

Report To:	LOCAL PLAN DEVELOPMENT PANEL
Date:	5TH JULY 2022
Heading:	LOCAL PLAN UPDATE
Executive Lead Member:	NOT APPLICABLE
Ward/s:	ALL WARDS
Key Decision:	NO
Subject to Call-In:	NO

Purpose of Report

To set out the current position regarding the emerging Local Plan with a specific reference to housing need and employment land.

Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that the Local Plan Development Panel note the current position on the emerging Local Plan.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

To provide the Local Plan Development Panel with an update on the emerging Local Plan.

Alternative Options Considered

None

Detailed Information

The Cabinet at the meeting of 20th September 2021 resolved to undertake a consultation on a draft Local Plan under Regulations 18 of the Town and Country (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, as amended. The consultation was undertaken from 4th October to 16th November 2021.

The Draft Local Plan identified a housing need of 457 dwellings per annum or a minimum of 8,226 dwellings over the Plan period to 2038¹. This was based on the standard method for assessing housing need set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 61 and Planning Practice Guidance Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (PPG). The sites proposed for allocation in the Draft were sites put forward and assessed as potentially deliverable and developable.

The PPG uses a formula to identify the minimum number of homes expected to be planned for. While this is not mandatory, the NPPF and PPG sets out the expectation councils will follow the standard method and the resultant housing need figure. It is made clear that any reduction in the housing need figure is a high bar to overcome and will be closely scrutinised at the subsequent formal examination in public of a plan. The local authority will need to demonstrate, using robust evidence, that the reduced figure is based on realistic assumptions of demographic growth and that there are exceptional local circumstances that justify deviating from the standard method. There is no guidance that explains what warrants an exceptional circumstance. The NPPF also provides that sites have to be deliverable and developable. A substantial part of this reflects that landowners must be prepared to have their land developed for housing or other purposes. The evidence is provided through a strategic housing land availability assessment² from which councils should identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites considering their availability, suitability and likely economic viability³.

At the Party Conference of 6th October 2021, the Prime Minister set out:

'you can also see how much room there is to build the homes that young families need in this country not on green fields not just jammed in the south east but beautiful homes on brownfield sites in places where homes make sense'.

Ashfield has seen significant past development on brownfield sites both in terms of the former colliery sites and the traditional textile sites. The deliverable and developable brownfield sites identified through the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA), have been included as allocations in the Draft Local Plan. Nevertheless, there is a substantial shortfall of brownfield sites in relation to meeting the housing need for Ashfield identified through the standard method.

The current position regarding the emerging Local Plan is that the Plan is paused. There is an ongoing dialogue with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities regarding the standard method, brownfield sites, the implications of development on greenfield land, and the proposed Green Belt release⁴ in the emerging Ashfield Local Plan. The Government has introduced the Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill into Parliament and further information is set out in an associated Policy Paper. However, neither the Bill, or the Policy Paper address the issue of the housing requirements and land constraints, including the Green Belt. The Council is currently awaiting a response from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities.

As Ashfield cannot meet all the housing need set out in the Draft Local Plan on brownfield sites alone, letters have been sent to neighbouring authorities in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. The purpose of the letter was to ascertain whether the neighbouring councils are in a position to accommodate any of the assessed level of housing need for Ashfield. The majority of councils have responded that they cannot accommodate additional housing need from Ashfield. One authority identifies that they are currently assessing their own and the wider housing needs in relation to Derby and were not in a position to give a definitive response. Consequently, it is considered that neighbouring authorities will not be able to accommodate any of Ashfield's housing needs.

The Draft Local Plan allocates land for employment purposes. The Plan reflected the evidence from the Nottingham Core HMA⁵ and Nottingham Outer HMA Employment Land Needs Study 2021, Lichfield. The Draft Local Plan included proposed allocations for logistics at Junction 27 of the M1. However, the Employment Land Needs Study highlighted a regional demand for logistic along the M1 corridor in Nottinghamshire. As the NPPF places a significant emphasis on logistic requirements, the councils in the Core and Outer HMAs, have commissioned a Logistic Study to take account of the gap in evidence. Further information on this aspect is set out elsewhere on the agenda.

In conclusion, the Local Plan is to remain paused until further Government clarification is received.

1. NPPF paragraph 22 requires strategic policies to look ahead over a minimum 15-year period from adoption of the plan.
2. NPPF paragraph 68. For Ashfield this is reflected in the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA).
3. NPPF paragraph 68.
4. Planning For The Future' - White Paper 2020 'A new nationally determined, binding housing requirement that local planning authorities would have to deliver through their Local Plans. This would be focused on areas where affordability pressure is highest to stop land supply being a barrier to enough homes being built. We propose that this would factor in land constraints, including the Green Belt, and would be consistent with our aspirations of creating a housing market that is capable of delivering 300,000 homes annually, and one million homes over this Parliament'.
5. HMA - Housing Market Area.

Implications

Corporate Plan: There are no implications for the Corporate Plan from the report.

Legal: There are no direct legal implications from the report. [RLD 23/06/2022]

Finance: There are no direct financial resource implications from the report. [PH 27/06/2022].

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	None
General Fund – Capital Programme	None
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	None
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	None

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation

No risk specific risks are considered to arise from the report.	
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Human Resources: There are no direct Human Resource implications from the report.

Environmental/Sustainability: There are no environmental/sustainability implications from the report.

Equalities: There are no diversity or equality implications from the report.

Other Implications: None

Reason(s) for Urgency: Not applicable

Reason(s) for Exemption: Not applicable

Background Papers

- Draft Local Plan available on the Council's website.

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