

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet
2.	Date:	24 April 2013
3.	Title:	Local Plan: Public Consultation
4.	Directorate:	Environment & Development Services

5. Summary

The report seeks Cabinet approval for public consultation on the Local Plan. The consultation planned for summer 2013 will cover the potential development sites around all the Borough's communities.

6. Recommendations

1. Cabinet approve the draft Sites and Policies document for public consultation.
2. Cabinet endorse the approach set out in the Local Plan Consultation and Engagement Action Plan summary attached at Appendix 1.

7. Proposals and Details

Purpose

The Council is preparing a Local Plan for Rotherham. This is a statutory requirement under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Planning Act 2008 and Localism Act 2011).

Previous public consultation on the Local Plan has focused on the Core Strategy – setting out the broad strategy for the amount and distribution of the Borough’s future growth. The consultation planned for summer 2013 will cover the detail by looking at potential development sites for housing, employment and retail around all the Borough’s communities. The draft Sites and Policies document sets out this detail.

The draft Sites and Policies document will be made available to Cabinet Members prior to the meeting.

Consultation

In carrying out the consultation, we will build on the successful features of previous Local Plan consultations:

- targeted public “drop in” events on potential development sites for communities in growth areas
- pre-publicity for the consultation and specific local events
- advance briefings for Ward Members, MPs and Parish Councillors
- liaison with the Area Assembly network
- close working with Libraries and Parish Councils
- early engagement with the local press as a further means of ensuring engagement with and involvement of local people

A summary of the Local Plan Consultation and Community Engagement Action Plan is attached at Appendix 1. This may be subject to minor change in the run up to consultation launch as detail is finalised.

Sites and Policies document

The Local Plan Core Strategy sets out the **strategy** of how much growth we are proposing and where it should go. The **detail** will be covered in the Sites & Policies document by presenting to the public the potential sites for future development in local communities. This will enable local people to give their views on which sites they feel should be developed and which should not. All this information will be publicised and made available at public drop-in sessions throughout the Borough, in libraries and customer service centres and via our website.

These sites will be taken forward in the Sites and Policies document, which will be subject to further public consultation as it evolves and eventually submitted to

government. The Sites and Policies document will also contain development management policies to guide decisions on planning applications and will include designations to protect sensitive locations.

8. Finance

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The cost of the consultation will be met from the existing Planning Policy team budget although any expansion of the consultation would result in significant pressure on the financial and staffing resource available. Corporate assistance with the consultation exercise has been sought for officers from relevant services to assist with the consultation.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Cabinet approval of the public consultation is sought to enable the further preparation and refinement of the Sites and Policies document.

- Supplementing media relations with more direct communication has been considered. Investment in channels such as direct mail is felt necessary to ensure adequate levels of communication and engagement. Previous criticisms have included a perceived lack of information about the consultation.
- The Localism Act and National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) express a strong presumption in favour of sustainable development. Our Unitary Development Plan (UDP) policies only continue to have any weight where they are in accordance with the NPPF. It is important that Rotherham's Local Plan is in place as soon as possible to provide an up-to-date planning policy framework for the Borough's future growth and development.
- A failure to achieve timely progress on the Local Plan could delay adoption of the policies required to guide future decision-making on planning applications.
- Having a Local Plan in place will provide a steer for any neighbourhood plans that may emerge under the provisions of the Localism Act.
- Failure to make progress with the Local Plan risks delayed provision of the new homes and employment opportunities that the Borough needs.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The implementation of the Local Plan will make a positive contribution to all of Rotherham's Regeneration priorities. When adopted, the Core Strategy and supporting documents will further the objectives of the Corporate Plan and support the delivery of the Rotherham Sustainable Community Strategy by:

- providing sufficient good quality homes
- ensuring well designed, decent affordable housing

- providing employment land to meet the needs of the modern economy and support sustainable communities through access to employment opportunities
- promoting the “town centre first” policy approach to help the regeneration and renaissance of Rotherham Town Centre

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Local Plan Publication Core Strategy (June 2012)

Local Plan Core Strategy Focused Changes (Jan 2013)

Local Plan Sites and Policies Issues and Options (June 2011)

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Appendix 1: Local Plan Consultation and Community Engagement Action Plan Summary

Date (2013)	Activity	Comments
4 March	Area Assembly Chairs Meeting	
19, 20 & 22 March	Ward Member briefing sessions on potential development sites	Three sessions at the Town Hall.
16 April	Parish Network Event	
24 April	Cabinet	Local Plan consultation presented for approval.
End April	Press briefing	Press and publicity campaign begins.
April	Brief librarians	Principal librarians briefed.
May	Brief of local MPs	Briefing note circulated before consultation launch.
w/c 6 May	Place adverts in local press	Format of a "statutory notice" to also include confirmed dates and times of events
w/c 13 May	Notify consultees	Letter and/or email to all consultees on the Local Plan consultation database. Letter to all residents living within 100 metres of a proposed development site.
20 May	Consultation launch	Press and radio interviews as required. Consultation material in customer service centres and libraries. Website goes live with event calendar and all consultation material.
June	Stakeholder Seminar	Date and format to be confirmed. By invitation.
June - July	Public drop-in sessions (focused on areas of growth/change)	Advertise all events through posters and flyers made available at publicly accessible venues. Consider placing additional adverts in local press.
June - July	Policy themed workshops (communities of interest and hard to reach groups)	Community Engagement Team / Area Assembly Team / Sustainable Communities Team. By invitation.
29 July	Consultation close	