

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 16 October 2017

Wards: all

Subject: Starting Stage 1 consultation on new Local Plan

Lead officer: Director for Environment and Regeneration Chris Lee

Lead member: Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing, Councillor Martin Whelton.

Contact officer: Deputy FutureMerton manager, Tara Butler

Recommendations:

- A. That Cabinet resolve to approve the first six week consultation on the new borough-wide Local Plan, to run for six weeks between October and December 2017.
 - B. That approval for the short consultation leaflet be delegated to the Director of Environment and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. On 14 September 2016, council resolved to start a new borough-wide Local Plan. In line with government's guidance, this will be a single document replacing both Merton's Core Planning Strategy 2011 and Sites and Policies Plan 2014.
- 1.2. Cabinet is now asked to approve the first statutory borough-wide consultation of 6 weeks, to take place between October and December 2017.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. On 14 September 2016, council resolved to start a new borough-wide Local Plan. In line with government's guidance, this will be a single document replacing both
 - Merton's Core Planning Strategy 2011 and
 - Sites and Policies Plan 2014.
- 2.2. The new Local Plan won't replace the South London Waste Plan 2012 (as this is a joint document with three other boroughs, dealing with waste management only) or the Estates Local Plan (as this is a site-specific rather than borough-wide Local Plan).
- 2.3. The council has already committed to creating plans for Morden and Wimbledon to ensure that the opportunities presented by Crossrail2 and the Mayor's Housing Zone in Morden can be realised.

- 2.4. Rather than create two separate Local Plans (with two separate sets of research, consultation and costs) the council will create one borough-wide Local Plan.
- 2.5. When the Local Plan is finished, it can cover:
- Borough-wide strategic policies on housing, design, flood risk, open space, etc (a similar approach to that are found in the Core Planning Strategy)
 - Area specific strategic policies covering the town centres and wider surroundings of Colliers Wood, Mitcham, Morden, Raynes Park and Wimbledon (a similar approach to those found in the Core Planning Strategy) These area-based policies can set the direction and allocate the sites for any detailed masterplans that may follow, such as for Morden Housing Zone.
 - Setting land designations: e.g. town centre boundaries, designated open space boundaries, areas for nature conservation, cycle routes etc. (similar to the maps in the Sites and Policies Plan)
 - Allocations of specific sites for development and any statutory site allocations or specific planning policies required for Morden, Wimbledon, or any other part of the borough (similar to the Sites and Policies Plan)
 - Detailed planning policies on retail, business areas, offices in town centres, housing matters, urban design (similar to the Sites and Policies Plan)
- 2.6. For this stage 1 initial consultation, officers will produce a short consultation leaflet (5-10 pages) and web form asking residents, businesses and others to suggest sites to allocate for development, to suggest places that they want to protect or see change and to suggest ideas for new planning policies.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. One alternative is not to consult on the first stage of a Local Plan prior to December 2017. This option is not recommended as the current approach co-ordinates with the Mayor's London Plan, Transport Strategy and Environment Strategy timetable (all of which will have been published for consultation by December 2017) and with the council's requirements to produce a Local Implementation Plan (generating funding to the council to deliver the Mayor's Transport Strategy).
- 3.2. Missing this opportunity for consultation before January 2018 would remove the alignment between the Mayor of London's work and the council's work. This Local Plan timetable is also co-ordinated with the delivery of Morden Housing Zone and will de-risk the planning process to help deliver that zone.
- 3.3. The option not to carry out a Local Plan has already been considered and rejected by council at their meeting on 16 September 2017.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. As this is the first consultation stage, it is asking respondents questions (e.g. which sites they would like to see developed? What is important to you with new development?)
- 4.2. Officers are designing a short leaflet (5-10 pages) that will be easily readable online to prompt responses on planning policy matters and potential sites for redevelopment.
- 4.3. Peer to peer promotion of the consultation is usually a more successful approach. The consultation would be promoted by:
 - Sending it to all +2,000 community groups, residents associations, nature conservation bodies, individuals, landowners, developers and others on Merton's Local Plan consultation database. We will be asking community groups and residents associations to help spread the word in their own newsletters, blogs and websites.
 - Having an online form and promoting it on the council's website, Twitter and Facebook
 - Attending community events and encouraging people to respond.
- 4.4. The cross-party Borough Plan Advisory Committee will review progress and advise Cabinet on the progress of the new Local Plan. In addition this report has also been considered by members of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee on 11 October 2017 and Cabinet members will be updated on any relevant outcome at their meeting on 16 October 2017.

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. It is proposed that the consultation takes place for six weeks from around the end of October until the first week of December 2017.
- 5.2. This timetable for considering the council's consultation results is co-ordinated with the publications / projects below:
 - The first consultation on the Mayor's London Plan: due to be published November 2017 for three months
 - The Mayor's draft Transport Strategy and Environment Strategy, currently out for consultation until November 2017
 - Progress on the Morden Housing Zone, de-risking the planning process
 - The new draft of the National Planning Policy Framework, due in March 2018
- 5.3. The consultation results and all of the information will be used to inform Stage 2, a draft of the new Local Plan during 2018.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. Funding to support this work will come from existing resources and officers will seek opportunities for funding bids and match funding wherever possible.
- 6.2. For example, the council made a successful funding bid to the Greater London Authority for £20,000 each year for 2017-18 and 2018-19 to support the redevelopment of Morden. Some of this funding (for example, on public engagement and technical expertise) will support the Morden element of the borough-wide Local Plan where this helps to deliver the Housing Zone.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) requires at least two stages of engagement on local plan making. This is the first of the two stages.
- 7.2. With the aim of encouraging more local authorities to have a local plan in place, the Housing and Planning Act 2016, the Act gives the Secretary of State greater powers to intervene in the local plan making process. Specifically it would allow the Secretary of State to intervene if a local authority was failing or omitting to do anything it is necessary for them to do in connection with the preparation, revision or adoption of a local plan.
- 7.3. The Government's Implementation of planning changes: technical consultation proposes to prioritise government intervention where:
 - there is under delivery of housing in areas of high housing pressure;
 - the least progress in plan-making has been made;
 - plans have not been kept up-to-date.
- 7.4. Merton's Core Planning Strategy was adopted in July 2011, just over six months prior to the National Planning Policy Framework publication in March 2012. Although the draft NPPF was considered as part of Merton's Core Planning Strategy and despite Merton producing three Local Plans between 2012 and 2017, technically Merton's strategic policies are not up to date. The preparation of the new Local Plan will enable Merton's strategic policies to be revised.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. Local Plans contain planning policies to improve community cohesion and are subject to Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessments and Equalities Impact Assessments.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. Local Plans contain planning policies to improve community cohesion and are subject to Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessments which also consider matters of crime and disorder.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1. As set out in the body of this report.

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- None

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1. Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 as amended.

12.2. National Planning Policy Guidance

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