

REPORT TO: Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 20th November 2013

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Policy and Resources

PORTFOLIO: Physical Environment

SUBJECT: Delivery and Allocations Local Plan Scoping Document

WARDS: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 This report provides the Environment and Urban Renewal PPB with an overview of the draft Delivery and Allocations Local Plan Scoping Document. This is the first stage in the production of this Local Plan (previously known as the 'Site Allocations and Development Management Local Plan') and is the starting point for discussion on what the Local Plan should include and what should inform its preparation.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the content of the report is noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background Information

- 3.1 This report follows on from the Site Allocations and Development Management Local Plan report which was brought to the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board on 21st November 2012. It should be noted that since this report the title of the Local Plan has been shortened to the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan. The previous report discussed the statutory requirement for local authorities to produce a development plan for their area and that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 3.2 The Halton Core Strategy Local Plan was adopted in April 2013 and effectively forms the first part of Halton's development plan. The Core Strategy provides high level planning policy guidance setting out the Borough's overarching strategy for future development. The Council now needs to produce the second part of the development plan through a Local Plan to cover the allocation of sites and detailed policies for the determination of planning applications. This would form part of Halton's local development plan alongside the Core Strategy Local Plan and the Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan (Joint Waste Local Plan) (July 2013).

Purpose of the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan

- 3.3 The role of the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan is to allocate sites and provide detailed policies for Halton's places, areas and issues. This will deliver the spatial vision and strategic objectives of the Council's adopted Core Strategy Local Plan and ultimately replace the saved policies of the Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (2005).
- 3.4 The Delivery and Allocations Local Plan will:
- identify strategic development site allocations and land use designations for the Borough that will address the policy direction outlined and referred to in the Core Strategy;
 - set out specific policies which will help to guide and inform the development of the identified strategic site allocations and the future growth of the Borough; and,
 - provide further detail on the Key Areas of Change identified in the Core Strategy where a clustering of opportunity sites warrant a collaborative strategy and policy approach for the area, rather than for individual sites

The Scoping Document

- 3.5 The production of a Local Plan must follow the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The process is similar to that followed for the Core Strategy, with consultation taking place on draft documents.
- 3.6 The first stage in this process for the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan is to carry out a public consultation on a Scoping Document which will be a starting point for discussion on what the Local Plan should include and what should inform its preparation. This first stage will therefore 'scope' the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan, identifying the policies that are needed within the plan in order to guide the future development of the Borough.
- 3.7 The Scoping Document has recently been drafted for the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan and is appended to this report (Appendix 1). It should be noted that the Scoping Document has not been finalised and may be subject to some minor changes before the consultation document is agreed.

Policy Framework

- 3.8 The Scoping Document sets out the national and local context for the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan. This includes consideration of the requirements set out nationally and locally.
- 3.9 At the national level the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) establishes high-level planning principles for England and requirements for the planning system, covering the full range of land use topics from sustainable development, to the historic environment, to flood risk. The NPPF must be taken into account in the preparation of Local Plans,

and is a material consideration in planning decisions. Appendix A of the Scoping Document sets out the specific requirements detailed in the NPPF which need to be addressed through the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.

- 3.10 At the local level, the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan will complement the planning policies contained in the Halton Core Strategy Local Plan and the Joint Waste Local Plan. Appendix B of the Scoping Document sets out the Core Strategy requirements that need to be addressed by this Local Plan.
- 3.11 Currently sitting alongside the Core Strategy Local Plan and the Joint Waste Local Plan as part of the statutory development plan for the Borough is the UDP. A number of the saved policies of the UDP have been deleted by the Core Strategy and Joint Waste Local Plans with the remainder to be replaced or deleted in their entirety by the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan. The Scoping Document has included an analysis (Appendix C) to show how the saved policies of the UDP are going to be taken forward by the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan and to identify policies which are important to assist development management matters within the Council. Appendix D also details potential saved UDP policies which may not be taken forward by the Local Plan and which would consequently be deleted.

Supporting Documents

- 3.12 Impact Assessments, namely Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment), Habitats Regulations Assessment, Health Impact Assessment and Equalities Impact Assessment will be produced to support the Local Plan's production. The assessments should form part of the iterative process of policy writing as policies are drafted and sites to be allocated are selected. Alongside these Impact Assessments an updated Infrastructure Plan and a Duty to Co-operate Statement will also be produced.

Evidence Base

- 3.13 A thorough evidence base has been, and will be, developed in response to issues and challenges faced by Halton. This will be used to inform the policy approaches within the Local Plan.
- 3.14 One of the most important pieces of the evidence base will be the Green Belt review. Following the outcome of the examination into the soundness of the Core Strategy, the Council has committed to undertake a partial review of the Borough's Green Belt boundaries around Widnes and Hale. A Widnes and Hale Green Belt Study is being undertaken alongside the Local Plan to review and assess the Widnes and Hale Green Belt. This study will inform the development of the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan. A report concerning the Methodology for this study has recently been brought to the Board in September 2013.

- 3.15 Appendix E of the Scoping Document details the key local evidence base documents which will be used to support the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan policies.

Policy Outline

- 3.16 The most significant aspect of the Scoping Document is the Policy Outline table which sets out the proposed policy areas for the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan. This also highlights the matters that are likely to be included in the proposed policies and will give an indication of the scope that will be covered. The Policy Outline section also highlights the policy areas that will refer to specific site allocations. Land designations are also highlighted, identifying land that should be safeguarded or where specific policies may apply.
- 3.17 The Policy Outline is broken down into 16 policy sections ranging from Housing to Renewable and Low Carbon Energy to Green Infrastructure. In total 42 policies across the sections have been identified. This is in comparison to the 149 Part 2 policies of the UDP when it was adopted in 2005. It is intended that by streamlining the policy areas and ensuring that these are relevant to Halton's circumstances it will enable the Local Plan to be simpler and more accessible to the local community, council officers, applicants and agents.

Timetable

- 3.18 The table below shows the proposed timetable for the production of the Local Plan with estimated dates. The consultation for the Scoping Document is currently anticipated to take place towards the end of 2013 / beginning of 2014.

| Stage | Estimated Date |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Scoping Document preparation | Completed |
| Developing the Evidence Base | Underway and Continuing |
| Consultation on the Scoping Document | December 2013 – February 2014 |
| Preparation of the Draft Local Plan | February – June 2014 |
| Consultation on Draft Local Plan | July - September 2014 |
| Pre-Submission consultation of the Local Plan | November – December 2014 |
| Submission to Planning Inspectorate | March 2015 |
| Examination Hearings | June 2015 |
| Receipt of Inspectors Report | August 2015 |
| Adoption of Local Plan | September 2015 |

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Delivery and Allocations Local Plan is set to replace the remainder of saved UDP policies that have not already been replaced by the Halton Core Strategy or the Joint Waste Local Plan. It will therefore be a key policy document for the future development of the Borough and the Council's investment and economic prosperity strategies.

- 4.2 The Delivery and Allocations Local Plan allows the Council to demonstrate it is making a supply of land available to meet growth and development needs. Without this planning document adopted it will be left to the market to bring forward sites to meet the quantum of development set out in the Council's Core Strategy.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The key non-policy implications of producing the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan relate to resources. The production of this Local Plan will be the key project for officers in the Planning and Transport Strategy Team in the Policy and Development Services Division over the coming years. Involvement from other Council departments such as Open Space Services, Highways, Environmental Health, Investment and Development Services and Commissioning and School Place Planning, will be vital to ensure that sites are allocated to meet the whole range of community needs.
- 5.2 Aside from the financial implications of producing material for public consultations and hosting events, it may be necessary to use planning consultancy services where specialist expertise or independent scrutiny is required.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

The Delivery and Allocations Local Plan recognises the importance of raising aspirations of younger people, and supporting the provision of opportunities for them to enter further education or employment.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

The Delivery and Allocations Local Plan will allocate sites for employment purposes supporting the enhancement of the Borough's economy and assisting in delivering economic growth.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

The Delivery and Allocations Local Plan will contribute to a healthy Halton through ensuring well-designed places and spaces, supporting accessible travel options and through the provision of a healthy, green local environment.

6.4 A Safer Halton

The Delivery and Allocations Local Plan will aim to ensure that Halton's communities, businesses and visitors enjoy access to a safe and sustainable physical environment with natural and man-made risks and hazards being minimised. A number of policies seek to create and sustain safer environments, which are well designed, well built, well maintained and valued by all members of society.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The Delivery and Allocations Local Plan will be a key tool in bringing forward development on sites in the urban area by setting out allocations for specific land uses. It will also be vital in ensuring a high standard of development across the Borough, through development management policies on matters such as design, access and parking.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 The adoption of the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan will require a prioritisation of resources to progress the Local Plan from this initial scoping stage. There is a possibility that the timetable may not be met, and thus the eventual adoption of the document will be delayed.

7.2 It is anticipated that the Widnes and Hale Green Belt Study will generate a high level of interest both among residents and in the local press. Clear communication and public involvement will therefore be necessary at all stages, in the production of the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan to show how the study has led to planning decisions.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 The policies in the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan would be applied equally to all sections of Halton's communities. An Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out during the production of the Local Plan to identify the potential impact of proposed policies on Halton's residents. Consultation on draft policies will take place with stakeholders and the Borough's population and efforts will be made to ensure that all sectors of the community are reached.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

| Document | Place of Inspection | Contact Officer |
|---|---|------------------------|
| Partial Green Belt Review – North Widnes and Hale Green Belt Study (Sept, 2013) | Planning and Transport Strategy, Municipal Building, Widnes | Alasdair Cross |
| Site Allocations and Development Management Local Plan (Nov, 2012) | Planning and Transport Strategy, Municipal Building, Widnes | Alasdair Cross |
| The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 | Planning and Transport Strategy, Municipal Building, Widnes | Alasdair Cross |
| National Planning Policy Framework (2012) | Planning and Transport Strategy, Municipal Building, Widnes | Alasdair Cross |
| Halton Core Strategy Local Plan (2012) | Planning and Transport Strategy, Municipal Building, Widnes | Alasdair Cross |

| Document | Place of Inspection | Contact Officer |
|---|---|------------------------|
| Report on the Examination into Halton Core Strategy Local Plan (2012) | Planning and Transport Strategy, Municipal Building, Widnes | Alasdair Cross |