

REPORT TO: CABINET

DATE: 22 JUNE 2017

TITLE: HARLOW LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN:
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME,
DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES:
PROPOSED TOWN CENTRE AREA ACTION
PLAN

PORTFOLIO HOLDER(S): COUNCILLOR DANNY PURTON, PORTFOLIO
HOLDER FOR ENVIRONMENT

LEAD OFFICER(S): GRAEME BLOOMER, HEAD OF PLACE
(01279) 446270

**CONTRIBUTING
OFFICER(S):** DIANNE COOPER, PLANNING AND
BUILDING CONTROL MANGER (01279)
446595

PAUL MACBRIDE, FORWARD PLANNING
MANAGER (01279) 446258

This is a Key Decision
It is on the Forward Plan as Decision number I006849.
Call-in Procedures may apply
This decision will affect all Ward(s).

RECOMMENDED that:

- A** Cabinet approves the Local Development Scheme for publication. (Appendix A)
- B** Cabinet approves the Development Management Policies for consultation. (Appendix B)
- C** Cabinet agrees the production of a Town Centre Area Action Plan to set out the spatial strategy and land use planning policies to guide and support the regeneration of the Town Centre.
- D** Subject to A, B and C above authority be delegated to the Head of Governance (or the Managing Director if in post at the appropriate time), in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Environment, to approve any inconsequential and non-material amendments to the policies and text that may be necessary arising from the completion of technical reports and the strategic policies.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

- A** The Council is required to publish the details of its Local Development Scheme. This must specify (amongst other matters) the documents which, when prepared, will comprise the Local Development Plan for the area. It must be made available publicly and kept up-to-date so that the local community and interested parties can keep track of progress.
- B** The Development Management policies are a key element of the statutory Local Development Plan (LDP) the Council has to prepare. They are required in order to provide a policy framework to assist in the determination of planning applications submitted to the Council as Local Planning Authority.
- C** Harlow Town Centre has been subject to a number of proposed regeneration schemes over past years, none of which have come to fruition. The increasing pace of change in the retail industry, particularly with regard to traditional town centre trading, renders mid to long term spatial planning inherently difficult and inflexible to the changing needs of the retail market and the requirements of would-be investors in the Town Centre. Accordingly it is considered more appropriate to deal with spatial planning in the Town Centre by means of a specific local development plan document – a Town Centre Area Action Plan.

BACKGROUND/ UPDATE

1. The process of preparing Harlow's Local Development Plan (LDP) has been and continues to be, a complex and involved programme of work.
2. The task is being undertaken within an unprecedented context of having to work in tandem and cooperatively with neighbouring Councils towards the preparation of an agreed spatial planning strategy that will guide the future development and regeneration of Harlow and its immediate surroundings over the course of the next 15 years.
3. To be found sound, the LDP (and the evidence base used to justify its content and direction) will be tested by a Planning Inspector at Public Inquiry against the statutory requirements of; being positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national planning policy.
4. The Council has recently engaged the support of consultants (Stace) to assist, with a supportive critical eye, the production of a strategic master programme towards conclusion of the LDP before issue for a Regulation 19 consultation.
5. A Programme Management Report, together with Risk Register and Programme Management Plan is attached. (Appendices C-E)

The Local Development Scheme (LDS)

6. The Council is required to prepare a Local Development Scheme under section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011). This must specify, among other matters, the documents which, when prepared, will comprise the Local Plan for the area. It must be made available publicly and kept up-to-date so that the local community and interested parties can keep track of progress. In effect it is a high-level explanatory timetable of the Local Plan, heralding the dates and documents comprising the Plan. The Local Development Scheme is attached at Appendix A.

Development Management Policies

7. The Development Management Policies (Appendix B) will provide the detailed planning framework which will be used to shape and guide future development in Harlow through the use of the policies in the determination of planning applications. They reflect the overarching objectives and themes of the LDP via policy groupings reflecting: Placeshaping, Housing, Prosperity, Lifestyles and Infrastructure. They will also provide the detailed implementation of the spatial expression of the Strategic Policies.
8. They have been informed by the technical evidence that has been prepared to support the LDP and have had regard to Government guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).
9. Initial drafts of the Policies were considered by Members at the Local Development Plan Panels of 16 and 30 November 2016 and have been subject to further amendment and revision following updates arising from the findings of technical evidence that has become available.
10. Some policies may need further revision depending on the results of consultation, the findings of updated expert advice on, inter alia, retail needs, leisure needs, roads infrastructure following the completion of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and to ensure consistency of policy approach across the greater Harlow area (which includes East Hertfordshire and Epping Forest districts).

Town Centre Area Action Plan

11. Harlow Town Centre has been subject to a number of proposed large-scale regeneration schemes over past years, some of which have failed to progress fully and others not at all, having been victims of recession and market changes. With over thirty separate private freehold ownerships and upwards of one hundred leasehold interests in the Town Centre, it is now felt that in

light of previous attempts, large scale retail-led schemes are unlikely to be successful especially given the lack of substantial capital investment available from both the private and public sectors.

12. Harlow Town Centre suffers from an ageing infrastructure, and has an out of date built environment and public realm. Coupled with a lack of retail sector investment (The Harvey Centre notwithstanding), this has resulted in the decline of the Town Centre where retail sales are being lost to competing retail centres and an under performance in terms of attracting new customers given the emerging wider potential catchment area. The most notable aspects of decline have been seen in the northern part of the town centre.
13. In recent years the town centre has also seen a number of office buildings converted to residential use under permitted development rights. Some of these have not been at the level of quality that would be desired by the Council for residential development in the Town Centre.
14. Current issues notwithstanding, the recent announcement on Garden Town status, coupled to the emerging inevitability of significant jobs and housing growth in and around Harlow bodes well for the future prospects of the Town Centre. In addition, the recent Retail Needs Study, has identified the need for an uplift in comparison and convenience floorspace arising from the significant housing growth proposed across the wider Harlow area.
15. It has become clear that in order to be successful and provide for the current and future needs of the emerging Greater Harlow community, regeneration proposals should build on the existing Harlow legacy, complement the current Town Centre and its architecture and contribute to developing a long term sustainable community. Constructing an appropriately detailed but adaptable land use planning policy framework to assist the Council's regeneration aspirations is crucial to future success.
16. Accordingly, it is proposed to prepare a detailed spatial planning framework for the Town Centre supported by a dedicated project team drawing upon specialist consultant advice in relation to design and architecture guidance and policy. This separate development plan document (DPD) will provide the spatial expression of the overarching strategic policies set out in the Harlow Local Development Plan and will run parallel but on an overlapping time frame.

IMPLICATIONS

Place (includes Sustainability)

As contained within the report and appendices.

Author: **Graeme Bloomer, Head of Place**

Finance (Includes ICT)

None specific at this stage. There may be costs linked with a public enquiry which would be met from the specific Planning Reserve.

Author: **Simon Freeman, Head of Finance**

Housing

As outlined in the body of the report.

Author: **Andrew Murray, Head of Housing**

Community Wellbeing (includes Equalities and Social Inclusion)

An Area Action Plan will set out area-specific visions, planning policies and masterplans for the Town Centre and will provide a comprehensive spatial strategy for coordinated development and design that will reflect the local aspirations for the future of the area. It will help to guide development and provide confidence and certainty to developers and others as Town Centre regeneration proposal progress.

Author: **Jane Greer, Head of Community Wellbeing**

Governance (includes HR)

As contained within the report.

Author: **Brian Keane, Head of Governance**

Appendices

Appendix A – Local Development Scheme

Appendix B – Development Management Policies

Appendix C – Programme Management Report

Appendix D – Risk Register

Appendix E – Programme Management Plan

Background Papers

None.

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

None.