

LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive / Assistant Director Planning and Place Making

1. Introduction and purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an update on the current position in respect of the Local Plan following recent events, including the publication of a draft revised National Planning Policy Framework and the subsequent decision to halt the proposed consultation on the Local Plan.

2. Background

- 2.1 On 19th July 2024, Cabinet resolved that the Council should commence a period of consultation on a draft local plan (regulation 18) on 2nd September 2024 for a period of eight weeks. In considering the proposal, the report to Cabinet made clear that any resolution taken by Cabinet needed to cater for a scenario that saw the new government announcing changes which could potentially impact the progression of the Local Plan. The report stated *“in light of the outcome of the General Election, delegated authority is sought to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to delay the commencement of the consultation in the event that changes to national policy are made that would result in a need for the council to review its approach in the local plan”*.
- 2.2 On 30th July 2024, the Government announced that it would commence a consultation on planning reform which includes the publication of a draft revision to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). In addition, all local planning authorities in England were sent a letter from the Deputy Prime Minister / Secretary of State titled ‘Playing your part in building the homes we need.’
- 2.3 Following receipt of the notice regarding consultation, the accompanying letter and consideration of the ministerial statement, officers immediately commenced a review of the implications of the proposed changes on progression of the Local Plan.
- 2.4 It was clear from the draft NPPF and correspondence from the government that their proposals represent significant change. Whilst many of the proposed changes had been referenced either in the Labour Party Manifesto pre the General Election or via a series of announcements / interviews post the election, the precise nature of the changes and the timetable only became clear on 30th July 2024.
- 2.5 In particular, the changes propose the reintroduction of mandatory housing targets with a new methodology for calculating housing need. The consultation makes clear that local planning authorities will be expected to apply the new

national housing methodology which defines the minimum number of homes needed and make all efforts to allocate land in line with their housing need. The consultation goes on to advise that in demonstrating that all reasonable steps have been taken to meet need in full, this should include “optimising density, sharing need with neighbouring authorities, and reviewing green belt before a lower housing requirement will be considered.”

- 2.6 The changes also include an 18 month extension for the submission of a Local Plan to December 2026 effectively removing the June 2025 deadline.
- 2.7 In addition to officers reviewing the changes, the council engaged King’s Counsel to provide an initial view as to the potential implications of the proposed changes to the NPPF. The legal privilege which attaches to that advice is not waived or removed by reference to it within this report. However, it is necessary to say that this was supportive of the Deputy Chief Executive / Assistant Director Place Making and Planning recommending to the Chief Executive that the proposed consultation on the Local Plan should not proceed at this time.
- 2.6 The Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council, Councillor Mark Hunter, resolved that in light of the nature of the changes it was proposed to halt the consultation on the Local Plan on 8th August. As well as communicating this decision directly to Group Leaders and All Councillors, the Council issued a press release confirming its decision.

3. NEXT STEPS

- 3.1 Officers continue to review the proposed changes and are preparing a response to the consultation. In parallel a review is underway to understand the implications for the Local Plan as drafted and decision-making processes in Stockport, as well as seeking to draft a new timeline for preparation of the Local Plan.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 It is recommended that Members note the update.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Anyone wishing to inspect the above background papers or requiring further information should contact Emma Curle, Assistant Director Place Making and Place Making emma.curle@stockport.gov.uk