

**Committee: Individual Cabinet Member Decision Making**

**Date of meeting: 19 July 2017**

<b>Subject:</b>	Elmbridge Local Plan: Strategic Options Consultation - Summary of Consultation Responses
<b>Lead Officer:</b>	Suzanne Parkes, Acting Planning Policy Manager
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Councillor Karen Randolph - Portfolio Holder for Planning Services
<b>Link to Council Priorities:</b>	P3
<b>Exempt information:</b>	None
<b>Delegated status:</b>	For Resolution
<b>Key decision:</b>	Yes

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

In December 2016 the Council published a consultation paper on the Strategic Options for a new Local Plan. This consultation finished at the end of February 2017 with nearly 3,800 individuals and organisations submitting responses. During this consultation period the Government published the Housing White Paper "Fixing our broken housing market" (February 2017). This set out proposals to change national planning policy in areas that could affect the approach taken by the Council in preparing its new Local Plan.

In light of the above, it was agreed by Cabinet on 5 July 2017, that an Interim Position Statement be published. The Statement sets out the reasons for the delay in the preparation of the Local Plan, and indicates when the Council intends to prepare and adopt an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS).

Mindful however of the significant level of interest in the Strategic Options Consultation and the continued preparation of a new Local Plan, it was also agreed on 5 July 2017, that a summary of the consultation responses received would be published. This was subject to the agreement of the Portfolio Holder for Planning Services at an Individual Cabinet Member Decision Making (ICMDM) meeting on 19 July 2017. Subject to agreement at the same ICMDM meeting, it was also resolved by Cabinet that all of the consultation responses would be published on the Council's Consultation Portal.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

**THAT THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING SERVICES AGREES:**

- 1. TO THE PUBLICATION OF THE SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES DOCUMENT; AND**
- 2. TO THE PUBLICATION OF ALL CONSULTATION RESPONSES RECEIVED ON THE COUNCIL'S CONSULTATION PORTAL.**

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 For a 10-week period commencing December 2016, the Council consulted on its Local Plan Strategic Options Document, the first stage in the process of developing a new Local Plan for the Borough. The Consultation focused on the key challenges facing the Borough, three potential strategic options for seeking to meet the Borough's development needs, and other planning issues such as infrastructure provision that a new plan would need to address.
- 1.2 At paragraph 1.20 of the Consultation Document it was stated that the Council will prepare a statement (Consultation Statement) responding to the issues raised in the comments received and set out how the Council would seek to address them. No date was specified within the Consultation Document as to when the Statement would be published however, during the consultation an indication of May 2017 was given.
- 1.3 In reply to the Consultation the Council received nearly 3,800 responses from our residents and other interested parties. This generated just under 50,000 separate comments. As a result, the Council's ability to prepare the Consultation Statement by May 2017 was impacted.
- 1.4 In addition, during the Strategic Options Consultation the Government published the Housing White Paper "Fixing our broken housing market" (February 2017). This set out proposals to change national planning policy in areas that could affect the approach taken by the Council in preparing its new Local Plan. In particular, proposed changes to assessing housing needs and the introduction of tests as to when there are exceptional circumstances to amend Green Belt boundaries will require the Council to prepare additional studies.
- 1.5 Further consultation by the Government is expected Summer 2017 on the details of its proposals. Until these details are known and the implications can be fully understood, it is considered premature for the Council to respond in detail to the comments received to the Strategic Options Consultation. This is particularly pertinent given that the vast majority of the comments focused on how the Objectively Assessed Housing Need (OAHN) figure was calculated; the Green Belt Boundary Review; and whether the exceptional circumstances to amended Green Belt boundaries had been satisfactorily demonstrated.
- 1.6 In light of the above, it was agreed by Cabinet on 5 July 2017, that an Interim Position Statement be published. The Statement set out the reasons for the delay in the preparation of the Local Plan, as summarised above, and indicated when the Council intends to prepare and adopt an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS).
- 1.7 Mindful however of the significant level of interest in the Strategic Options Consultation and the continued preparation of a new Local Plan, it was also agreed on 5 July 2017, that a summary of the consultation responses be published. This was subject to the agreement of the Portfolio Holder for Planning Services at an ICMDM meeting on 19 July 2017. Subject to agreement at the same ICMDM meeting, it was also resolved by Cabinet that all of the consultation responses would be published on the Council's Consultation Portal.

## **2. Summary of Consultation Response**

2.1 The Summary of Consultation Responses document is set out in Appendix A to this report. This has been prepared so that our residents and other interested parties can see the key issues that have emerged from the responses to the Strategic Options Consultation and to provide assurance that their comments have been registered, read, and reported to Members.

2.2 The format to the document is as follows:

- Section 1 - the introduction and background section explains the process of preparing a Local Plan and introduces the first stage in the consultation process; the Strategic Options Consultation. This includes an explanation to how this complies with planning regulations (Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulation 2012 (as amended)) and the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) (revised and adopted June 2015).
- Section 2 - highlights the early engagement methods carried out prior to the publication of the Strategic Options Consultation in December 2016.
- Section 3 - sets out the details of all the consultation methods adopted. It also includes information on who was consulted.
- Section 4 - provides a break down of those who responded to the consultation.
- Section 5 - provides a summary of the key points raised (as set out in the Council's Interim Position Statement).
- Sections 6 – 13 - set out the detailed summaries of each question featured in the consultation response form as well as additional summaries of comments received from duty-to cooperate bodies and those questioning the evidence base. The sections have been divided into themes to correspond with the content of the Strategic Options Consultation document.
- Section 14 - outlines the next steps in the process of preparing a new Local Plan.
- Appendices - copies of the consultation materials are set out at the end of the document.

2.3 As set out above, Sections 6 - 13 provide the detailed consultation summaries for each question featured in the response form. Where appropriate, each includes a breakdown of the number of responses and comments received and provides a summary of the key points raised. Each summary generally follows the same format as described below:

- The title and overview of the issue
- Consultation question
- Summary of responses graph
- Overview of numbers of comments received
- Comments from those who responded 'Yes'
- Comments from those who responded 'No'
- Comments from those who responded 'don't' know'
- Comments from those who did not select an option

- 2.4 To prevent repetition some of the questions have been presented in terms of key issues. This applies to Infrastructure, Heritage and Traveller Accommodation questions as the same comments were made by those selecting yes, no and don't know options.
- 2.5 The document makes clear throughout that unless stated the comments made / views expressed are not necessarily those of the Borough Council.

### **3. All Consultation Responses**

- 3.1 As set out in paragraph 1.3 of this report, 50,000 individual comments were received in response to the consultation. It is proposed that these are made available to review on the Council's Consultation Portal. The Council will only make viewable the name of respondents and the comments they have made. Where a comment has been made by a resident association, organisation/company for example, this will also be published. Contact information such as postal and email addresses will all be redacted.
- 3.2 As recommended by the Local Plan Working Group at a meeting on 20 June 2017, guidance will be provided on how respondents can search for their comments and any others that they may have a particular interest in. This will be set out on the Consultation Portal.
- 3.3 As with the Summary document, the Council will ensure that it is made clear on the Portal that the individual comments received do not necessarily reflect the views / position of the Borough Council.

### **4 Next steps**

- 4.1 Subject to the agreement of the Portfolio Holder it is proposed that the Summary of Consultation Responses and all responses received to the consultation be published early August 2017. These will be published on the Council's website / Consultation Portal.
- 4.2 The next steps in the process of continuing to prepare a new Local Plan for Elmbridge Borough are set out within the 5 July Cabinet report and so have not been repeated here.
- 4.3 Nevertheless, it is important to note that once a decision has been made on how to proceed with the preparation of the new Local Plan, the Council will be able to respond in more detail to the key issues raised through the Strategic Options Consultation.

#### **Financial implications:**

The financial implications of the delay in the preparation of the Local Plan and the need to prepare additional evidence base studies were set out in full as part of the Cabinet Paper agreed on 5 July 2017 (Section 5). In summary, an estimated cost of £35,000 - £50,000 was identified as being required to undertake additional studies that seek to address the issues raised in the Housing White Paper. This is alongside the £44,000

previously set aside to support the preparation of other studies already scheduled / commissioned. The Cabinet Paper identified the total estimated cost of the studies as £79,000 - £94,000. This is to be funded from the Housing Planning and Delivery Grant, from which the initial review was funded, and from existing budgets allocated for the development of the Local Plan.

There are not considered to be any financial implications arising from the publication of the Summary of Consultation Responses or the individual comments received.

**Environmental implications:**

None for the purpose of this report.

**Legal implications:**

When preparing the new Local Plan the Council will be required to explain how it has complied with planning regulations (Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulation 2012 (as amended)) and the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) (revised and adopted June 2015). The Summary of Consultation Response document is the start to this process.

**Equality Implications:**

None for the purpose of this report.

**Risk Management Implications:**

None for the purposes of this report

**Community Safety Implications:**

None for the purpose of this report.

**Background papers:**

Exempt

**Enclosures/Appendices:**

Appendix A – Elmbridge Local Plan – Strategic Options Consultation (Regulation 18) Summary of Consultation Responses, August 2017

**Contact details:**

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