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| Subject: | LOCAL PLAN REGULATION 18 CONSULTATION |
| Meeting and Date: | Cabinet – 7 December 2020 |
| Report of: | Ashley Taylor, Planning Projects and Policy Manager |
| Portfolio Holder: | Councillor Nicholas Kenton, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services |
| Decision Type: | Key |
| Classification: | Unrestricted |

Purpose of the report: To seek approval to carry out consultation on the Regulation 18 draft Local Plan for the District.

- Recommendation:**
- (1) That Cabinet approves the Local Plan Regulation 18 document, as set out in Appendix 1, for consultation for a period of eight weeks.
 - (2) That Cabinet approves the Regulation 18 Consultation Engagement Strategy as set out in Appendix 2.
 - (3) That the Head of Planning, Regeneration and Development, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services, be authorised to make minor changes to the consultation document, and to take all necessary steps to develop and carry out the regulation 18 consultation.
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1. Summary

- 1.1 The Council is in the process of developing a new Local Plan which will set out the planning and development framework for the district for the period up to 2040.
- 1.2 Consultation is proposed to be carried out in relation to the issues which the Local Plan should address, the options for addressing those issues and a proposed preferred option. The consultation includes draft policies and site allocations based upon the preferred options. The consultation document is set out in Appendix 1.
- 1.3 The consultation is proposed to meet the requirements of Regulation 18 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 which requires consultation to take place on the preparation of the Plan.
- 1.4 This report sets out background information regarding the formulation of a Local Plan, summarises the proposals contained within the plan, and recommends consultation be carried out for a period of 8 weeks, in accordance with the engagement strategy set out in Appendix 2.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The Council has a statutory duty to prepare a Local Plan under section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The Local Plan is a development plan document that sets out the vision, framework and policies for guiding new development in Dover district over the next 20 years.

- 2.2 The new Local Plan will replace the existing 'Development Plan' that currently consists of the Adopted Core Strategy (2010), the Land Allocations Local Plan (2015), and the saved policies from the 2002 Local Plan. The new Local Plan will:
- Set the strategic planning policies of the Council, taking account of key factors like population trends, economic growth, climate change, resources and built and natural environmental character;
 - Set the general scale and distribution of the new development which is required to meet Dover's needs to 2040;
 - Provide the planning principles, including detailed 'development management' policies to guide decisions on planning and other applications;
 - Show in detail where new homes, workplaces and facilities will be located through allocations of land; and
 - Show key environmental designations and include specific policies for the conservation and enhancement of those historic and natural assets.

Why do we need to prepare a new Local Plan?

- 2.3 Since the adoption of the Core Strategy in 2010, there have been a number of changes to the planning system, with the abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies (the South East Plan), the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework in 2012, and the recent revisions to the NPPF in 2018 and 2019. As a result of the changes in the system and in both local and national circumstances in the last decade, some of the policies in the Council's current Plan are out-of-date (notably Policies DM1, DM2, CP2, CP3) and therefore are no longer able to guide decision-making in the manner in which they were intended to.
- 2.4 The Government has also introduced the requirement for Council's to review their Plans every five years, to ensure they remain relevant and responsive to changes in the market, especially in relation to housing growth.
- 2.5 The Government wants to see every community covered by an up-to-date plan for sustainable development - meaning that communities are in control of development and are less exposed to speculative development. As made clear in the National Planning Policy Framework, the preparation and implementation of these plans is key to achieving sustainable development.
- 2.6 Having an up to date Local Plan which identifies sufficient land to meet the development needs of the district will also ensure the Council can demonstrate a five year housing land supply, and should assist in increasing the delivery of housing in order to meet the requirements of the Housing Delivery Test. Without an up to date local plan, these tests will be much harder to meet, and we are higher risk of speculative applications for development with less control over where new development is permitted.
- 2.7 It is therefore essential that the district has an up-to-date Plan which sets out the vision and framework for the future development of the area, and to explain how the Council intends to deliver an increase in housing numbers, whilst also delivering jobs, retail and leisure facilities and open spaces, and balancing this need against a range of environmental and natural constraints.

What are the expectations of the Government?

2.8 The Governments objectives are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019. The NPPF places Local Plans at the heart of the planning system and makes clear that local authorities should:

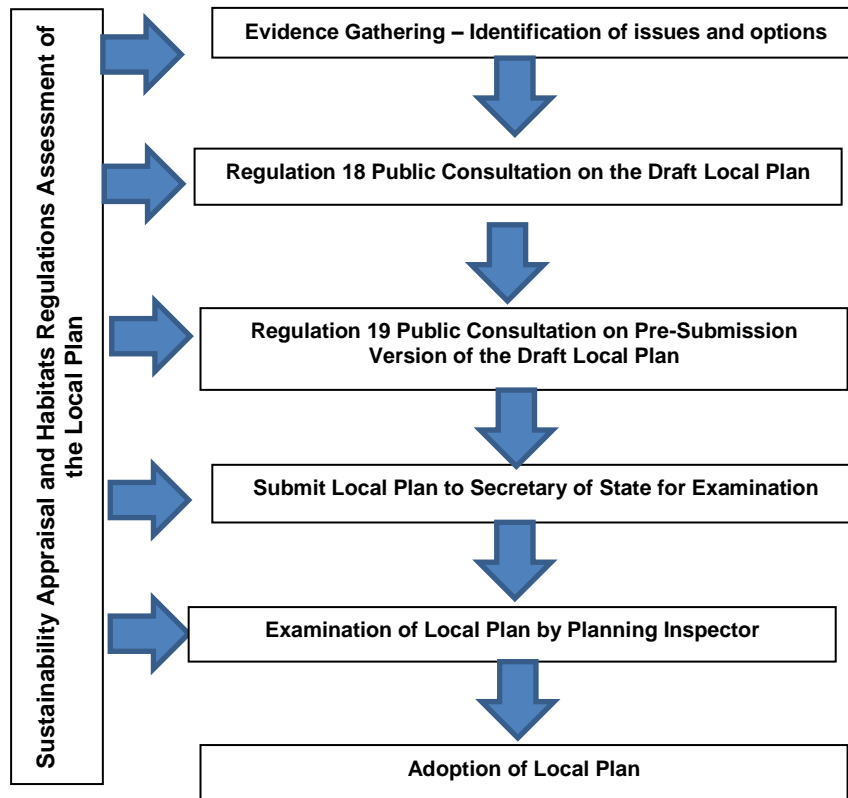
- Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development (para.7): There are three key objectives to achieving sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. The policies in the new Local Plan will therefore need to seek opportunities to make a positive contribution to these objectives and ensure that the presumption in favour of sustainable development lies at the heart of the Local Plan.
- Positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area, and be sufficiently flexible to adapt to rapid change (para 11).
- Support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes (para 59): As a minimum the Government expects Local Authorities to provide for the objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas (para 11)
- Co-operate with other Local Planning Authorities and County Councils (in two tier areas), and with other prescribed bodies, under the duty to co-operate, on strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries (para 24). In order to demonstrate effective and on-going joint working, we are required to prepare and maintain one or more statements of common ground, documenting the cross-boundary matters being addressed and progress in cooperating to address these.

2.9 Local Plans are subject to independent examination, where they are tested against what are known as the 'tests of soundness'. The NPPF (2019) sets out the tests of soundness (para 35). Plans are sound if they are:

- a) Positively prepared** – providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area's objectively assessed needs; and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development;
- b) Justified** – an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence;
- c) Effective** – deliverable over the plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground; and
- d) Consistent with national policy** – enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the NPPF.

The plan making process and timetable

2.10 The process for producing a local plan is set out in legislation and guidance, with the key stages being set out below:



2.11 The timetable for the preparation of the Local Plan is set out in the Local Development Scheme (LDS). An update to the current LDS is the subject of a separate report on this Cabinet agenda. The regulation 18 consultation was originally envisaged to have taken place during Summer of this year, but the ongoing situation regarding COVID-19 impacted on our ability to complete the necessary evidence base for the plan, as well as carry out meaningful consultation at the time. As a result, it was necessary to delay the consultation, which is now proposed to commence in January 2021, subject to Cabinet approval of this report.

Evidence base

2.12 The early stages of the process for producing the Local Plan includes the research and production of the evidence base which is required to justify the proposals in the local plan. The evidence base is used to identify the issues that need to be addressed by the Local Plan, and the options there are for addressing these. A full list of the evidence which has been produced to support and inform the Local Plan is set out at pages 196-200 of Appendix 1. Some of these studies have already been published on the Local Plan webpages. The remainder will be published at the time of the consultation starting. The consultation document refers to and explains how the evidence base has been used to inform the issues, options and preferred policy options set out in the document.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)/Sustainability Appraisal (SA)

2.13 As part of the evidence base, the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires Local Plans to be subject to Sustainability Appraisal (SA). SA is designed to ensure that the plan preparation process maximises the contribution that a plan makes

to sustainable development and minimises any potential adverse impacts. The SA process involves appraising the likely social, environmental and economic effects of the policies and proposals within a plan from the outset of its development.

2.14 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is also a statutory assessment process, required under the SEA Directive¹, transposed in the UK by the SEA Regulations². The SEA Regulations require the formal assessment of plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment and which set the framework for future consent of projects requiring Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)³. The purpose of SEA, as defined in Article 1 of the SEA Directive, is:

“to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans...with a view to promoting sustainable development”.

2.15 SEA and SA are separate processes but have similar aims and objectives. SEA focuses on the likely environmental effects of a plan whilst SA includes a wider range of considerations, extending to social and economic impacts. The Government's planning practice guidance⁴ shows how it is possible to satisfy both requirements by undertaking a joint SA and SEA process.

2.16 A key part of the SA process is the assessment of reasonable alternatives. This has been carried out for the levels of growth (housing and employment), spatial alternatives for delivering this growth, the 'green' and 'amber' rated sites identified in the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment, as well as development management policy options. Where most relevant, the draft Local Plan consultation document at Appendix 1 sets out how the SA assessment has influenced the process of determining the preferred options. It should be noted, however, that the SA does not decide which options should be adopted. Other factors, such as the views of stakeholders and the public, and other evidence base studies, also help to inform the decision.

2.17 The SA is an iterative process with initial conclusions of the assessment being used to refine the policies in the draft Local Plan, which will then be subject to a final assessment through the SA process. This will be set out in a SA report which is currently being finalised and will be consulted upon alongside the regulation 18 consultation.

2.18 Alongside the evidence gathering stage, consultation with stakeholders has also taken place through the following:

- Local Plan workshops in 2018
- Consultation with Ward Councillors and Town and Parish Councils on the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (2019/2020)
- Meetings of the Local Plan Project Advisory Group
- Informal consultation with statutory consultees and infrastructure providers to inform the evidence base

¹ Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment.

² The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SI 2004/1633), as amended by The Environmental Assessments and Miscellaneous Planning (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2018 (SI 2018/1232).

³ Under EU Directives 85/337/EEC and 97/11/EC concerning EIA.

⁴ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>

- Duty to co-operate engagement with neighbouring local authorities.

2.19 This has all been used to inform the production of the Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation Document which is set out in Appendix 1.

3. **Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation Document**

3.1 The purpose of the consultation is to seek views on:

- the key issues that the new Plan should address,
- a draft vision for Dover District in 2040 and the objectives needed to meet that vision,
- the options that have been considered to address the key issues and growth and development needs,
- the draft strategy for meeting growth and development needs over the next 20 years,
- the land identified which is expected to be needed to meet this strategy and draft policies for guiding that development, and
- draft policies to address climate change, for delivery high quality development and for protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment of the District.

3.2 The document has been structured in the following chapters:

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Chapter 2 – Responding to the Consultation

Chapter 3 – Dover District Spatial Portrait

Chapter 4 – Vision and Objectives

Chapter 5 – Climate Change

Chapter 6 – Housing

Chapter 7 – Employment and the local economy

Chapter 8 – Retail and Town Centres

Chapter 9 – Transport and Infrastructure

Chapter 10 – Design

Chapter 11 – Natural Environment

Chapter 12 – Historic Environment

3.3 Each of the topic-based chapters are structured to identify the key issues in relation to that topic, the options which been identified to address the issues, and the identification of the Council's preferred policy option. This is followed by draft supporting text, policies and site allocations. Justification for the proposals are set out in the consultation document, the following identifies the key issues set out in each of the topic-based chapters.

Vision and Objectives

3.4 The overarching vision for the plan should set out what the Council intends to achieve for the District over the next 20 years. The vision informs the objectives and policies within the plan. The vision has been developed from the evidence base and consultation, including the Local Plan workshops that were carried out in 2018, and the Virtual Visioning Event which has held on 30th July 2020. The vision should be locally specific and avoid generalised aspirations. It should also reflect the Council's vision and priorities set out in the Corporate Plan.

- 3.5 The proposed vision and objectives are set out in four themes relating to prosperous economy, vibrant communities, thriving places and spectacular and sustainable environment. There are also cross-cutting objectives identified. The draft vision and objectives are set out from pages 20 to 22 of Appendix 1.

Climate change – Chapter 5 (pages 24-40)

- 3.6 The Local Plan is intended to support the Council's strategy on climate change particularly in relation to the built environment. The chapter incorporates a range of topics and policies which aim to ensure that development proposals which come forward mitigate against and adapt to the effects of climate change. This includes proposed policies in relation to:
- Reducing Carbon emissions (DM Policy 1) – requiring new residential development to meet deliver a 31% reduction in carbon emissions below the target emission rate (TER) as set out in Buildings Regulations Part L (2013). Commercial development is required to meet BREEAM 'Very Good' standard overall, including Very Good for addressing maximum energy efficiencies under the energy credits.
 - Sustainable Design and Construction (DM Policy 2) – requiring development to meet several criteria to further reduce carbon emissions
 - Renewable and Low Carbon Energy (DM Policy 3) – supporting installations for renewable energy developments subject to criteria to minimise any harmful impacts
 - Sustainable Travel (DM Policy 4) – requiring provision of non-car-based modes of transport within development, as well as electric car charging points
 - Water efficiency (DM Policy 5) – requirements of water efficiency measures in new development
 - Flood risk (DM Policy 6) – sets out how flood risk will be considered when determining planning applications
 - Surface Water Management (DM Policy 7) – requires sustainable drainage systems to accommodate surface water in new developments
 - Coastal change (DM Policy 8) – policy to avoid inappropriate development within the identified Coastal Change Management Areas
 - Tree Planting and Protection (DM Policy 9) – requiring a minimum of 2 trees to be planted for every new home provided.

Housing – Chapter 6 (pages 41-97)

- 3.7 In accordance with national policy, the plan must seek to meet the District's identified housing need based upon the standard methodology for calculating housing need. This currently equates to 596 dwellings per year for Dover District, and the preferred option for housing growth is to meet this need in full.
- 3.8 The chapters set out how this housing requirement will be delivered. As set out in Table 6.1 on page 54, the housing requirement is proposed to be met through extant planning permissions, the Whitfield Urban Extension, windfall sites, and proposed site allocations. The plan needs to provide specific site allocations for 5,288 dwellings across the plan period in order to meet the housing need.
- 3.9 The reasonable alternatives for the spatial distribution of this level of housing has been identified and assessed through the SA, and the options are set out at paras 6.24-6.38 (pages 45-46) of Appendix 1.
- 3.10 The recommended preferred strategy is a combination of three of the options (A; HELAA sites; C: settlement hierarchy and D; Dover focus), with the distribution of

housing growth primarily being based upon the settlement hierarchy, and influenced by site availability, environmental constraints and factors of delivery. This results in the following proposed distribution of housing development across District, as set out in Table 6.2 of Appendix 1.

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| Dover | 48% |
| Deal | 7% |
| Sandwich; Aylesham | 20% |
| Eastry; Wingham, Ash, Shepherswell, St Margarets ar Cliffe; Eythorne/Elvington | 15% |
| Larger villages | 9% |
| Smaller villages and hamlets | 1% |

- 3.11 This proposed strategy continues to focus on the development and regeneration of Dover Town, with around half of new housing development planned there, the majority of which is to be delivered by the urban extension at Whitfield. Development is proposed at Deal and Sandwich, however environmental and highways constraints do limit the availability of suitable sites and therefore levels of development at those settlements. The secondary focus for development is proposed at the Rural Service Centre of Aylesham. The remainder of housing growth is proposed to be distributed across the Districts local centres, villages and hamlets, taking into account their relative sustainability and individual site constraints and availability. As part of the strategy for the rural area, it is proposed to grow the villages of Eyethorne and Elvington to create a new local centre in the District.
- 3.12 Specific sites have been selected taking into account the site specific assessments carried out as part of the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment, the SA, alongside consideration of the spatial strategy, sustainability of settlements, and other parts of the evidence base including the transport modelling and viability testing.
- 3.13 The draft policies are set out as four strategic site policies, covering development at Whitfield (Strategic Policy 4, Aylesham (2 sites – Strategic Policies 5 and 6) and Eythorne/Elvington (Strategic Policy 7). A further policy (Site allocations Policy 1) sets out the proposed non-strategic housing allocations.
- 3.14 Residential windfall development (sites which come forward for development which have not been allocated) is expected to contribute to the supply of housing over the plan period. A policy to direct proposals to suitable and sustainable locations is therefore proposed. The preferred option is to allow in principle development within and adjoining the largest settlements and villages within the District (in accordance with the settlement hierarchy), with the smaller villages and hamlets allowing development within existing settlement boundaries. The draft policy (Strategic Policy 3 – pages 57-58) sets out criteria which would need to be satisfied to ensure proposals do not cause unacceptable harm, including consideration of the scale of the proposals in relation to the size of the settlement and services which are available within it.
- 3.15 The proposed requirements for affordable housing are set out in draft Development Management Policy 12 (pages 90-92). This requires 30% affordable housing on new development, with the exception of the existing Dover Urban Area. National policy and guidance require that Local Plans be subject to viability testing to ensure that the policies are deliverable. The Local Plan Whole Viability Study has tested a number of

viability scenarios with differing thresholds and tenure splits in order to ascertain the most appropriate and deliverable levels of affordable housing within the district. The study has concluded that within the Dover Urban Area it is not viable to provide affordable housing.

- 3.16 The chapter also covers the provision of Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation, and it is recommended that the full PPTS and cultural needs for Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation are met through the identification of specific sites. This includes the proposed intensification of existing sites (DM Policy 10) and sites allocations at Aylesham and Alkham (Strategic Policy 6 and Site allocations Policy 2 respectively). It is recognised that further sites are still required to meet the need in full, and it is therefore proposed that a further call for sites will be carried out as part of the consultation.
- 3.17 The chapter also includes development management policies covering issues in relation to housing mix and type (DM Policy 11), houses in multiple occupation (DM Policy 17), self and custom build housing (DM Policy 15), rural local needs housing (DM Policy 13), gypsy and traveller windfall accommodation (DM Policy 14) and residential extensions and annexes (DM Policy 16).

Local Economy (pages 98-114)

- 3.18 This chapter sets out the economic strategy for the plan including the identification of proposed employment allocations, with the aim of delivering higher levels of economic growth in the District across the plan period. At the current time there are uncertainties around this issue, and the evidence base (Economic Development Needs Assessment 2017 – EDNA) which seeks to identify the level of job growth and land requirements needs to be updated. In terms of the overall strategy, the current EDNA identifies very limited potential job growth and therefore limited need for employment allocations. In order to support and justify proposals which aim to deliver a higher level of economic growth in the District an Economic strategy is being developed. The emerging themes for this Strategy are set out at para 7.33 (pages 104-105). The strategy will be used to inform an updated EDNA following the regulation 18 consultation. The jobs targets and land requirements would be specified in an updated Strategic Policy 8 – Economic Growth (page 105).
- 3.19 The draft employment site allocations policy (SP9 – pages 105-107) proposes to roll forward the existing employment site allocations which have yet to be built out. However, given the uncertainties around the future use of White Cliffs Business Park, and the potential growth opportunities in the District, there is likely to be a need for further land, and therefore a call for sites is proposed to be carried out as part of the consultation.
- 3.20 The chapter also includes policies in relation to:
- New Employment Development (DM Policy 18)
 - Retention of Existing Employment Sites (DM Policy 19)
 - Loss or redevelopment of existing employment premises (DM Policy 20)
 - Home-working (DM Policy 21)
 - Rural Economy - Conversion/re-build of building in the countryside and development in the countryside (DM Policy 22)
 - New Employment Premises in the Countryside (DM Policy 23)
 - Tourism and Tourist/visitor Accommodation (DM Policy 24)

Town Centres and Retail (pages 115-135)

3.21 This chapter sets out the strategy for the town centres in the District, including identifying the need for additional retail and other town centre development.

3.22 The chapter proposes the following policies:

- Quantity and Location of Retail Development (Strategic Policy 10)
- Dover Town Centre (Strategic Policy 11) - the overarching strategy for the future of Dover Town Centre, including a proposed contraction of the town centre boundary.
- Deal and Sandwich Town Centres (Strategic Policy 12) – the strategy for Dover and Sandwich Town Centres
- Primary Shopping Area (DM Policy 25) – identifies the primary shopping areas of Dover, Deal and Sandwich town centres, where the focus for commercial development is proposed.
- Sequential Test and Impact Assessments (DM Policy 26)
- Local Centres (DM Policy 27)
- Shopfronts (DM Policy 28)

Transport and Infrastructure (pages 136-150)

3.23 Ensuring that the right infrastructure, is provided in the right place, at the right time, to support the scale of growth identified in the Plan will be integral to its successful delivery. The Local Plan will be supported by an Infrastructure Delivery Plan which will identify specific infrastructure needs. Early engagement has taken place with infrastructure providers, however further work is required to identify the specific infrastructure requirements needed to support the development set out in the Plan. This is proposed to take place through the regulation 18 consultation, and engagement will continue to inform the next version the Plan. It is proposed that specific requirements will be set out in site policies where these are known.

3.24 Alongside any site-specific requirements, this chapter sets out the policies in relation to transport and infrastructure considerations. This includes the following proposed policies:

- Infrastructure and Developer Contributions (Strategic Policy 13) – overarching requirements for development to deliver the required infrastructure.
- Strategic Transport Infrastructure (Strategic Policy 14) – supporting improvement to the A2 through the Dover Access Strategy
- The highway network and highway safety (DM Policy 29) – requirements for transport assessment, travel plans and mitigation
- Parking provision on new development (DM Policy 30)
- Providing open space (DM Policy 31)- requirement for open space provision on new development
- Playing pitch strategy (DM Policy 32) – requirements for playing pitch provision to support new development
- Protection of open space (DM Policy 33)
- Community facilities (DM Policy 34)
- Digital Technology (DM Policy 35) – requirements for all new development to be provide with the infrastructure to support high speed broadband

Design (Pages 151-159)

- 3.25 The NPPF (2019) states that Plans should set out a clear design vision and expectations, so that applicants have as much certainty as possible about what is likely to be acceptable.
- 3.26 At present the Core Strategy doesn't contain any design policies and officers instead rely on the provisions in the NPPF. The Local Plan seeks to address this and proposes three design policies:
- Place-making (Strategic Policy 15) - provides clear design expectations for proposals that come forward in the District and sets out a number of key principles that should inform all development from the earliest stages of the design process. These relate to context and continuity, built form, movement, nature, public spaces, uses and lifespan.
 - Achieving High Quality Design (DM Policy 36) - provides more detailed design guidance. It also highlights that where significant design implications are identified on major proposals these will be referred to a Design Review Panel.
 - Quality of Residential Accommodation (DM Policy 37) - sets out a number of criteria that developments must meet to ensure the delivery of high quality residential accommodation, including meeting the nationally described space standards, and accessible and wheelchair home requirements.

Natural Environment (pages 160-181)

- 3.27 This chapter addresses issues in relation to the Natural Environment of the District, with the aim of conserving and enhancing the environment of the District. This includes the following proposed policies:
- Protecting the District's Hierarchy of Designated Environment Sites (Strategic Policy 16)
 - Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity (Strategic Policy 17)
 - Requiring Biodiversity Net Gain (DM Policy 38)
 - Landscape Character (DM Policy 39)
 - Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay SPA Mitigation Strategy (DM Policy 40)
 - Air Quality (DM Policy 41)
 - Water supply and quality (DM Policy 42)
 - The River Dour (DM Policy 43)

The Historic Environment (pages 182-190)

- 3.28 The current planning policy framework for the District includes only one historic environment policy (for applications affecting Historic Parks and Gardens, Policy DM19), and a strategic site policy for Dover Western Heights (Policy LA11). Such an approach is at odds with the NPPF which requires local planning authorities to set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. This chapter therefore proposed the following policies to address issues in relation the historic environment:
- Protecting the District's Historic Environment (Strategic Policy 18)
 - Designated and non-designated heritage assets (DM Policy 44)
 - Conservation Areas (DM Policy 45)
 - Archaeology (DM Policy 46)

- Dover Western Heights Fortifications SM and Conservation Area (DM Policy 47)
- Historic Parks and Gardens (DM Policy 48)

4. **Consultation proposals and methods**

4.1 The regulations do not set out a minimum time period for this consultation. It is proposed that the consultation will run for a period of 8 weeks. It is currently anticipated that the consultation will commence before the end of January 2021.

4.2 The regulations require that we consult with specific consultation bodies, general consultation bodies and residents and other persons carrying out business in the area. Officers are in the process of updating the Local Plan consultation database, to ensure all contact details are up to date and to get them set up on the online system in order to prepare for the consultation. The following groups will be directly contacted and invited to respond:

- Interest and Community groups
- Schools/Education establishments
- Developers/ Agents / Architects / Affordable Housing providers
- Other Local Authorities and KCC
- Town and Parish Councils
- Local Businesses
- Executive non-departmental public bodies
- Infrastructure Providers
- Mobile and Broadband providers
- Individuals registered on the Local Plan consultation portal

4.3 It is proposed to make the wider community and others who will not be written to specifically aware of the consultation through a variety of the following methods:

- Council's website including a bespoke website for the plan
- Notices in local papers and newsletters
- Leaflets and summary literature to be placed in various public locations
- Use of social media – Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn
- Encouraging Parish Council's and community groups to publicise the consultation in their local areas

4.4 In normal circumstances it would be expected that hard copies be deposited at local libraries for viewing. However, given the current restrictions relating to COVID-19 this will not be possible. For those who are unable to access the document online, hard copies will be made available.

4.5 A proposed consultation engagement strategy is set out in full in Appendix 2. The consultation strategy has been adapted to take into account the current restrictions with COVID-19, whereby no face-to-face consultation events are planned to take place.

4.6 The following consultation activities are proposed:

- Local Plan website and virtual exhibition – a dedicated Local Plan website is being developed

- Online stakeholder and public consultation events
- Dedicated telephone hotline for the general public
- Town and Parish Council online tutorials

Responding to the consultation

- 4.7 All those responding will be encouraged to do so through the Council's online consultation portal. This is the quickest and easiest way to respond to the consultation and is also the most efficient way for comments to be recorded and analysed by Officers following the consultation.
- 4.8 A specific consultation questionnaire will be provided to enable comments to be made in relation to specific issues and at specific points throughout the consultation document.
- 4.9 For those who are unable to respond through this method, alternative options will be made available and hard copy submissions will be accepted.

Next Steps

- 4.10 Following the close of the consultation all comments will be reviewed and considered, and changes will be made to address comments received. A consultation statement will be produced to explain how comments have been taken into account, and where it has not been possible to do so, explain why.
- 4.11 Work is required to update the evidence base, and a Final Draft (reg 19 submission version) of the Plan will be produced. That will be subject to a further consultation in late 2021, and then it will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination.

5. Identification of Options

- 5.1 Option 1 – Agree to carry out the regulation 18 Local Plan consultation
- 5.2 Option 2 – Do not carry out or delay the proposed consultation

6. Evaluation of Options

- 6.1 This consultation needs to be carried out in order to meet the legal requirements for production of a Local Plan, it is therefore not an option to not carry out consultation if we are to continue to progress the adoption of a new Local Plan.
- 6.2 In order to ensure that the Council has an up to date Local Plan in place as soon as possible, and to ensure that adoption of the Plan can take place no later than the beginning of 2023, this consultation needs to take place as soon as possible.
- 6.3 In addition to this, MHCLG has recently consulted on changes to the planning system which has the potential to significantly impact upon the local plan process and the housing need that would have to be planned for. In order to provide the best chance of being able to continue with the current plan proposals and get a local plan adopted in the shortest timescales it is important that we carry out the regulation 18 consultation as soon as possible.
- 6.4 There will be the opportunity to further consider the proposed draft policies and site allocations during the consultation process and in light of the consultation responses.
- 6.5 If we do not carry out or delay the consultation, this will have the effect of delaying the production of the Local Plan and would mean extending the time which the Council does not have an up to date plan. This could also result in the Council not meeting the deadline set by Government, that all local authorities must have an up to date plan in place by the end of 2023. This could result in central government intervention in the plan-making process, potentially removing local control.

7. **Resource Implications**

- 7.1 The cost of preparing the Local Plan, the associated evidence base and examination are currently included in the Special Projects programme. The total budgeted expenditure for the project is £285k as detailed in the revised General Fund budget and projects programmes approved by Council on 21st October 2020.

8. **Climate Change and Environmental Implications**

- 8.1 Consultation of the Local Plan does not in itself have any Climate Change and Environmental Implications.

9. **Corporate Implications**

- 9.1 Comments from the Equality Officer - An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out to identify and mitigate any negative impact upon the protected characteristic groups and will be revisited post consultation. The Equality Officer has been consulted during the development of the report and has no further comments to make, other than to remind Members that in discharging their responsibilities they are required to comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149>
- 9.2 Comments from the Section 151 Officer: The Head of Finance and Investment has been consulted on this report and has no further comments to add.
- 9.3 Comments from the Planning Solicitor: The Planning Solicitor has been consulted in the production of this report and has no further comments to make'

10. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Dover District Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation; Maps of Proposed Housing allocations; Maps of Proposed Gypsy allocations; Maps of Proposed Employment allocations.

Appendix 2 – Consultation Engagement Strategy

Appendix 3 – Equalities Impact Assessment

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