

**12 March 2019**

**Planning and Licensing Committee**

**Response to the Thurrock Issues & Options (Stage 2)  
Local Plan Consultation (December 2018)**

**Report of:** *Phil Drane – Director of Strategic Planning*

**Wards Affected:** *All*

**This report is:** *Public*

**1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report seeks approval on a formal response from Brentwood Borough Council to the Thurrock Issues & Options (Stage 2) Local Plan, January 2019 Document (Regulation 18).
- 1.2 The proposed response conveys broad support of Thurrock Borough Council's aims in the preparation of their local plan and addresses concerns around the proposed option for development south of West Horndon. The Thurrock Local Plan is in the early stages of the plan-making process, focused on asking questions around spatial strategy and development options.

**2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 To approve the response to the Thurrock Local Plan Issues & Options (Stage 2) consultation, as set out in Appendix A.**

**3. Introduction and Background**

- 3.1 Thurrock Borough Council is at an early stage in the plan-making process. The Thurrock Local Plan Issues & Options (Stage 2) (Regulation 18) was published for public consultation in December 2018.
- 3.2 The Issues & Options (Stage 2) consultation document mainly focuses on the development options available in Thurrock for delivering the full objectively assessed housing need of 1,381 new homes per annum,

equating to 31,763 new homes over the plan period. This level of housing growth would allow for Thurrock Council to support their aspirations for economic growth. The document asks several questions across a range of topics related to growth options.

- 3.3 Thurrock Borough Council is a neighbouring authority and Brentwood Borough Council is duty bound to undergo the duty to cooperate with neighbouring authorities on preparation of their local plans regarding strategic issues. Considering this, the proposed response is limited to high level comments regarding strategic planning issues which have cross-boundary impacts on Brentwood Borough.

#### **4. Thurrock Issues & Options (Stage 2)**

- 4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires each local planning authority to produce a local plan. This should set out strategic priorities for the area and plan positively for development and infrastructure needs, in line with national policy and guidance.

- 4.2 Local Plans should include strategic policies to deliver:

- a) Homes and employment needed in the area;
- b) Provision of retail, leisure, and other commercial development;
- c) Provision of infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, water supply, waste water, flood risk and coastal change management, and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat);
- d) Provision of health, security, community and cultural infrastructure and other local facilities; and
- e) Climate change mitigation and adaption, conservation and enhancement of the natural and historic environment, including landscape.

#### **Housing Need**

- 4.3 Thurrock Council's full objectively assessed housing need is 31,763 new homes over the plan period of 2018-2038, which equates to an average rate of 1,381 per annum. This rate of growth would also support Thurrock Council's aspirations to achieve comparative economic growth.
- 4.4 The Thurrock Issues and Options (Stage 2) outlines an approach to prioritise building on all viable brownfield sites first. However, because this does not meet local housing needs in full Thurrock Council will need to consider releasing land from the Green Belt.

## Housing Delivery Options

- 4.5 The Thurrock Issues & Options (Stage 2) document explores three possible development options, which may not be mutually exclusive:
- a) **Option 1: Urban Intensification** – Regeneration and re-configuration of existing housing estates; reuse and redevelopment of non-residential sites; and redevelopment of urban green space.
  - b) **Option 2: Duty to Co-operate** – This option relies on duty to cooperate and the South Essex Joint Strategic Plan (JSP) to deliver unmet need.
  - c) **Option 3: New settlements in the Green Belt** – The consultation document suggests a minimum of 10,000 new homes and associated employment south of West Horndon (within Thurrock Borough).
- 4.6 It is proposed that Brentwood Borough Council supports Thurrock’s approach to preparing a Local Plan which seeks to deliver its full objectively assessed housing needs and associated employment.
- 4.7 It is proposed that concerns should be raised regarding Option 3 for a new settlement in the Green Belt south of West Horndon. It is noted that this forms a development option at this stage and not a proposal in the Thurrock Local Plan. The proposed responses sets out that the Council does not agree that this development would form a new settlement given the existence of West Horndon Village to the north (in Brentwood Borough), and the railway station that would provide the link between the existing settlement and potential new development. This development would have a direct impact on West Horndon residents, changing the character of the village and area, something the Brentwood Local Development Plan has sought to protect.
- 4.8 Development at West Horndon of this size that amends the Green Belt boundary is not consistent with Brentwood Borough Council’s spatial strategy. The Brentwood Borough Local Plan (Pre-Submission, 2019) prioritises brownfield redevelopment at West Horndon, delivering around 580 new homes and 2 hectares of employment land, significantly increasing the number of homes in the village. The amendment of Green Belt boundaries around West Horndon is not proposed in the Brentwood Local Plan on the basis that a key element of the spatial strategy is to retain village character and reflecting the fact that a significant brownfield redevelopment opportunity is being delivered. The Council is proposing

delivery of a new garden village at Dunton Hills, which benefits from the transport connections with West Horndon but is separated so as to not physically impact on local village character.

- 4.9 Given these are development options and not proposals, and that the Thurrock plan-making process is still at the early stages, it is noted that details of the delivery and viability of such development are not provided. The impact on the adjoining housing market in Brentwood Borough, infrastructure delivery and funding; and the impact on major roads (A127, A128 and beyond) as well as the wider highway network, are issues that should be discussed between the authorities and through joint work on the South Essex Joint Strategic Plan.

### **Active Design Principles**

- 4.10 It is proposed that the Council supports Thurrock Council's proposal to embed Sport England's Active Design Principles into the emerging Thurrock Local Plan as well as to seek to required Health Impact Assessment (HIA) to be submitted as part of large and/or sensitive planning applications.

### **Duty to Cooperate**

- 4.11 The Council welcomes the opportunity to continue to work with Thurrock Council in progressing the plan-making process of both local authority areas on an ongoing basis in line with the requirements of the duty to cooperate. Good progress has been made on joint working and partnership through ASELA. Both authorities have approved the ASELA Statement of Common Ground, which includes a commitment to joint working through the preparation of a Joint Strategic Plan for South Essex.
- 4.12 Brentwood Borough Council has proposed through its plan-making process that a Statement of Common Ground be prepared to identify cross-boundary issues to identify where there are agreements and disagreements and setting out a path to resolution on particular issues identified.

## **5. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 5.1 Thurrock Council are at the early stages of the plan-making process, Issues & Options (Stage 2) (Regulation 18). Housing delivery options are being explored to determine the preferred development strategy.
- 5.2 It is considered appropriate that Brentwood Borough Council express broad support for Thurrock Borough Council's efforts to prepare a local

plan which seeks to meet its full objectively assessed housing needs and associated employment. However, of the three-housing delivery options concern should be raised regarding Option 3 (a new settlement in the Green Belt south of West Horndon), for reasons set out in Section 4 of this report (sub-section “Housing Delivery Options”).

## **6. Consultation**

- 6.1 The Thurrock Local Plan Issues & Options (Stage 2) consultation was open for comment from Wednesday 12 December 2018 to Friday 8 March 2019. Local planning authorities have a statutory obligation to allow consultees a minimum of six weeks to respond as part of the plan-making process. The Council has submitted comments as prepared in Appendix A in line with this deadline, subject to approval by the Planning and Licensing Committee.

## **7. References to Corporate Plan**

- 7.1 The Thurrock emerging Local Plan will have a close relationship with the Brentwood Local Plan, the production of which is a key priority in the Council’s Corporate Plan.

## **8. Implications**

### **Financial Implications**

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- 8.1 None directly arising from this report.

### **Legal Implications**

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- 8.2 The Localism Act 2011 places a legal duty on local planning authorities and other defined local bodies to engage constructively, actively and on an on-going basis to maximise the effectiveness of Local Plan preparation in the context of strategic cross boundary matters. It is currently not a duty to agree, but local planning authorities must make every effort to secure the necessary cooperation before they submit their Local Plan for examination. The cooperation should produce effective and deliverable policies on strategic cross boundary issues.

## **9. Background Papers**

- 9.1 Thurrock Local Plan Issues & Options (Stage 2), Thurrock Borough Council (December 2018)

## **10. Appendices to this report**

- a) Appendix A: Response to Thurrock Local Plan Issues & Options (Stage 2), Thurrock Borough Council (December 2018) Document

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