

Committee: Planning and Licensing Committee	Date: 15 January 2020
Subject: Response to the Castle Point Borough Council Pre-Submission Local Plan (Regulation 19)	Wards Affected: All
Report of: Phil Drane, Director of Strategic Planning	Public
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Summary

This report seeks approval to respond to Castle Point Borough Council's Pre-Submission Local Plan (Regulation 19) consultation (December 2019). The proposed response on behalf of Brentwood Borough Council supports steps being taken by Castle Point Borough Council to prepare a Local Plan. Additional evidence has been prepared since the last consultation in July 2018. According to the Pre-Submission Local Plan, Castle Point Borough Council is planning to meet the objectively assessed housing need of 5,130 dwellings over the life of the plan, equating to 342 new dwellings per annum. However, there are unanswered questions regarding the methodology used for calculating this figure and the ability to meet these needs.

Both Councils are partners in the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (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 the sub-region. The Castle Point Pre-Submission Local Plan has been prepared within the context of the South Essex Joint Strategic Plan.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

R1. To approve the response to the Castle Point Pre-Submission Local Plan (Regulation 19, December 2019), as set out in Appendix A.

Main Report

Introduction and Background

1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires each local planning authority to produce a local plan. This should set strategic priorities for the area and plan positively for development and infrastructure needs, in line with national policy and guidance.
2. As part of plan-making (chapter 3), the NPPF states that plans should:
 - a. be prepared with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development;
 - b. be prepared positively, in a way that is aspirational but deliverable;
 - c. be shaped by early, proportionate and effective engagement between plan-makers and communities, local organisations, businesses, infrastructure providers and operators and statutory consultees;
 - d. contain policies that are clearly written and unambiguous, so it is evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals;
 - e. be accessible through the use of digital tools to assist public involvement and policy presentation; and
 - f. serve a clear purpose, avoiding unnecessary duplication of policies that apply to a particular area (including policies in this Framework, where relevant).
3. The Castle Point Pre-Submission Local Plan draws upon representations received in response to previous consultations, held in 2014, 2016, and 2018. This includes those submitted by Brentwood Borough Council. The Plan has also been further developed as a result of additional evidence being published.
4. Brentwood Borough Council objected to the 2016 Castle Point Pre-Submission Local Plan because it failed to meet the full objectively assessed housing needs of the area and did not confirm how the shortfall would be delivered within the South Essex Housing Market Area (Item 76, Planning and Licensing Committee, 28 June 2016). The 2016 Castle Point Local Plan was withdrawn after the appointed Planning Inspector concluded it had not complied with the Duty to Cooperate.
5. In July 2018, Brentwood Borough Council responded to the new Castle Point Local Plan, which generally supported the steps taken to prepare a plan but sought clarification regarding the strategy for meeting objectively assessed needs within Castle Point Borough over the 5-10 year timeframe planned for the housing policies and allocations (Item 99, Planning and Licensing Committee, 17 July 2018).

6. Castle Point Borough Council are partners in the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA), alongside Brentwood Borough Council. Both Councils have approved the ASELA Statement of Common Ground, which includes agreement to produce a Joint Strategic Plan for South Essex.

Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

7. The Castle Point Local Plan and supporting evidence has been prepared as part of this consultation. The Plan period has been extended to 15 years (2018-2033), whereas the previous draft Local Plan (2018) was expected to cover a plan period of 5-10 years with the expectation that the Joint Strategic Plan would pick up the unmet housing need thereafter.
8. This consultation is at Regulation 19 stage, which focuses on the four tests of soundness, legal compliance, and duty to cooperate. This will be Brentwood Borough Council's last opportunity to submit representations prior to the Pre-Submission Plan being submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for consideration to proceed to an Examination in Public and ultimately for the plan to be considered for adoption.

Reasons for Recommendation

9. The Castle Point Pre-Submission Local Plan sets out the intention to meet the local objectively assessed housing need of 5,130 new dwellings over the plan period from 2018 to 2033 (342 dwellings per annum). The housing needs are expected to be met through the following combination of sites:
 - a. Housing completions from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019;
 - b. Current extant planning permissions;
 - c. Strategic Housing Market Assessment policy compliant sites;
 - d. Sites identified on the Brownfield Land Register;
 - e. Small windfall sites; and
 - f. New strategic housing allocations within Castle Point Borough.
10. It is proposed that the Council support the efforts of Castle Point Borough Council to meet the borough's objectively assessed housing needs. However, the methodology used for calculating housing figures is questioned (identified in Table 9.1, Housing Trajectory). Therefore, it is proposed that the Council seek clarification on how these figures were calculated.
11. The Castle Point Local Plan also identifies the ability to meet employment needs, regeneration and protection of town centres, and inclusion of a health and wellbeing policy, all of which it is proposed should be supported by the Council.

Consultation

12. The Castle Point Pre-Submission Local Plan public consultation runs for eight weeks from 16 December 2019 to 14 February 2020. The consultation period has been extended to account of the Christmas period.

References to Corporate Plan

13. The Castle Point Local Plan is relevant to the Thames Gateway South Essex housing market area, and the South Essex Joint Strategic Plan. Both have a relationship with the emerging Brentwood Local Development Plan, the production which is a key priority in the Council's Vision for Brentwood 2016-2019.

Implications

Financial Implications

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14. None directly arising from this report.

Legal Implications

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15. 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 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.

Economic Implications

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16. There are no direct economic implications. However, it is important that authorities in South Essex have an up-to-date local plan for their area in order that these can inform wider plans for growth and infrastructure investment. Efforts to realise a vision for South Essex through the South Essex 2050 work and Joint Strategic Plan can only be achieved with Local Plans that promote sustainable growth. As part of ASELA, it is important that constructive partnership working continues on issues such as growth and investment.

Other Implications (where significant) – i.e. Health and Safety, Asset Management, Equality and Diversity, Risk Management, Section 17 – Crime & Disorder, Sustainability, ICT.

17. None.

Background Papers

- Castle Point Borough Council Pre-Submission Local Plan (December 2019) and supporting evidence, available to view at <https://www.castlepoint.gov.uk/pre-submission-local-plan/>
- Brentwood Borough Council Response to Castle Point Local Plan Public Consultation 2018 (Item 99, Planning and Licensing Committee, 17 July 2018)
- Brentwood Borough Council Response to Castle Point Draft New Local Plan 2016 (Item 76, Planning and Licensing Committee, 28 June 2016)

Appendices to this report

- Appendix A: Brentwood Borough Council response to the Castle Point Pre-Submission Local Plan (Regulation 19), January 2020