

LOCAL PLAN SUB COMMITTEE - 8 AUGUST 2019

PART I – NOT DELEGATED

10. LOCAL PLAN TOPIC PAPER: OVERARCHING POLICY ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (DCES)

1 Summary

- 1.1 This topic paper sets out the issues which the new Local Plan will need to address in relation to the overarching policy on sustainable development and proposes policy wording to be contained within the new Local Plan.

2 Details

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is underpinned by a presumption in favour of sustainable development which applies both in plan-making and decision taking.
- 2.2 The presumption means that Local Plans must plan positively to seek opportunities that meet an area's objectively assessed development needs and be flexible enough to adapt to rapid change unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly outweigh the benefits; or specific policies in the NPPF provide a strong reason to restrict the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area.
- 2.3 The NPPF emphasises, all Local Plans should be based upon and reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development and the principle will inform both the policies and site allocations within the Local Plan, and will be used to guide decisions on planning applications.
- 2.4 Adopting the presumption in favour of sustainable development will enable the Council to approve appropriate development without delay, in accordance with the NPPF
- 2.5 To guide this, the three strategic policies below provide the Council's overarching approach to sustainable development, overall levels of growth, and the spatial strategy to deliver growth to 2036. These set the strategic priorities for the area, and are complemented by the more detailed policies and the allocations of land for specific uses in the remainder of the Local Plan.
- 2.6 The proposed Overarching Policy on Sustainable Development (Appendix 1) is a strategic policy that sets out the Council's approach to sustainable development and will be complemented by more detailed policies in the Local Plan, enshrines the presumption in favour of sustainable development, and provides details of the specific local circumstances relevant to the achievement of sustainable development in Three Rivers.

3 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

- 3.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed policy and budgets.

4 Financial, Legal, Equal Opportunities, Staffing, Environmental, Community Safety, Public Health, Customer Services Centre, Communications & Website, Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications

4.1 None specific.

5 Recommendation

5.1 That the Local Plan Sub Committee note the contents of this report and recommend to the Policy and Resources Committee the Draft Overarching Policy on Sustainable Development Policy as set out in Appendix 1

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Background Papers

National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Draft Overarching Policy on Sustainable Development

APPENDIX 1

DRAFT OVERARCHING POLICY ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Sustainable Development

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is underpinned by a presumption in favour of sustainable development which applies both in plan-making and decision taking. The presumption means that Local Plans must plan positively to seek opportunities that meet an area's objectively assessed development needs and be flexible enough to adapt to rapid change unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly outweigh the benefits; or specific policies in the NPPF provide a strong reason to restrict the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area.

Adopting the presumption in favour of sustainable development will enable the Council to approve appropriate development without delay, in accordance with the NPPF.

As the NPPF emphasises, all Local Plans should be based upon and reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development and the principle informs both the policies and site allocations within the Local Plan, and will be used to guide decisions on planning applications.

SP1 Overarching Policy on Sustainable Development

- (1) The Council will take a positive approach to the consideration of development proposals that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework.
- (2) The Council will work proactively with applicants to find solutions that mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.
- (3) To contribute to the sustainability of the District, all development must take into account the need to:
 - a) Tackle climate change by reducing carbon emissions, increasing energy and water efficiency of buildings, promoting the use of renewable energy systems, and using other natural resources wisely, including through the use of sustainable building materials.
 - b) Avoid development in areas at risk from flooding, and manage water and flood risk through the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems.
 - c) Make efficient use of land by prioritising development on previously developed, brownfield land and incorporating mixed-use development wherever possible, recognising that some previously developed land can have significant biodiversity value.
 - d) Optimise the use of land including through an uplift in the density of development where appropriate.
 - e) Reduce waste going to landfill by reducing materials used, reusing and recycling building materials and providing opportunities for recycling wherever possible.

- f) Protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environments from inappropriate development and improve the diversity of wildlife and habitats.
- g) Build mixed and sustainable communities by providing housing across a range of tenures and types, including affordable housing and specialist and supported accommodation to meet identified needs.
- h) Maintain high levels of employment by attracting jobs and training opportunities for local people and supporting businesses.
- i) Improve access to jobs, skills, services and facilities particularly within areas of deprivation in the District.
- j) Sustain the viability and vitality of the Principal Town, Key and Secondary Centres and Villages as identified in the Three Rivers Settlement Hierarchy.
- k) Protect and enhance existing social and community facilities, and provide new facilities.
- l) Reduce the need to travel by locating development in accessible locations and promoting a range of sustainable travel modes with priority given to cycling and walking.
- m) Provide necessary infrastructure to enable and/ or support development, including (but not limited to) transport, education, health, Green Infrastructure, utilities, waste facilities, waste water, leisure, cultural and community facilities.
- n) Promote buildings and public spaces of a high enduring design quality that respect local distinctiveness, are accessible to all and reduce opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour.
- o) Manage and reduce risk of and from pollution in relation to quality of land, air and water and dealing with land contamination.

Reasoned Justification

Sustainable development is the key principle underpinning the Local Plan, and is critical to the delivery of many of the Council's and the community's aspirations. It requires social progress which recognises the needs of everyone, effective protection of the environment, prudent use of natural resources and the maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

All policies within the Local Plan have been subject to Sustainability Appraisal to ensure sustainability in terms of economic, social and environmental impacts. In addition, Policy SP1 has been developed setting out the Council's overarching approach to ensuring that new development will be sustainable.

This policy enshrines the presumption in favour of sustainable development, and provides details of the specific local circumstances relevant to the achievement of sustainable development in Three Rivers which need to be taken into account. Further detail on these elements are provided within the non-strategic policies in the remainder of the Local Plan.

In accordance with policies in the NPPF that protect important natural and heritage assets, the presumption will not automatically apply to: habitats sites (including sites protected under the Birds and Habitats Directives), designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), land designated as Green Belt or Local Green Space, the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), irreplaceable habitats (which includes ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees) designated heritage assets and heritage assets of archaeological interest, or locations identified as at risk of flooding.

The District's future growth will be pursued in the most sustainable way. Taken as a whole, the policies within the Local Plan outline what is considered to be sustainable development in the context of Three Rivers and add more detail to the criteria at Policy SP1. Particular priorities for sustainable development within the District are to:

- Increase the supply of homes and affordable housing;
- Improve access to jobs, services and facilities for all groups;
- Achieve a high quality environment and
- Tackle climate change by reducing the area's carbon footprint and creating resilient and adaptive environments.

New development will need to be built to the highest sustainability standards, helping to generate wider benefits in terms of the quality of the environment and carbon reduction, be energy efficient, using renewable resources, and minimising the production of waste. The built environment will need to be resilient to the potential impacts of climate change with flood plains protected from inappropriate development and the sustainable management of the District's watercourses promoted.

All future development will also need to be supported by suitable social and Green Infrastructure and set within environments that reflect the character and history of the area. All development must be well-designed, accessible and safe including for people with disabilities. Schools, health care facilities, shops and other services need to be available in accessible locations along with open spaces, parks, sports facilities and play, forming part of a wider Green Infrastructure network.

The historic environment is an important part of the character of the District. Heritage assets will be conserved and enhanced as part of the creation and maintenance of distinctive places. In addition, the District's wide variety of natural environments, landscape and biodiversity will be protected and enhanced, and the District's watercourses should remain a key asset for the area, providing space for water, biodiversity, recreation and a setting for development.