

## Agenda Item 9

<b>Executive Member</b>	Councillor John Northcott
<b>Strategic Management Team Lead Officer</b>	Andrew Bircher
<b>Author</b>	Jack Straw
<b>Telephone</b>	01306 879246
<b>Email</b>	<a href="mailto:Planning.policy@molevalley.gov.uk">Planning.policy@molevalley.gov.uk</a>
<b>Date</b>	Council 3 <sup>rd</sup> December 2013 and Executive 17 <sup>th</sup> December 2013

<b>Ward (s) affected</b>	All	<b>Key Decision</b>	Yes
--------------------------	-----	---------------------	-----

<b>Subject</b>	Mole Valley Local Plan – Housing and Traveller Sites Plan Consultation Document 2014
<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	
<p>The Council is asked to recommend to the Executive</p> <p>(1) that it publishes the Housing and Traveller Sites Plan - Consultation Document, plus supporting background evidence, for an 8 week period from Friday 10 January 2014 to 7<sup>th</sup> March 2014; and</p> <p>(2) that authority be delegated to the Corporate Head with responsibility for Planning in consultation with the Planning Portfolio Holder and Chairman of the Local Plan Working Group to make any changes necessary to the documents prior to their publication.</p>	

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council is required to prepare a Local Plan for Mole Valley. The Local Plan is a suite of Development Plan Documents (DPDs) which set out a framework of policies for the use of land in the District. The Local Plan was previously known as the Local Development Framework (LDF).</li> <li>• A number of DPDs have already been prepared for the Local Plan including the Core Strategy and the Dorking Town Area Action Plan (AAP).</li> <li>• The Core Strategy sets out the overarching approach to future development in the district over the next twenty years and was adopted in 2009. The Core Strategy does not identify specific areas of land for particular forms of development. This is achieved through the preparation of other documents in the Local Plan, such as the Dorking Town AAP and the Housing and Traveller Sites Plan.</li> <li>• The Council consulted on the Green Belt Boundary Review (GBBR) at the beginning of 2013. This document identified broad locations in the Green Belt and assessed them against the contribution they make to the purposes of the Green Belt (as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework). At this stage the Council also invited developers and landowners to submit sites for consideration as part of the preparation of the Housing and Traveller Sites Plan.</li> </ul>

- All of the proposed sites have been considered and detailed Site Appraisals completed for each; a summary of each site is set out in the Housing and Traveller Sites Plan - Consultation Document. The public consultation forms an important part of the preparation of this plan and the findings will be used to inform which sites are proposed for development in it.
- The consultation document also seeks views on proposals for identifying Traveller sites to meet the identified need in the Travellers Accommodation Assessment, which will be a background document to the Housing and Traveller Sites Plan consultation document.
- The consultation document identifies locations where a minor amendment may be appropriate to the Green Belt boundary, to update the boundary where development has taken place since the boundary was last reviewed and secure a consistent approach across the District.
- The report explains the relationship between the preparation of the Housing and Traveller Sites Plan and the Neighbourhood Development Plans
- The development of the consultation document has been overseen by the Local Plan Working Group and is supported by a substantial evidence base.
- The consultation document seeks the views of local communities on the sites put forward and their suitability for future development, the proposals for identifying Traveller sites and potential minor amendments to the Green Belt boundary.

## **CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

### **Access to Services**

#### **(1) Helping residents to access the services they need**

#### **(2) Improve the way we engage with our Customers and listen to our communities.**

The Housing and Traveller Sites Plan is the latest in a number of consultations that the Council has undertaken in relation to proposed housing developments. Most recently this has included a consultation on the Green Belt Boundary Review and meetings with representatives of local community and residents groups in each affected community. The Plan is likely to be a controversial piece of work and ensuring that the Council is transparent in its decision making processes is key.

Information about the work being undertaken and how options are assessed and choices made will be clearly set out and made available via the Council's website, in the Council Offices, the Leatherhead HelpShop, in libraries and at drop-in events. Officers will make themselves available as far as resources allow in order to explain the issues and processes that are being gone through. It is recognised that the review of the Green Belt boundary and allocation of land for development will result in significant publicity and reaction. This can not be avoided, but making information available in a clear and understandable form will be a priority.

This latest document will be consulted on extensively; letters/emails will be sent to interested parties, the website will be used and drop-in sessions will be held throughout the District.

## **Environment**

### **(1) Maintaining the character and environment of Mole Valley**

### **(2) Enable growth in the District to support businesses and the local economy and facilitate appropriate housing development.**

The Housing and Traveller Sites Plan will be an important document in the Mole Valley Local Plan. It is a vehicle for delivering the housing objectives set out in the Core Strategy.

Through the development of the Housing and Traveller Sites Plan, the Council will continue to focus on improving the quality of the built environment whilst preserving the character and integrity of our towns and villages.

The delivery of new housing is a Government priority. The Council has to determine, in consultation with its communities, how best to do this whilst protecting both the built and natural environment. The housing development required in the District cannot be accommodated within the built up areas without the loss of other important land uses which the Council wishes to safeguard, including for example businesses and recreation facilities. Moreover, intensification of development in existing residential areas could have a harmful impact and change to their character which could be damaging to the quality of the built environment. This has to be balanced against the impact of developing open land currently in the Green Belt.

## **The Executive has the authority to determine the Recommendations**

### **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 The Core Strategy indicates the Council will identify sites for at least 3,760 new homes in the District within the plan period to 2026. While some of these new homes will be delivered in the built-up areas, insufficient land is available there to meet the requirement in full. The Council has therefore given a commitment in the Core Strategy to conduct a review of the Green Belt to ensure there is sufficient land available for new homes.
- 1.2 Since 2006, approximately 1700 homes have been constructed in the District and there is planning permission for approximately 620 additional homes. In the light of Government guidance, an allowance for a further 120 homes on unidentified sites (known as windfall sites) has been made which is based on past trends. Taking these elements of housing land supply together, it is concluded that land needs to be identified in the District for approximately a further 1300 new homes in the period to 2026.
- 1.3 Following the 'call for sites' and the Green Belt Boundary Review – Consultation Document, landowners and developers submitted sites to the Council for allocation in the Housing and Traveller Sites Plan. The Housing and Traveller Sites Plan - Consultation Document provides details about all of the sites proposed to the Council and invites comments on the sites identified.

## 2.0 The Housing and Traveller Sites Plan: Consultation Document

- 2.1 The *Housing and Travellers Site Plan – Consultation Document* is in the folder of documents that accompanies this report (Appendix 1). It contains a short appraisal of all the sites submitted to the Council as part of the various ‘call for sites’ exercises, as well as some other sites which have been identified during the course of preparing the consultation document. The consultation document contains a summary of the key considerations for each site. This information is drawn from the more detailed site appraisals completed for each site which are available to view in the supporting document. ‘*Site Assessments: Housing 2014*’. These site appraisals follow the methodology set out in the ‘*Site Appraisal Toolkit*’ which has been previously published by the Council.
- 2.2 In total around 70 sites have been brought to the Councils attention with a total potential capacity of over 3000 dwellings.
- 2.3 The sites in the *Housing and Traveller Sites Plan - Consultation Document* have been grouped into settlement areas. For each site there is:
- Reference number
  - Site address
  - Area (normally the developable area)
  - Developer’s estimate of the capacity
  - Map and aerial photograph
  - Brief description
  - A list of the key considerations
- 2.4 For those sites where it is felt the issues are insurmountable, a statement to this effect is made. These insurmountable issues are limited and generally relate to issues of flood risk, biodiversity significance and physical lack of access.
- 2.5 The Housing and Traveller Sites Plan will also look to identify sites for travellers. The Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) concludes that between 2012 and 2017 there is a need for an additional 28 pitches for gypsies and travellers and 5 plots for travelling showpeople. Between 2017 and 2027 there is a need for a further 16 pitches for gypsies and travellers and 2 plots for travelling showpeople.
- 2.6 The results of a search across the District for sites using various means are detailed in the consultation document. Views are sought on proposed further work to identify specific sites for Travellers. This includes a suggestion that proposed housing sites over 3ha should include an area set aside for a small permanent traveller site.
- 2.7 As potential traveller sites have not been identified in this consultation document, it is likely that a further round of consultation on suggested locations for new traveller sites will be organised during the summer. This will be informed by the responses to this current consultation.

### **3.0 Green Belt Boundary Review**

- 3.1 The Housing and Traveller Sites Plan - Consultation Document has been informed in part by the work on the Green Belt Boundary Review which Members will recall was published for consultation in February 2013. This document analysed the Green Belt boundary around the main built up areas and larger villages in the District. The Council indicated in the document whether it felt broad areas of the Green Belt made a minimal, moderate or significant contribution to the role and key purposes of the Green Belt.
- 3.2 The Green Belt Boundary Review has been updated as a result of the consultation at the beginning of the year and used to inform the appraisals of the sites that have been promoted to the Council.
- 3.3 An analysis and response to the representations that were received will be published alongside the Housing and Traveller Sites Plan - Consultation Document as part of an omnibus document that also sets out the revised Green Belt Boundary Review and Sustainability Appraisal. It will be called the '*Green Belt Boundary Review - Analysis and response to representations*'. A copy of this document is in the folder of documents accompanying this report (Appendix3).
- 3.4 The review of the Green Belt Boundary has also provided an opportunity to consider the existing boundary, to see if its alignment around the District's built up areas and larger rural villages is still appropriate, having regard to development that has taken place since it was last reviewed. It also provides an opportunity to pick up any anomalies in the existing boundary, for example where it cuts through a property's curtilage.
- 3.5 At this stage no decisions have been made as to whether any minor alterations should be made but areas have been identified where careful consideration needs to be given to the current boundary. This forms part of the consultation document and is supported by a background document containing considerable detail (*Green Belt Boundary Review: Minor Boundary Changes*). Ward Members' views have been sought and updates made where comments were submitted. Those people whose land is potentially affected by such changes will be written to as part of this consultation.
- 3.6 A copy of the background document explaining the process of looking at parts of the Green Belt boundary to identify potential minor alterations has been published on MOSS and a hard copy has been placed in the Members' Room.

### **4.0 Consultation Arrangements**

- 4.1 It will be important to ensure that those with an interest in the Consultation Document are aware of its publication, how it can be viewed and how comments can be submitted. The Council's Statement of Community Involvement sets out the measures that will be taken to achieve these objectives and includes:
  - Posting the Consultation Document and all the supporting background documents on the Local Plan pages of the Council's website. There will be a facility to make comments via the online consultation portal.
  - The web pages will also include an interactive map which displays all the proposed housing sites and allows users to view the site appraisal and submit comments.

- The map will also identify locations where minor Green Belt boundary changes are under consideration.
  - Copies of the documents will be made available at all the deposit locations, including the Council Offices, the Leatherhead HelpShop and libraries.
  - A programme of drop-in events will be arranged throughout the consultation period in all those settlements where sites have been identified.
  - An email/letter will be sent to all statutory consultees as well as those people registered on the planning policy consultation database. This includes those people who submitted comments to the Green Belt Boundary Review Consultation Document.
  - It is also proposed to send letters to all those people who adjoin the current Green Belt boundary in a similar fashion to that done for the consultation at the beginning of the year. Developers and agents who have submitted sites for consideration will also be notified
- 4.2 In addition, a Question and Answer sheet will be prepared for Members, a Press Release circulated and a briefing for the Press organised.

## **5.0 Neighbourhood Development Plans**

- 5.1 Neighbourhood Forums in Ashted, Bookham, and Westcott and the Parish Council in Ockley are preparing Neighbourhood Development Plans for their communities. Sites in these areas that have been suggested for development by landowners and developers have therefore not been included in the Council's *Housing and Traveller Sites Plan - Consultation Document*.
- 5.2 The Neighbourhood Forums will assess the Green Belt boundary in the area covered by their NDPs and the sites that have been suggested to them and consult their communities on their findings. The Neighbourhood Forums cannot alter the Green Belt boundary as that is something that can only be done by the Council through its preparation of a Local Plan. Accordingly, the Forums will provide the Council with the results of their review of the Green Belt in their areas, their assessment of the sites that have been submitted to them and the responses to the consultation on their Green Belt Review and site assessments.
- 5.3 The Council will consider the Neighbourhood Forums' assessment of the Green Belt and the sites that have been promoted in these areas and the responses to the Forum's consultation.
- 5.4 All this work will then be brought together to create a consistent and comprehensive review of the Green Belt boundary across the entire District and an assessment of all the sites that developers and landowners have suggested to both the Council and to the Neighbourhood Forums, should be earmarked for housing development in the Plan.
- 5.5 The Council will then identify those sites across the District which are the most suitable locations for new housing and which should be allocated for development in the Housing and Traveller Sites Plan. If the Council concludes that sites in the Green Belt which are within the Neighbourhood Areas are among the most appropriate for development, they

will be included in the Council's Housing and Traveller Sites Plan as part of the contribution to meeting the requirement to identify land for 1300 dwellings.

- 5.6 Ockley is also preparing an NDP, but is defined as a smaller village in the Core Strategy and is not a strategic location for new housing development, other than infilling or affordable housing on a rural exception site. It is also not within and only abuts the Green Belt on its northernmost boundary.

## 6.0 Recommendation and Next Steps.

- 6.1 It is proposed to invite representations on the *Housing and Traveller Sites Plan: Consultation Document* from Friday 10 January until Friday 7 March 2014.
- 6.2 Following the consultation period the comments that are received will be analysed and work progressed to produce a draft Plan for submission to the Secretary of State. The timing of this stage will be dependent on the outcomes of the consultation. For example, if further sites are submitted which the Council consider to be suitable for development there may be a need for a further consultation on the additional sites.

6.3 The proposed timetable for the progression of the Housing and Traveller Sites Plan is:

Publication of Housing and Traveller Sites Plan – Consultation Document	8 week public consultation (10 January – 7 March 2014)
Consultation on Traveller Sites Paper	Summer 2014
Publication of Draft Housing & Traveller Sites Plan and supporting document including the SA/SEA	Autumn 2014, representations invited
Submission of Plan for examination by a Planning Inspector	Early 2015
Estimated date of adoption of DPD (and a revised Policies Map)	Mid 2015

### Financial Implications

The cost of preparing the plans and undertaking the consultation can be met within existing budgets.

Plan making and the delivery of housing has significant implications for the Council's budget. The financial support that central government gives to local councils is being tied increasingly to housing delivery. To not expedite this work and allocate land for the delivery of new homes would have implications for the Council's financial position.

### Legal Implications

None at this stage. This consultation is in line with the Local Plan Regulations and the Council's own commitments. However, interpretation of the plan making process is evolving and lessons are being learned as draft Plans are submitted for examination. Officers are therefore closely watching the outcome of appeals and Local Plan examinations in order to keep abreast of the ever changing situation and may be required to seek legal advice from time to time.

## **OPTIONS:**

### **Option 1**

Publish the Housing and Traveller Sites Plan - Consultation Document for an 8 week period.

### **Option 2**

Not to publish the Housing and Traveller Sites Plan - Consultation Document. This will lead to significant delays in the development of the Housing and Traveller Sites Plan.

There is currently a lack of a five year supply of available housing land in the District. In these circumstances the Council is vulnerable to appeals against its decisions to refuse planning applications for housing development on sites which it considers unsuitable, including in the Green Belt

It is therefore important that the Council has a complete Local Plan in place to demonstrate an adequate supply of housing land and to ensure a plan-led approach to development.

<b>It is recommended that Option 1 is agreed</b>
--

## **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

Monitoring Officer commentary – All legal implications have been taken into account.

### **Risk Implications –**

There are many risks around the preparation of Development Plans especially as at the moment they are being prepared in the light of recent changes by the Government to the processes involved. Whatever route the Council chooses to take there could be challenges by developers/landowners and residents.

Preparing a Land Allocations plan that does not fully address the requirements of the NPPF to plan for objectively assessed housing needs is also not without risk and there is the potential for challenge on this basis, particularly by those people trying to promote a piece of land that may not be included within the Plan. However the Government wants to see new housing delivered on the ground. Preparation of a plan that seeks to do that in the shortest possible time has to have some merits and the proposed pragmatic approach is considered to be the best way forward. (See report to Executive 5<sup>th</sup> February entitled: *Mole Valley Land Allocations Plan and Green Belt Boundary Review.*) and the paper accompanying this report titled '*Planning for New Homes in Mole Valley – The Options*

A key argument in taking this approach will be a commitment by the Council (and set out in the Local Development Scheme) to preparing a new Local Plan as soon as possible that takes account of the current big 'unknowns' including the outcomes from the preparation of the London Plan and where additional runway capacity will be provided in the South East. A report on a new Local Plan Scheme will be considered by the Executive at its meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2013.

In relation to the Housing and Traveller Sites Plan Consultation, the publication of the consultation paper could trigger:

- (a) planning applications for development in the Green Belt, especially in view of the current lack of a 5 year housing land supply. This could however happen already.
- (b) community/action type groups who may well feel it necessary to protest about development in areas of Green Belt when at this stage there is no firm proposal in the form of a planning application or proposed site allocation. This will take up officer time and resources.

Conversely to not publish the information and enable early engagement is contrary to the Government guidance regulations on these matters.

**Equalities Implications** – In order to assess the wider equalities implications of the Housing and Travellers Sites Plan an Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been prepared and is in the folder of documents accompanying this report (Appendix 4).

**Employment Issues** – It will be important to manage existing staff resources so that the work necessary to progress the Housing and Traveller Sites Plan can be carried out.

**Sustainability Issues** – A SA/SEA has been prepared for the Housing and Traveller Sites Plan and is an integral part of the development of the document. In addition, the Core Strategy which this plan sits alongside contains policies that specifically relate to sustainable construction, reducing and managing the impact of climate change and ensuring that development takes place in sustainable locations. Please see Sustainability Appraisal Report which is available on MOSS and in hard copy in the Members' Room.

**Consultation** – Please see section 4, as well as Appendix 1.

### **Appendices to this report**

The following documents are appended to this report in a ring binder for Members and will be published on the Council's website:

1. Housing and Traveller Sites Plan - Consultation Document
2. Green Belt Boundary Review, Sustainability Appraisal and responses to Consultation Document
3. Planning for new homes in Mole Valley – The Options
4. Equality Impact Assessment.

The following documents will be available on the Council's website, MOSS and in hard copy form in the Members' Room:

1. Overarching Sustainability Appraisal
2. Housing and Traveller Sites Plan: Site Assessments 2014 (incorporating the first draft of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment
3. Green Belt Boundary Review: Minor Green Belt Boundary Alterations: Consultation Document
4. Employment Land Review 2013
5. Travellers Accommodation Assessment

