



Report of	Meeting	Date
Central Lancashire Planning Policy Officers	Joint Advisory Committee	30/01/2018

## **CENTRAL LANCASHIRE LOCAL PLAN REVIEW RESOURCING AND PROGRAMME PROPOSALS**

### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To provide an outline of the resource implications for undertaking a review of the Central Lancashire Local Development Plan (currently known as the 'Core Strategy' of the Local Development Framework).

### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

2. To commit to work in collaboration as Central Lancashire (Preston, Chorley and South Ribble) to develop and submit for approval to Secretary of State, a single Central Lancashire Local Development Plan (or Local Plan).
3. To share the costs for the staffing and non-staffing costs as set out below.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT**

4. An up to date local development plan (also can also be known as the Local Development Plan, Core Strategy, Local Plan and Local Development Framework), is the primary consideration for guiding land use within a local planning authority area and it is required for the determination of planning applications and is required to be kept up-to-date, with local authorities expected to refresh the local plan every five years.
5. The three councils of Preston, South Ribble and Chorley have a long history of working together in partnership to produce local plans to inform land use and deliver strategic objectives. The three councils collaborated between 2008 and 2012 to produce the Local Development Framework and this was jointly resourced by the three councils, with a team based at Chorley created specifically to undertake the piece of work.
6. Developing a Local Plan is a lengthy process which comprises of a number of key, statutory actions and therefore must follow the legislation and guidance as to the process, audit trail and quality of the work produced. It can only be adopted following an examination in public by the Planning Inspectorate and the policy framework must be supported by a robust evidence base, a full process of consultation including engaging a list of 'statutory' consultees, and also there must be a sustainability appraisal of the policy, which must look at the viability of development in the area.

7. The three councils have a statutory duty to keep an up-to-date Local Development Scheme (LDS) that sets out a timetable for the production and review of documents that comprise Local Plan. To support the Local Plan review, the Local Development Scheme (LDS) will be updated.
8. National planning guidance requires that local plans be updated regularly, ideally every five years and therefore the Central Lancashire Core Strategy is now on the cusp of being considered to be past that timeframe. Officers across the three areas have been working together to commission and produced the required evidence base to support the local plan review and therefore the process has commenced and we are well placed to progress. This report seeks approval for each council to allocate the required resources required to support the Local Plan Review and also the approach to be taken.

## **BACKGROUND**

9. In July 2012, the Central Lancashire authorities of Preston, Chorley and South Ribble Council adopted the Core Strategy, the key document in the statutory Local Plan which sets out the strategic planning policies for Central Lancashire and is supported by the individual local plans produced by each respective council in 2015.
10. It is the Local Plan which sets out the strategic objectives or policies for development with the area and includes the policies on housing including the number of new homes to be delivered in each borough over the plan period.
11. Following the adoption of the Core Strategy, there have been some significant changes in the national and sub-regional policy landscape with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in 2012. There are further changes planned as set out in the recent government consultation 'Planning for the Right Homes in The Right Places' including a nationally imposed, standard methodology for determining housing need.
12. Therefore it is imperative that the review of the Central Lancashire Local Plan is progressed quickly in order for the three councils to ensure there is a sound policy framework in place which includes a call for sites, SHLAA (Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment) and development of site allocations policies to ensure that future development is sustainable, meets local needs and aspirations for economic development, regeneration, social and environmental objectives.
13. As part of the Local Plan Review, the three councils will undertake a review of existing policies and may elect to retain, refresh or set aside policies, depending on current and future strategy and the key findings from the evidence base. Policy areas that may be considered as part of the Local Plan review include transport, affordable housing, public open space and infrastructure.
14. The Council must prepare all Local Plan documents that form part of the development plan in accordance with the LDS. The previous approach undertaken by the three councils was to develop firstly, a shared Core Strategy and then each undertook a separate exercise to develop an individual Local Plan with site allocations and development management plan document. Whilst providing advantages, this process requires a second, similar process to that of the core strategy and therefore duplicates costs such as staffing, the Examination in Public and Counsel representation.

## **THE LOCAL PLAN REVIEW PROCESS**

15. Below is a high level overview of the timetable and although every effort will be made to accelerate the programme in order to secure the adoption of a new Local Plan as soon as is practicably feasible, this timetable is subject to change and will depend largely on a) the delivery of key pieces of evidence and b) the scale and content of the consultation response.

## TIMETABLE

Key Stages	Date
Local Plan staffing resources in place	March 2018
Local Development Scheme(programme) agreed by JAC	March 2018
Initial Engagement and Commence the Call for sites	April 2018
Engage with Statutory Consultees	April 2018
Evidence gathering and policy updating	(already commenced) to September 2018
Undertake a process of policy review and develop a programme for updates/refresh/omissions	June 2018
Draft Plan ready for approval for JAC & Councils	January 2019
Publication of Draft Plan for Representations	March 2019
Date of Submission to Secretary of State	May 2019
Appoint Counsel	July 2019
Public Hearing	November 2019
Inspectors Final Report Issued	January 2020
Adoption	March 2020

## STAFFING RESOURCES

16. In order to deliver the review of the Local Plan, there is a need to secure additional resources over and above the established staffing compliment in each councils Planning Policy team as set out in the table below. These posts would be recruited for a fixed period of two years aside from the Programme Officer who would only be required for the duration of the public examination, expected to be nine months.

Post	Grade	FTE salary incl all On-costs
Central Lancs Local Plan Coordinator	POE	£48,700
Central Lancs Planning Officer (Local Plan)	POA	£42,200
Central Lancs Planning Officer (Local Plan)	POA	£42,200
Central Lancs Local Plan Technical Assistant	Sc6	£31,200
Programme Officer for Central Lancs Local Plan	Sc6	£31,200

17. The day to day work of planning policy officers (a which includes providing policy assessments of new planning applications, undertaking statutory and local plan monitoring work including publishing reports and also commissioning and being client lead for evidence work, means that the staff cannot simply 'absorb' the work to deliver a review of the local plan. There have been significant reductions in the size of the three policy teams since the LDF was undertaken in 2008 and therefore it is simply not feasible for the teams to deliver the review without additional resource.
18. The existing teams within each of the three councils comprises of on average 2 FTE officers plus a manager with other responsibilities and therefore in order to deliver a refreshed Local Plan, and to deliver this within the shortest timeframe possible, there is a need to pump prime the resources.
19. The staffing proposed comprise of:
- One full time Local Plan Coordinator who will lead the programme, coordinate the consultation exercises, lead on drafting policies and reports and manage the process of the submission and public examination. The Coordinator will report to the Planning Managers as well as the JAC and the respective Portfolio Members and will be responsible for producing reports, securing decisions and the submission to the Planning Inspectorate.

- Two full time Planning Policy Officers who will undertake the consultation exercises, manage the and ensure all consultees are responded to, draft the required policies (which could vary across the three council areas depending on the individual strategic aims) and undertake the impact assessments.
- A full time technical officer to provide support to the team and manage the high volume of consultation responses ensuring that full and auditable records are kept and prepared for the inspection. The Technical Officer will develop the consultation programme including coordinating the meetings with the statutory consultees.
- A programme officer which is a requirement for the examination. These officers are specially trained officers appointed specifically and only to support the inspector during the inquiry .

20. It is proposed that Chorley Council will be responsible for the overall recruitment and line management of the fixed term posts, however there is an expectation that all three respective Planning Managers will regularly engage with the Local Plan officers, provide support and any required training, access to each respective councils systems and also ensure there is accommodation to facilitate a system of 'hot-desking'.

## **OTHER COSTS TO DELIVER THE LOCAL PLAN REVIEW**

21. Staffing costs will not be the only costs incurred as a result of the local plan review and work is underway to calculate these costs and provide an estimate to each council. As this is a review of the Local Plan and we are not essentially starting from scratch, the costs will be lower than those incurred during the LDF process.

22. These costs will include items such as:

- The Commission of the Recreation, Play and Open Space Strategy
- The Examination in Public (Planning Inspectorate)
- Counsel
- Strategic Housing Land Area Assessment (SHLAA)
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
- Retail study

23. Statutory planning policy is framed by legal requirements and therefore legal support is necessary to manage risks related to these requirements. Planning policy can only be adopted following public examination by a Planning Inspector, and the Council bears costs for venue and examination staff (including the Inspector and a Programme Office to provide administrative support).

24. Public examination places a high evidential burden on statutory planning policies as the opportunity to be challenged by other stake-holders means that policies must be robustly justified. This means that technical specialists need to be commissioned to produce the pieces of evidence and the expertise does not exist locally.

25. Given the statutory nature of Local Plans, it is also necessary that the three councils engage expert legal advice at key stages during preparation. These resources will incur costs for which a budget would be needed, although the work will have a wider value supporting the three council's development management and regeneration functions.

26. The process of securing formal sign-off of the Local Plan involves a public examination, with a Planning Inspector undertaking a formal process to review all aspects of the draft Local Plan and to determine if it is 'sound'. This process requires significant support and is costly. It is for this reason, the three Councils are looking to progress with a single examination in public as opposed to two examinations which was the approach undertaken in the Local Development Framework (LDF) process in 2012.

27. To oversee the review process and manage the work programme that will develop from it, it is

proposed to set up a Local Plan Steering Group comprising of the Local Plan officers, the respective Planning Managers and Senior Managers from each of the three councils. The Steering Group will report regularly to the established JAC with progress and detailed updates as they emerge.

## TOTAL LOCAL PLAN REVIEW COSTS

28. The table below provides a summary of the estimated costs, **PER COUNCIL** (i.e. applicable costs already split three ways) for both the staffing and the other associated non-staffing costs.
29. There is a DCLG funding pot available for councils to bid into to support innovation in plan-making and therefore the Central Lancashire Authorities have submit a bid to the value of £250,000 to support this local plan review project . In the event that this bid is successful, this revenue will be split three ways and used to substitute each council's contribution.
30. The non-staffing costs include a high level estimation of the following items:
- Retail and Household
  - Transport Study (This is for Chorley only and not included in the costings below)
  - SHLAA
  - Greenbelt review (This is for Chorley only and not included in the costings below)
  - Employment Land Review
  - Gypsies and Travellers Area Assessment (This is included but may not be necessary)
  - Flood Stage Level 1
  - Flood Stage Level 2
  - Administration
  - Examination in Public (Planning Inspectorate Costs)
  - Counsel for Examination in Public

	<b>2017/18</b> £	<b>2018/19</b> £	<b>2019/20</b> £
Staffing	4,564	54,767	51,616
Commissioned Work	0	80,000	35,000
<b>TOTAL COST PER COUNCIL</b>	<b>4,564</b>	<b>134,767</b>	<b>94,163</b>

31. The **total costs per Council, per financial year:**

- Year 1 17/18 £4,564
- Year 2 18/19 £134,767
- Year 3 19/20 £94,163

## REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

32. To ensure the Local Plan Review is delivered which will inform future development and ensure it is sustainable and meets local needs and policy objectives.

## ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

33. Do nothing. Should the councils decide not to progress the review of the Local Development Plan, the policies will become out of date and this means that the weight to be attached to policies in the Plan would be significantly reduced and that policies within the NPPF including ‘the presumption in favour of sustainable development’ would take precedence. It would be more difficult to defend applications which are not in accordance with policy such as safeguarded land or greenbelt.
34. The Councils could elect to pursue individual Local Plans however these would cost more and may take longer if there are not the sufficient staff in place.

#### **NEXT STEPS**

35. Upon confirmation of the three councils commitment to the project, the following initial actions will need to be followed:
- a) Additional appendices to the MOU to detail the arrangements for the governance of the project including roles and responsibilities, recruitment of staff, finance, decision making and overall project management architecture and audit.
  - b) Development of all job descriptions and job evaluation for the salary levels (it is not expected these will change significantly).
  - c) Internal approval for the recruitment of the staff.

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