READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO: STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT

COMMITTEE

DATE: 22 NOVEMBER 2017 AGENDA ITEM: 8

TITLE: PRE-SUBMISSION DRAFT LOCAL PLAN

LEAD COUNCILLOR PAGE PORTFOLIO: STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT,

COUNCILLOR: PLANNING AND

TRANSPORT

SERVICE: PLANNING WARDS: ALL

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TEAM LEADER

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council is replacing its existing development plans (the Core Strategy, Reading Central Area Action Plan and Sites and Detailed Policies Document) with a new single local plan to set out how Reading will develop up to 2036. Consultation on the first stage, Issues and Options, which was a discussion of what the content of the plan should be, was undertaken between January and March 2016, and consultation on a Draft Local Plan was undertaken in May and June 2017. Around 150 organisations or individuals commented on the Draft Local Plan.
- 1.2 This report seeks Committee's approval to undertake community involvement on a Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan (Appendix 1) and associated documents including a Proposals Map (Appendix 2) showing the geographical extent of the policies and proposals in the Draft Local Plan. Community involvement will then be undertaken, and, subject to minor changes that do not affect the overall policy direction, the Local Plan would be submitted to the Secretary of State for public examination.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

2.1 That the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan (Appendix 1) and Pre-Submission Draft Proposals Map (see Appendix 2) be approved.

- 2.2 That community involvement on the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan, Proposals Map and associated supporting documents be authorised.
- 2.3 That the Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services be authorised to make any minor amendments necessary to the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan and Proposals Map in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, prior to community involvement.
- 2.4 That the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan and Proposals Map be authorised for submission to the Secretary of State should no significant issues arise during community involvement that would necessitate a substantive change to the document.
- 2.5 That the Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services be authorised to make any minor amendments necessary to the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan and Proposals Map that do not alter the policy direction, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, prior to their submission to the Secretary of State and prior to the consequent Public Examination of the Document.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Local Plan sets out the planning policies for an area and is the main consideration in deciding planning applications. The local plan for Reading, previously referred to as the Local Development Framework, currently consists of three documents the Core Strategy (adopted 2008, amended 2015), Reading Central Area Action Plan (RCAAP, adopted 2009) and Sites and Detailed Policies Document (adopted 2012, amended 2015).
- 3.2 Various changes have meant the need to review the Local Plan. In particular, the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2012 has meant significant changes, in particular the need for local planning authorities to identify their 'objectively assessed development needs' and provide for them. The need to review the local plan as a single, comprehensive document was identified in a Local Development Scheme, which is the programme for producing planning policy documents, the latest version of which was agreed by this Committee on 23rd November 2016 (Minute 15 refers).

4. THE PROPOSAL

(a) Current Position

4.1 The first stage of preparing the Local Plan was consultation on Issues and Options. An Issues and Options for the Local Plan document was

approved by this Committee on 24th November 2015 (Minute 22 refers), and consultation was carried out between January and March 2016. The results of the consultation were reported to this Committee on 5th April 2016 (Minute 34 refers). Around 200 representations were received, which were taken into account in drawing up the Draft Local Plan.

- 4.2 The second stage was production of a full Draft Local Plan and Proposals Map for consultation. The Drafts were approved by this Committee on 4th April 2017 (Minute 26 refers), and consultation was carried out during May and June 2017.
- 4.3 The Council received around 150 written responses to the Draft Local Plan (although one of these was a petition with 317 signatures. This is somewhat lower than the 200 or so received to the Issues and Options consultation, but this is in line with the approach of carrying out the widest public consultation at the earliest stage. The responses that were received were in general quite detailed, and a total of 1,300 individual comments were made.
- 4.4 In summary, the following were some of the main points emerging from consultation:
 - Generally, there was support for trying to accommodate the need for 658 homes per annum from the development industry. Adjoining authorities noted the position regarding the expected unmet needs.
 - Many individuals expressed support for encouraging higher density growth in the town centre, while some individuals expressed concern about the number of flats planned and the need for more family housing, as well as affordability concerns.
 - Many developers requested more flexibility, particularly with regard to energy efficiency, design and affordable housing. Additionally, some developers consider the requirement of employment development to mitigate impacts on housing to be onerous.
 - A number of developers encouraged the Council to consider a Private Rental Sector policy in order to encourage build-to-rent properties.
 - Many individuals expressed concern about the impacts of new development on existing infrastructure, citing traffic congestion, limited school places and crowded GP surgeries.
 - In terms of sites allocated for development, the sites that generated the largest volume of responses (most opposing development), were
 - Land at Armour Hill (WR3t)
 - Part of Reading Golf Course at Kidmore End Rd (CA1b)
 - Park Lane Primary School, the Laurels and Downing Road (WR2)
 - Arthur Hill Swimming Pool (ER1h)

- Many developers and landowners who had put forth sites earlier in the process responded with support, sometimes with additional information.
- Some individuals expressed concerns about the impacts of tall buildings on the character of the town, as well as on panoramic views.
- Some landowners and developers sought to advocate new sites not included in the Draft Local Plan. These were:
 - Land at Green Road and Wokingham Road
 - Cantay Business Park at Hardy Close
 - Land rear of 10-32 Clifton Street
 - 15-18 Friar Street, 2-16 Station Road and the Harris Arcade
 - Great Brigham's Mead, Vastern Road
 - 64 St. John's Road, Caversham
- Some landowners and developers advocated other sites located just outside Reading's boundary, around Grazeley in Wokingham Borough and around the edges of Caversham and Emmer Green in South Oxfordshire District, as potential sites to help meet Reading's housing need.
- Numerous individuals and community groups expressed strong support for retention and improvement of existing open spaces. A number of responses were in relation to identification of sites as Local Green Space. The sites most frequently listed were:
 - Various allotment sites
 - Mapledurham Playing Field
- Many organisations and individuals supported greater recognition of Reading's waterways and active use of waterside areas. There were varied views on whether there should be a protected natural buffer along waterways.
- There were a number of detailed technical comments on the environmental policies from respondents such as the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Council's own Environmental Protection Team
- Many individuals expressed the need for affordable and accessible leisure provision throughout the Borough and frustration at the loss of the Arthur Hill Swimming Pool.
- Historic England, community groups and individuals were pleased with the greater emphasis placed on heritage within the Local Plan. A number of in-depth responses to the issue of how Reading should plan for the historic environment were received. These also cover matters with implications beyond the Local Plan process. The following were the main issues raised:

- Completing Conservation Area appraisals, developing action plans and adding new or extending existing Conservation Areas;
- Preventing further decline of Chazey Farm Barn, a grade I listed building at risk;
- Further use of Article 4 Directions in order to protect amenity, particularly with regard to HMOs;
- Improving the website to provide heritage guidance for landowners and residents; and
- Improving the List of Locally Important Buildings.
- 4.4 A full schedule setting out the summary of each representation received, together with an officer response, is available on the Council's website¹.
- 4.5 More recently, Policy Committee on the 25th September authorised consultation on Gypsy and Traveller Provision (Minute 29 refers), and this consultation was carried out during September and October 2017. The results will be reported back in full to a future meeting of Policy Committee, but in summary, over 200 responses were received. The vast majority of these objected strongly to the proposed transit site. This included objections from local residents and from many of the businesses located in the Richfield Avenue and Portman Road areas. An objection from the Council's own Leisure and Recreation and Parks sections, although there was some support from a small minority of responses, including that from Thames Valley Police.

(b) Option Proposed

- 4.6 Committee is recommended to approve the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan (Appendix 1) and Pre-Submission Draft Proposals Map (Appendix 2) for community involvement.
- 4.7 The Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan and Proposals Map are largely based on the Draft Local Plan and Proposals Map as agreed by this Committee on 4th April. The version of the Local Plan at Appendix 1 is shown in tracked changes format so that the areas where changes are proposed are clear. Appendix 2 is not a full version of the Proposals Map, but shows changes to the previously approved Draft Proposals Map, which can be viewed on the Council's website².
- 4.8 The changes proposed are for a variety of reasons. Most of the changes respond to comments made on the Draft Local Plan, and the schedule of representations and officer responses on the Council's website¹ sets out how each comment has been addressed and whether it has resulted in a change. Other aspects of the plan have been due to new matters arising, or new information becoming available on certain matters. Other changes are straightforward clarifications or corrections. The Local Plan also seeks to take account of recent issues around air quality, and seeks

¹ http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/7907/Statement-of-Consultation-on-Draft-Local-Plan/pdf/Statement of Consultation on Draft Local Plan.pdf

² www.reading.gov.uk/newlocalplan

to ensure that it is part of a co-ordinated response to the need to improve air quality (see the report on Air Quality Action Plan to this meeting).

- 4.9 In addition, discussions with neighbouring authorities about the likely shortfall in meeting Reading's full housing need have continued. A formal request to West Berkshire District Council and Wokingham Borough Council in January 2017 to consider accommodating part of Reading's unmet housing need (which at the time stood at 943 homes) did not result in any agreement. However, recently a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed by Reading, Wokingham, West Berkshire and Bracknell Forest Councils which agrees that:
 - Reading cannot meet its needs in full and that the shortfall is between 500 and 1,000 dwellings;
 - The full need should be accommodated within the Western Berkshire Housing Market Area (comprising Reading, West Berkshire, Wokingham and Bracknell Forest Councils);
 - That Reading does not need to ask authorities outside that area to accommodate its unmet needs; and
 - That the four authorities will keep this issue under review.

The signing of this MoU will go some way towards minimising any disagreement around the issue at examination.

- 4.10 The main substantive changes that have been made within the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan are set out below:
 - 1. Section 2.1 (Vision) text changed to take update on the progress of the Reading 2050 initiative (p10-11);
 - 2. Policy CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction) extension of the BREEAM requirements to cover residential conversions, as is the case in existing policy. Their exclusion from the Draft was an oversight (p21);
 - 3. Policies EN1-EN6 (Heritage) A number of wording changes to deal with comments from the Conservation Area Advisory Committee and various community groups, as well as from Historic England, including an expanded archaeology policy (EN2), an additional heritage view in EN5 and a revised figure 4.2 on heritage views (p35-44);
 - 4. Policy EN11 (Waterspaces) Amendments to respond to comments from bodies including the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Canal and Rivers Trust (p51-53);
 - Policy EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodlands) extended supporting text (p58-59);
 - 6. Policy EN15 (Air Quality) revised supporting text to recognise the UK plan for nitrogen dioxide emissions and accompanying information

- from July 2017, as reported to this Committee on 3 July 2017 (p60-61);
- 7. Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) changes to the supporting text to respond to comments from Environmental Protection, the Environment Agency and Thames Water (p63-65);
- 8. Policy EN17 (Noise-Generating Equipment) new policy inserted on the recommendation of the Council's Environmental Protection team (p65-66);
- 9. Policy EN18 (Flooding and Sustainable Drainage Systems) changes to take into account most up-to-date national policy and to respond to comments from, in particular, the Environment Agency (p66-69);
- 10. Policy EM1 (Provision of Employment Development) additional clause to give in-principle support to freight consolidation, which is a potential way to improve air quality in urban areas (p71-72);
- 11. Policy EM2 (Location of Employment Development) additional text to clarify that ancillary non-employment uses that support employment uses may be located within Core Employment Areas (p73-74);
- 12. Policy EM3 (Loss of Employment Land) new paragraph in supporting text which recognises exceptional cases where there is no long-term prospect of employment use in Core Employment Areas, and ensures that in such cases a non-employment use would be commercial rather than residential (p75);
- 13. Policy H1 (Provision of Housing) a revised figure for homes to be provided over the plan period, changing from 658 to 671 per annum. This changes the scale of the shortfall that needs to be accommodated outside Reading from 943 dwellings to 644 dwellings. This is due to updated monitoring of completed developments and new or amended permissions, extended sites, changed assumptions on other sites and various other changes. This is based on a revised version of the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment. As a consequence, various references to number of homes in the Borough and in parts of the Borough throughout the document have changed, and there is a new Housing Trajectory in Appendix 1 (p77-78 and p268-269);
- 14. Policy H2 (Density and Mix) changes to the proposed approach to self-build housing to link the scale of any on-site provision to the scale of the self-build register based on an indicative formula (p79 & 81);
- 15. Policy H2 (Density and Mix) and H3 (Affordable Housing) text to clarify a perceived conflict between the results of the SHMA and the

- supporting text to H3 on whether family-sized accommodation is an affordable housing priority (p79, 82 & 84);
- 16. Policy H4 (Build to Rent Schemes) new policy to respond to proposals for build-to-rent schemes, the first of which in Reading (Thames Quarter) was recently granted planning permission in principle. This form of housing is supported in the Housing White Paper (p84-86);
- 17. Policy H5 (Housing Standards) clarification in the supporting text on how zero carbon homes are to be achieved (p89-90);
- 18. Policy H13 (Provision for Gypsies and Travellers) changes to update on the current position, with publication of the Gypsy and Traveller, Travelling Showpeople and Houseboat Dweller Accommodation Assessment in September 2017 and the recent consultation on Gypsy and Traveller Provision (p103-104);
- 19. Figure 4.8 (Major Transport Schemes in Reading) amended version of the map (as well as some of the area strategy maps) to more accurately show the Mass Rapid Transit routes set out in the Local Transport Plan (p110);
- 20. Policy TR5 (Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging) expanded policy to incorporate requirements for electric vehicle charging in new developments. This is linked to Reading's response to the air quality issue (see report on Air Quality Action Plan) (p114);
- 21. Paragraph 4.5.26 new text to emphasise the importance of walking as a sustainable transport mode (p115);
- 22. Policy RL2 (Scale and Location of Retail, Leisure and Culture Development) new figure for retail floorspace based on the final version of the Retail and Leisure Study (p117);
- 23. Policy OU1 (New and Existing Community Facilities) changes to bring the policy into line with national policy regarding loss of sports pitches, to address comments from Sport England (p125-126);
- 24. Policy OU1 (New and Existing Community Facilities) changes to provide support in cases where a secondary school to meet the identified need is to be provided on a site that the Local Plan identifies for housing (p125-126);
- 25. Policy CR4 (Leisure, Culture and Tourism in Central Reading) paragraph removed to bring the policy on loss of leisure in central Reading into line with the rest of Reading (p144-145);
- 26. Policy CR11 (Station/River Major Opportunity Area) various changes including:

- Extend Napier Court (CR11i) to include some Network Rail land that will potentially be available in future, and increase dwelling figure as a result, in response to representations from Network Rail:
- Additional guidance on cases where sites come forward in smaller parcels of land;
- Recognition of the potential for education to be part of the mix of uses:
- Safeguarding land along Napier Road for the eastern Mass Rapid Transit route (also safeguarded on the Proposals Map);
- New area strategy map to show additional land outlined above;
- Other changes to respond to representations. (p157-163)
- 27. Policy CR12 (West Side Major Opportunity Area) various changes including:
 - Additional guidance on cases where sites come forward in smaller parcels of land;
 - Recognition of the potential for education to be part of the mix of uses;
 - Other changes to respond to representations. (p163-166)
- 28. Policy CR13 (East Side Major Opportunity Area) various changes including:
 - Additional guidance on cases where sites come forward in smaller parcels of land;
 - Recognition of the potential for education to be part of the mix of uses:
 - Widen the potential range of uses on the Reading Prison site (CR13a) to ensure the future use of the site;
 - Other changes to respond to representations. (p168-171)
- 29. Policy CR16 (Area to the North of Friar Street and East of Station Road) a new policy is inserted on this area. This was put forward during consultation as a redevelopment opportunity, but the site makes a positive contribution to the character and diversity of the centre, so the policy seeks to retain the key elements ahead of any proposals for development (p180);
- 30. Policy SR1 (Island Road Major Opportunity Area) changes to highlight potential contamination and odour issues (p185);
- 31. Policy SR2 (Land North of Manor Farm Road Major Opportunity Area) addition of potential for school provision on SR2 (Land North of Manor Farm Road), which is a large, long-term development which provides the main opportunity to meet any primary education needs arising in South Reading as a result of the Local Plan (p189);

- 32. Policy SR3 (South of Elgar Road Major Opportunity Area) changes to respond to a potential aspiration from the landowner for a mixed commercial and residential proposal (p191);
- 33. Policy SR4e (Part of Former Berkshire Brewery Site) changes to respond to aspirations from the landowner for a wider mix of uses (p194);
- 34. Policy WR4 (Potential Traveller Transit Site at Cow Lane) new policy which identifies the Cow Lane/Richfield Avenue site as having potential for a traveller transit site. The responses to the recent consultation on the site (discussed at Policy Committee on 25th September) need to be formally considered and reported back to Policy Committee in due course, but in the meantime this policy identifies the potential of the site and clarifies the key considerations if the decision is made to proceed (p213);
- 35. Policy ER2 (Whiteknights Campus, University of Reading) re-instated text from the original allocation in the Sites and Detailed Policies Document, linking to the University's Whiteknights Campus masterplan (p233);
- 36. Policy ER3 (Royal Berkshire Hospital) extended boundary of the site to include 17 Craven Road, which has a functional relationship to the hospital. (p233-234 and Proposals Map);
- 37. Various site allocations (sections 5-9) changes to highlight the need to take account of water and/or wastewater infrastructure and public sewers on sites where Thames Water has identified an issue;
- 38. Infrastructure Delivery Plan expanded information on the most up to date police needs in response to Thames Valley Police comments (p251);
- 39. Infrastructure Delivery Plan expanded information on education requirements, in particular the need for a 6 form entry secondary school (p252); and
- 40. Various changes to the Proposals Map reflecting the changes above as well as slightly altering the Central Area boundary at Watlington Street to include the whole of the Lyndhurst pub and to safeguard land needed along Napier Road for East Mass Rapid Transit (see Appendix 2).
- 4.11 A number of additional amendments are made throughout the document to clarify, correct and amend elements of it, many of which are in response to representations.
- 4.12 If agreed, the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan and Proposals Map will be published for consultation under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country

Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. This is the final timetabled opportunity for public consultation on the document. Consultation is expected to take place between the end of November 2017 and the end of January 2018.

- 4.13 If, following consultation, no major changes that would affect the overall policy direction are required to the Local Plan, it would then be submitted to the Secretary of State, and this report seeks delegation to make minor post-consultation changes that do not alter the policy direction. Submission is scheduled for February or March 2018, and marks the starting point of the process of examination in public. An independent Inspector would be appointed to examine the plan and determine whether it is 'sound' and legally compliant. This would include a series of public hearings. If the Local Plan is considered to be sound and legally compliant, it can be adopted. Depending on the length of the examination, adoption at a meeting of full Council could take place at the end of 2018 or beginning of 2019.
- 4.14 However, if consultation reveals a need to make major changes to the policy direction, the Local Plan will need to be further revised and brought to a future meeting of this Committee for an additional period of consultation.

(c) Other Options Considered

- 4.15 The main alternative option that could be considered to consulting on a Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan at this stage is to delay the process.
- 4.16 Delaying would be likely to mean submitting the Local Plan later in 2018. The Government has stated that those authorities that submit a Local Plan after 31st March 2018 will need to base their plans on calculations of housing need deriving from a new standard methodology, on which a consultation was recently carried out. The figures released for Reading as part of the consultation were lower than our currently identified need figures, but there is no guarantee that the finalised methodology will reflect this, and planning to submit after 31st March 2018 would therefore mean substantial uncertainty and an overhaul of the evidence base that has been assembled to support the plan. This would not be in the interests of swift production of a new plan.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 The Local Plan, through setting out the way Reading will develop to 2036, will contribute to the following priorities in the Corporate Plan 2015-18:
 - Safeguarding and protecting those that are most vulnerable;
 - Providing the best life through education, early help and healthy living;
 - Providing homes for those in most need:
 - Keeping the town clean, safe, green and active;

- Providing infrastructure to support the economy;
- Remaining financially sustainable to deliver these service priorities.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 The Council's consultation process for planning policy, as set out in the adopted Statement of Community Involvement (adopted March 2014), is that the widest and most intensive community involvement should take place at the earliest possible stage, to allow the community a genuine chance to influence the document. Therefore, a significant and wideranging community involvement exercise on Issues and Options took place between January and March 2016, involving workshops, exhibitions and an online questionnaire. The Draft Local Plan consultation was more focused around making the document available for comment, although it also featured drop-in events and attendance at local community meetings.
- 6.2 The Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan consultation will largely follow the format of the Draft Local Plan consultation. Consultation is expected to begin at the end of November. The statutory consultation period is six weeks, but, since this will involve consulting over the Christmas period, it will be extended by two weeks and will finish in late January 2018.

7. EQUALITY ASSESSMENT

7.1 The Sustainability Appraisal of the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan incorporates the requirement to carry out a screening stage of an Equality Impact Assessment. A full Sustainability Appraisal that examines the effects of each policy and development site within the plan will be published alongside the consultation. It is not expected that there will be any significant adverse impacts on specific groups due to race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age or religious belief.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Local Development Framework documents are produced under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The process for producing local plans is set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. Regulation 19 states that, before submitting a Local Plan to the Secretary of State under section 20 of the 2004 Act, the proposed submission documents should be made available. This Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan has been produced within this Regulation 19 requirement.

9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Production of the Local Plan will generally carried out within existing budgets. However, there are some elements of producing the plan that

- can have significant resource implications, depending on how they are carried out.
- 9.2 Consultation exercises can be resource intensive. However, the Council's consultation process is based mainly on electronic communication, which helps to minimise resource costs.
- 9.3 Another main area where there can be significant financial implications is in producing the evidence base, particularly where the use of external consultants is required. The evidence required from external consultants has already largely been commissioned and/or published, including housing, economic and retail needs, gyspy and traveler accommodation needs, viability, flood risk and transport modelling, which means that these costs have largely already been taken into account. Many of these pieces of work were jointly commissioned with neighbouring authorities, which has reduced the costs. The remainder of the evidence will be produced in-house, within existing budgets.
- 9.4 The main significant cost will be a public examination, which will be required for the Local Plan. These examinations can cost tens of thousands of pounds. They are an inescapable fact of producing development plans, although the length and scope of these examinations can be minimised by seeking to resolve objections before the examination, as well as by combining documents into one document with one examination, as is the case with the Local Plan. This cost will fall within the 2018-19 financial year.

Value for Money (VFM)

9.5 The preparation of a local plan will ensure that developments are appropriate to their area, that significant effects are mitigated, that contributions are made to local infrastructure, and that there are no significant environmental, social and economic effects. Robust policies will also reduce the likelihood of planning by appeal, which can result in the Council losing control over the form of some development, as well as significant financial implications. Production of the local plan, in line with legislation, national policy and best practice, therefore represents good value for money.

Risk Assessment

9.6 There are no direct financial risks associated with the report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004
- Localism Act 2011
- The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012
- National Planning Policy Framework

- Local Development Scheme 2016
- Berkshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment, February 2016
 Central Berkshire Economic Development Needs Assessment, November 2016
- Draft Local Plan, May 2017