

Approval of Local Development Scheme (2015 – 2018)

Executive Portfolio Holder: Angie Singleton, Strategic Planning (Place Making)
Strategic Director: Rina Singh, Strategic Director, Place and Performance
Assistant Director: Martin Woods, Assistant Director Economy
Service Manager: Paul Wheatley, Principal Spatial Planner
Lead Officer: Paul Wheatley, Principal Spatial Planner
Contact Details: paul.wheatley@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462598

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. To consider and endorse the revised Local Development Scheme (LDS) for the period 2015 to 2018. The LDS sets out the documents that will be produced to inform the preparation of the early review of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028).

2. Public Interest

- 2.1. An LDS is a requirement under planning legislation and ensures that the public, business and other interested parties are aware of the programme of work that will be undertaken by the Council relating to planning policy and the preparation of a Local Plan. The LDS provides the organisational structure which guides the allocation and prioritisation of work which will be undertaken by the Council. The latest version, covering the period 2015 to 2018, will govern the work required to produce the early review of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028).

Recommendation(s):

That the District Executive:-

- i. endorse the Local Development Scheme (2015 – 2018) and resolve that it is effective as of 6th August 2015 (**See Appendix A**).
- ii. delegate responsibility to the Assistant Director for Economy, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning, to make any final minor text amendments which may be necessary to enable the Local Development Scheme (2015 – 2018) to be published.

3. Report

- 3.1. South Somerset District Council's first LDS was adopted in September 2007 and set the approach for the period 2007 – 2010. It was updated in January 2013 to cover the period 2013 – 2016.
- 3.2. Since then, in March 2015, the Council adopted the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028), which alters the perspective on what future evidence, strategies and documents should be produced to shape the future of South Somerset.
- 3.3. In adopting the local plan, the Council was aware of its commitment to carry out an "early review" of the local plan within three years of the date of adoption (i.e. by March 2018). The early review is a requirement set out by the Inspector who examined the

plan, and is a clear conclusion in his Inspector's Report. The reason for an early review is to clarify housing and employment provision in Wincanton¹.

- 3.4. The previous intention, once the local plan was adopted, was to progress to a series of related 'Development Plan Documents' and 'Supplementary Planning Documents'. However, three issues have altered the Council's thinking on the way forward, these are:
- the preferred approach set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is to have the various component parts needed for a development plan to be captured within one document;
 - the requirements to undertake an early review of the local plan to clarify specific issues relating to housing and employment provision in Wincanton; and
 - the Council remains committed to adopting a Community Infrastructure Levy, and it is advocated by the NPPF that this should be brought forward in parallel with the production of a local plan.
- 3.5. Reflecting on these changes in circumstance, the Council believes there is an opportunity to make a transition into a more comprehensive local plan whilst delivering the early review of policies in Wincanton at the same time. Taking this decision dictates priorities, timescales, and resource allocation; and therefore drives the programme of work set out in the LDS.
- 3.6. The LDS acts as a service planning and project management tool. It sets out a three-year timeframe for the work which will be carried out by the Spatial Policy team. Fundamentally, the LDS sets out a schedule for how evidence will be gathered in order to shape the content of the revised local plan. At this point in time it is not possible, or appropriate, to predict the outcome of the early review of the local plan. The process of formulating the content of the revised local plan must be evidence-led and decisions about the content of policies in the revised plan must be justified upon that evidence. To do otherwise, either to short-cut or second-guess the outcome at this stage would leave the Council vulnerable to legal challenge.
- 3.7. An indicative timetable for carrying out the formal public consultation stages associated with preparing and delivering a local plan have been set out in the LDS. It is right that these dates are indicative at present, as a series of factors could influence the timetable, including: the outcomes from the evidence gathering stages which affect current thinking on settlements and growth, the scale and nature of public feedback, and changes in Government policy.
- 3.8. Overall, it is expected that the early review of the local plan will begin its process through public consultation in March 2016, with Submission to the Secretary of State identified for June 2017, Examination in September 2017, and the estimated date for Adoption is March 2018. This would meet the requirements set out by the Inspector.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1. The Spatial Policy service was subject to a 'lean' review in 2014. This has shaped the existing make-up of the service and its resource and financial capability. If District Executive endorses the LDS, it will set a clear future work programme for the service. The proposed workload represents a major undertaking and has been tailored to

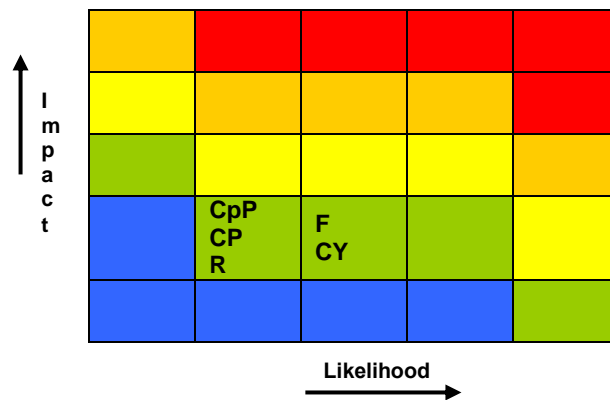
¹ See Paragraph 100 of the Inspector's Report, dated 8th January 2015:
http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/700388/south_somerset_lp_final_report.pdf

maximise the use of existing resources and finances whilst ensuring that the service can deliver to time and budget.

- 4.2. On this basis, any additional work which is outside of the LDS programme will not automatically be undertaken by the service. Any requests for additional work which would divert from the original programme would need to be fully formulated and submitted to the Local Plan Working Group (or other appropriate committee within the Council, e.g. District Executive) to allow the request to be considered and appraised. Importantly, any additional work will need to be self-financing and deliver the additional resources required to complete the additional work without compromising the original schedule. Formal sign-off from the Local Plan Working Group or appropriate committee will be required before any additional work can progress.
- 4.3. The LDS includes a monitoring and review process, which will track the progress in achieving the milestones set out. In carrying out performance reviews an appreciation of whether the team has sufficient resources will be included.

5. Risk Matrix

- 5.1. The matrix below sets out the risks associated with District Executive recommending that the LDS is approved.
- 5.2. The LDS includes a monitoring and review process, which will track the progress in achieving the milestones set out. In carrying out performance reviews an appreciation of the risks to the service and the Council will be carried out.



Key

Categories	Colours (for further detail please refer to Risk management strategy)
R = Reputation	Red = High impact and high probability
CpP = Corporate Plan Priorities	Orange = Major impact and major probability
CP = Community Priorities	Yellow = Moderate impact and moderate probability
CY = Capacity	Green = Minor impact and minor probability
F = Financial	Blue = Insignificant impact and insignificant probability

6. Corporate Priority Implications

- 6.1. Delivering the early review of the local plan is a high priority for the Council by virtue of the recommendation in the Inspector's Report and the acceptance of the task within the Council's adopted local plan.
- 6.2. Ensuring policies and the local plan remain up-to-date and aligned to the specific challenges and opportunities in the district will help the Council to realise economic vitality and prosperity, improve the health and well-being of citizens, create safe,

sustainable and cohesive communities and promote a balanced natural and built environment.

7. Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

7.1. None.

8. Equality and Diversity Implications

8.1. The evidence prepared through the work programme set out in the LDS will be publicised in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement and normal procedures. This will mean that the evidence and documentation will be in the public domain.

8.2. Subsequent work to bring about the early review of the local plan will be prepared in accordance with the legislative and statutory requirements of an Equality Analysis, Habitats Regulations Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal.

9. Background Papers

Appendix A – South Somerset Local Development Scheme (2015 – 2018)