



## AGENDA

### LOCAL PLAN PANEL MEETING

Date: Thursday, 30 July 2020

Time: 7.00pm

Venue: Via Skype\*

Membership:

Councillors Mike Baldock, Monique Bonney, Alastair Gould, James Hunt, Carole Jackson, Elliott Jayes, Peter Marchington, Benjamin A Martin, Richard Palmer, Eddie Thomas and Ghlin Whelan.

Quorum = 4

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Pages

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1. Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman for the Municipal Year 2020/21
2. Apologies for Absence and Confirmation of Substitutes
3. Minutes

To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 July 2020 (Minute Nos. 734 - 741) as a correct record.

4. Declarations of Interest

Councillors should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves or their spouse, civil partner or person with whom they are living with as a spouse or civil partner. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

The Chairman will ask Members if they have any interests to declare in respect of items on this agenda, under the following headings:

(a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI) under the Localism Act 2011. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared. After declaring a DPI, the Member must leave the meeting and not take part in the discussion or vote. This applies even if there is provision for public speaking.

(b) Disclosable Non Pecuniary (DNPI) under the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council in May 2012. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared. After declaring a DNPI interest, the Member may stay, speak and vote on the matter.

(c) Where it is possible that a fair-minded and informed observer, having considered the facts would conclude that there was a real possibility that the Member might be predetermined or biased the Member should declare their predetermination or bias and then leave the room while that item is considered.

**Advice to Members:** If any Councillor has any doubt about the existence or nature of any DPI or DNPI which he/she may have in any item on this agenda, he/she should seek advice from the Monitoring Officer, the Head of Legal or from other Solicitors in Legal Services as early as possible, and in advance of the Meeting.

## Part A Report for Recommendation to Cabinet

5. Growth Options

5 - 26

**Issued on Tuesday, 22 July 2020**

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Chief Executive, Swale Borough Council,  
Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT

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|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Local Plan Panel Meeting</b> |   |
| <b>Meeting Date</b>             | 30 July 2020  |
| <b>Report Title</b>             | Local Plan Review – Vision and Development Growth Options   |
| <b>Cabinet Member</b>           | Cllr Mike Baldock, Cabinet Member for Planning  |
| <b>SMT Lead</b>                 | James Freeman – Head of Planning  |
| <b>Head of Service</b>          | James Freeman – Head of Planning  |
| <b>Lead Officer</b>             | Jill Peet – Planning Policy Manager   |
| <b>Key Decision</b>             | Yes/No  |
| <b>Classification</b>           | <b>Open</b>   |
| <b>Recommendations</b>          | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Members consider the ‘vision’ for the local plan review and suggest proposed amendments for incorporation</li> <li>2. Members agree a preferred option that will form the basis of development strategy for the local plan review and recommend to Cabinet that this strategy is endorsed.</li> </ol> |

## 1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 In order to progress the drafting of the Local Plan Review, it is necessary for the Council to establish its vision for growth and to express its preference towards a growth strategy based on the evidence collected to date, including initial indications from the preliminary work carried out through the Sustainability Appraisal.
- 1.2 The purpose of this paper is to consider a draft vision and the options for the distribution of future development growth requirements for Swale setting out the strengths and weaknesses (pros and cons) of each of the growth options.

## 2 Background

- 2.1 The purpose of a local plan is to provide a planning policy framework to deliver the development needs of an area over a minimum 15 year period. According to government policy, guidelines and emerging evidence, for the borough of Swale, this means identifying enough land to accommodate:
  - 9,880 new dwellings (over and above the allocations in the adopted Local Plan for 13,981 dwellings, of which approximately 3,013 has been built out as at 31 March 2019) plus a 5% buffer
  - 41ha of B2/B8 (manufacturing land)
  - 15ha of B1 (office)
  - Associated infrastructure, community facilities and open spaces.
- 2.2 The timetable for the local plan review is set out in the Local Development Scheme (LDS) that was agreed by Cabinet on 18 March 2020. The Council completed the

Regulation 18 stage in late spring 2018 and has since been gathering further evidence to prepare the Regulation 19 stage document, the draft plan, for consultation in early 2021.

- 2.3 Before the draft plan can be prepared, officers need to secure a 'steer' from the members of the Local Plan Panel of an appropriate vision and strategy that will deliver the borough's development needs for the period covered by the local plan review (2022 to 2038).
- 2.4 Evidence gathering for the local plan review is well underway, the table in appendix i sets out what has already been prepared and presented to the Local Plan Panel, what the 'headlines' are and what the implications are for the options. There are two strands of evidence still to complete/report. The first strand is the remaining evidence currently underway that will provide more specific detail for policy formulation. The second/ final stand of evidence cannot be completed until a steer has been provided on the development strategy. This includes carrying out a final transport modelling run and the identification of mitigation measures to be included in that.
- 2.5 However, the evidence completed so far is sufficient to help identify and inform the options for a development strategy. The evidence base is a significant influencer of the local plan review along with national policy that is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and national planning guidance. The Council's corporate plan and other strategies are also fundamental to the shape and content of the local plan review.

### **Local Plan Vision**

- 2.6 It will be necessary for the Council to establish a vision for the Local Plan setting out what it intends to achieve for the Borough through new development. Based on the Council's corporate strategy, a draft vision is put forward as a 'starter for ten' to aid the consideration of the appropriate growth strategy to support the vision.
- *Generally, new development would come forward to meet local needs and have contributed to supporting low carbon/zero carbon and renewable energy initiatives, enhance the natural environment through biodiversity net gain, ensuring quality design and place making capitalising on the borough's extensive natural and heritage assets.*
  - *At Sittingbourne, a re-focussed town centre aimed at securing a vital and viable retail heart supported by leisure and dining opportunities, whilst enabling new high density residential and community activity. This has been achieved by wider regeneration, public realm improvements, and reconfigured and improved transport connections at and around the town.*
  - *At Sheerness, Minster and Queenborough, the promotion of coastal and port rejuvenation making most use of its heritage assets whilst supporting the needs of the local communities.*
  - *At Faversham, a thriving market town and heritage destination that has successfully managed 21st Century demands. It has been achieved by enabling sympathetic and symbiotic growth whilst reducing congestion and air quality issues along the A2.*

- *At our rural and maritime communities, enable development to maintain and improve local services to cater for the local daily needs of its residents and to support vibrant communities whilst maintaining the quality of the local countryside environments in which they are set and protecting their heritage.*

2.7 The Panel may wish to reflect on the proposed wording and any suggestions will be taken forward for further consideration as the Council progresses its work on the Local Plan Review.

### **Development strategy objectives**

2.8 The Local plan review needs to contain an overall strategy for the pattern and scale of development and make sufficient provision for the future growth needs of the Borough for the plan period (to 2038).

2.9 In terms of broad principles to guide the location of development, the following objectives reflect local evidence, government policy and Council priorities:

- To provide for homes and jobs that are best suited to meet identified local needs;
- To support and sustain communities across the borough, big and small, by planning to meet identified needs, including needs for community facilities and infrastructure; and
- To protect and manage our resources to address climate change through delivering sustainable growth that supports urban and rural economies and makes the best use of infrastructure.

2.10 Sitting behind these objectives are a number of key principles that should underpin the development strategy. The borough's identified development needs should be met:

- On brownfield sites in sustainable locations/within the settlement confines;
- On land at low risk of flooding within existing settlements; and
- On land with the least environmental or amenity value.

### **Challenges for consideration in discussing the strategic development options**

2.11 Given the characteristics of the borough and various constraints around infrastructure, difficult choices will need to be made about where development land should be allocated. 60% of the borough is covered by high-level constraints identified in the NPPF as habitat sites, SSSI, land at risk of flooding etc. The remaining 40% of the borough that is not constrained by these high level designations includes the fruit belt and land with local landscape designations and often subject to the 'best and most versatile' agricultural land. Additionally, the A2 corridor presents issues around air quality and traffic congestion.

2.12 With regard to infrastructure provision, there is evidence of some communities not being supported by the level of infrastructure and services that would normally be sought. It would therefore be important to ensure that new development does not further exacerbate that under provision and ensure that it does provide for its own needs in accordance with Government policy. Furthermore, sites to meet the development needs of the borough must be deliverable meaning that they are available and suitable for development and are economically viable. There are some difficult choices to be made.

- 2.13 The desired outcome is to agree a development strategy that achieves a future of the borough where people have a desire and ability to live locally because of the quality of life and opportunities available. The Council should provide a positive policy response to the evidence that can sustainably meet the plan objectives in a way that is shaped by the underpinning principles set out above.
- 2.14 In determining what would make a sustainable and deliverable strategy for the local plan review, it is important to consider the mix as well as the location of potential development sites. A strategy dominated by small to medium sized sites may not generate the critical mass required for significant improvements to infrastructure (schools, health care, highways, sustainable transport measure etc.) which could benefit existing communities as well as new residents – noting the NPPF requires at least 10% of the housing need to be met from small sites (less than 1ha) . A strategy dominated by a few larger sites would bring in to question whether the short to medium term housing needs of the borough would be adequately addressed given the long lead in times for significant delivery to come forward and the impact this has on meeting shorter term five year supply of housing. A supply of small/medium sites would also need to be allocated to maintain the rolling five year target.

### **3 Proposals**

- 3.1 In accordance with the development principles set out in paras 2.10, there is a strong case for ensuring maximum use is made of existing brownfield sites available within the Borough and town centre redevelopment sites, particularly with a focus on the opportunities available within Sittingbourne Town Centre. In effect the development growth which can be secured from these opportunities should be sought whatever growth option the Council adopts.
- 3.2 A Supplementary Planning Document is being prepared setting out an outline masterplan for development within the Sittingbourne Town Centre boundary. It is estimated that the Council should be able to secure circa 800 additional dwellings over the Local Plan review period. It is also anticipated that sites within Sheerness and Faversham Town Centres could also potentially provide an additional 200 dwellings. It is estimated that a further 500 dwellings could be identified on other available brownfield sites within existing settlement confines within the Borough. In total therefore, it is expected that an additional 1,500 dwellings can be secured against the requirement.
- 3.3 The borough has a strong record of delivering windfall sites. Since the 2014 base date of the adopted local plan, Bearing Fruits, an annual average of 258 dwellings have been delivered. Based on this performance, it would be reasonable to assume that for the last 12 years of the local plan review figure, 250 dwelling per year could be delivered. This equates to a total of 3,000 dwellings for the life of the local plan review and again is considered within each of the options presented.
- 3.4 Officers have identified five potential growth strategy options across a spectrum of opportunities to meet the remaining development needs within the Borough. It should be noted that these options are not necessarily distinct from one another and a combination of elements from each of the options can be put together to make an alternative strategy should the Council wish to do so.
- 3.5 In consideration of the above objectives, principles and government expectations, the options below could potentially deliver in the region of an additional 10,000 homes so it



builds in some flexibility and choice. A refinement of sites for inclusion in the local plan review is a matter for a later date when a detailed site selection will be carried out.

- 3.6 In summary, these are:
- A. Carry forward of Bearing Fruits (Business as usual) development focussed on extensions to main settlements with a focus on the Thames Gateway area
  - B. More even distribution of the additional Local Plan Review requirement across the borough's main urban centres and rural areas
  - C. More even distribution of the final requirements (Bearing Fruits and Local Plan Review) across the main urban centres
  - D. More of the overall Local Plan requirement at the eastern end of the borough
  - E. Focus on New Garden Settlements primarily located within existing rural area
- 3.7 Appendix ii sets out the likely development distribution in percentage terms between the Isle of Sheppey, Sittingbourne and Faversham including their immediate hinterlands, and the mainland rural areas against the above development growth options. Indicative figures are used to show how the existing Bearing Fruits distribution combine with the indicative distributions for the Local Plan Review development growth options.

#### **Site availability for Swale**

- 3.8 The sites that are available for development have been identified through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). Members may recall that sites have been assessed as either being:
- 'suitable and deliverable'
  - 'suitable but not deliverable'
  - 'unsuitable'
- 3.9 In an ideal world, the local planning authority would be in a position to choose their local plan allocations from sites that were assessed as 'suitable and deliverable' but site selection is more nuanced and must consider all other relevant evidence, national guidance and the Council's corporate objectives and other strategies and plans. SHLAA sites are assessed at a point in time and represent a 'snapshot'. Circumstances do sometimes change and this can alter the assessment outcomes (e.g. subsequently resolved land ownership issues that might previously have affected a site's achievability). Some sites that are unsuitable could become suitable through the appropriate mitigation measures.
- 3.10 Sites that immediately adjoin the settlement boundary (as identified in the adopted local plan, Bearing Fruits Policy ST4) are, for the purposes of this exercise, classed as being part of that settlement's area. Sites that are separate from the settlement confines are considered as rural sites.

**Option A - Business as usual: development focussed on extensions to main settlements with a focus on the Thames Gateway area**

- 3.11 Historically, new development has been focussed at the borough's principal settlement as it has the broadest range and quantity of services and facilities. In Bearing Fruits, approximately 40% of housing allocations are in and around Sittingbourne with 15.75% in Faversham and 25% in the West Sheppey Triangle. The remaining 10.75% is distributed across the Rural Service Centres at Boughton, Teynham, Newington, Iwade, Eastchurch and Leysdown. Windfalls account for approximately 8.6% of the total distribution. A strategy that continues with this approach would need to see further allocations distributed across the borough as follows:
- Sheppey - 17.5%
  - Sittingbourne – 30.5%
  - Faversham – 12.5% and
  - Rural areas – 8.5%
- 3.12 The SHLAA has identified a limited number of sites that directly adjoin the built up boundary of Sittingbourne itself. Should Members wish to support this option, sites would need to be located in the rural areas that surround Sittingbourne, at Borden, Tunstall, Highstead and Rodmersham and at Bapchild and Tonge. There is a significant number of sites to the west of the A249 at Bobbing but this is not considered part of Sittingbourne town given the physical separation of the A249 which acts as a hard 'finish'. Specific sites to be allocated would be a matter for discussion later in the process and would need to be able to deliver in the region of 3,000 dwellings.
- 3.13 The SHLAA identifies an abundance of sites in and around Faversham to the tune of approximately 6,000 dwellings. There are sufficient sites to allocate additional development in this location in line with a 'business as usual' development strategy for the local plan review. Approximately 1,250 dwellings would need to be allocated at Faversham under this option.
- 3.14 For the West Sheppey Triangle, the potential is more limited. Of the sites identified in the SHLAA, a significant number fall within land at high or medium risk of flooding but are also within or adjacent to the built-up boundary. Approximately 1,730 dwellings would need to be allocated in this broad location and SHLAA sites could yield approximately 2,200 dwellings on the basis that the site constraints can be addressed. Otherwise, the potential is limited to circa 1,200 dwellings over two large sites on land east of Scocles Road and land east of Queenborough. The Rushenden Marshes site could accommodate circa 850 dwellings subject to further discussions with Environment Agency and Natural England.
- 3.15 Available SHLAA sites in and around the Rural Service Centres can comfortably meet the requirement under this option as round 1,400 dwellings could be accommodated at these locations needing 840 dwellings to be allocated to meet the 8.5%.

- 3.16 This option can accommodate the quantum of development required and would be achieved by major further outward urban expansion where existing traffic and air quality problems would be difficult to mitigate against. Additionally, it would result in the erosion of open unspoilt countryside through the dilution of the separation between Sittingbourne and the surrounding rural settlements. There are also significant concerns that this approach would not be the most effective option for securing infrastructure improvements because the quantum of development on the individual sites does not lend itself to a more strategic approach to infrastructure provision and could lead to further demands on existing services and facilities, particularly in the short term before infrastructure projects are introduced. Noting that many of the existing infrastructure requirements to support existing communities are not yet finalised (M2 junction 5, additional secondary school and capacity issues on the A249) could be placed under further significant pressure with this option.
- 3.17 The pros of this option are:
- This approach enables the spread of development across all of the major urban centres, taking advantage of their existing facilities and services;
  - This should theoretically (over time) support local infrastructure investment that will increase capacity for existing communities.
- 3.18 The cons of this option are:
- It could lead to the further exacerbation of local infrastructure provision, particularly in the short term before development secures the infrastructure development required;
  - This approach would erode open, unspoilt countryside by 'development creep';
  - It would result in the dilution of the separation of settlements and undermine their individual identity;
  - Due to the distribution of new development under this option, it would be difficult to mitigate against traffic and air quality issues within the existing urban areas.
- 3.19 Overall, this is a deliverable option that could provide for the future development needs of the borough. However, this option presents limited opportunities to advantage the wider community through significant infrastructure investment and the introduction of more widely sustainable transport options and innovative placemaking.

**Option B - More even distribution of the additional Local Plan Review requirement across the borough's main urban centres and rural areas**

- 3.20 This option would see a more even distribution of the additional housing numbers across Sittingbourne and Faversham and the Isle of Sheppey and the rural areas. Windfalls would equate to 30% of the total need over the plan period. Of the remaining needs, the distribution would be as follows:
- Sheppey - 14%

- Sittingbourne – 21%
- Faversham – 24.5% and
- Rural areas – 10.5%

3.21 There are enough sites on Sheppey and in the rural areas to meet the numbers needed under this scenario and there is a reasonable range of sites. Faversham also has the quantum of sites to accommodate development and provide some choice around the sites that could be allocated without requiring the SE Faversham Duchy of Cornwall proposal, if the majority of sites all around Faversham come forward. The challenge for Sittingbourne remains the same as with option A. With 800 dwellings expected to come forward through regeneration of the town centre, sites to accommodate circa 1,275 would still need to be identified and could only be done so if sites remote from the settlement confines were included.

3.22 The pros of this option are:

- Some rebalancing of the distribution of development from that agreed through Bearing Fruits;
- Focusses a higher proportion of development within more viable/affluent areas that should in turn deliver a higher proportion of affordable housing;
- As there is more focus on the more viable, eastern part of the borough, this option would result in greater certainty over the delivery of housing and is more likely to secure a five year rolling supply of housing land;
- Spreads the majority of development across sustainable settlements which provide services and facilities and focusses on the strategic road network and would be easier to implement sustainable transport measures;
- Create opportunities to provide additional housing at rural settlements that already have a range of shops and services that would benefit from a modest increase in population to sustain and improve those facilities.

3.23 The cons of this option are:

- Similarities with options A, but places more pressure on Faversham and settlements in the east of the borough
- Given the more piecemeal approach to site selection implied by this option, would not provide the focus for significant opportunities to deliver strategic based infrastructure and service improvements that would do nothing to address infrastructure gaps for existing communities
- It would be necessary to tackle significant traffic issues along the A2 through Faversham and air quality at the Ospringe AQMA and other AQMA areas within the Borough
- It would result in the dilution of the separation of settlements and undermine the individual identity of local communities, particularly surrounding Faversham;

3.24 Overall, this option would spread development across the main settlements but could lack the focus of development to secure the sought after localised strategic infrastructure within the Faversham area e.g. handling transport and highway related improvements on a wider scale and providing for educational needs at primary level and at sub regional level secondary school provision.

**Option C - More even distribution of the final requirements (Bearing Fruits and Local Plan Review) across the main urban centres**

3.25 Similar to option B, this pattern of development would need to include the SE Faversham Duchy of Cornwall option as an urban extension of Faversham in order to deliver the borough's strategic objectives as the SHLAA sites on their own for Faversham would not provide the scale and typology of sites needed for this approach.

3.26 Again, windfalls would equate to 30% of the total need over the plan period. The remaining need would be met as follows:

- Sheppey – 14%
- Sittingbourne – 10.5%
- Faversham – 35%
- Rural areas – 10.5%

This option could meet the development needs of the borough and presents significant opportunities for infrastructure investment and for development that supports sustainable transport initiatives (modal shifts) although there are highway capacity issues at Brenley Corner that would still need to be addressed. KCC have identified a need for a new secondary school for Faversham and a specific site of approximately 10ha would need to be found, although not necessarily within the Borough.

3.27 The pros of this option are:

- Further rebalancing of the distribution of growth east/west in the borough;
- Focusses development in the more viable eastern half of the borough and in turn is more likely to deliver more affordable homes;
- Supports the range of sites needed to maintain a long term rolling 5 year supply of housing sites;
- Provides opportunities to look at the role of the A2 at Faversham and divert traffic to the M2 allowing greater integration of sites south of the A2;
- Provide the opportunity to secure other strategic based infrastructure improvements at the eastern part of the Borough e.g primary and secondary school provision;
- Enables greater emphasis towards sustainable village development by securing greater viability of shops and services, e.g. locations with existing services, existing employment sites etc.;

- Create opportunities to provide additional housing at rural settlements that already have a range of shops and services that would benefit from a modest increase in population to sustain and improve those facilities.
- New development could assist in enhancing the vitality and viability of Faversham town centre

This option would provide an opportunity to create integrated communities that would compliment the character and appearance of the historic town.

3.28 The cons of this option are:

- Capacity issues at Brenley Corner, junction 7 of the M2
- Extra development could put further pressure on A2 and the AQMA at Ospringe until mitigation was secured;
- Could limit development led infrastructure benefits in other parts of the Borough.

3.29 Overall, this is an approach that would deliver a wide range and mix of sites that would meet the development needs of the borough for the plan period and meet the need for smaller/medium sized sites to ensure delivery in the early years of the plan period. The pattern and scale of the development should provide a good range of opportunities to secure new infrastructure that would benefit new and existing communities as well as the opportunity to support smaller, rural communities. Whilst there are some concerns regarding capacity at Brenley Corner, this option also creates opportunities for implementing sustainable transport measures and supporting modal shifts away from the use of the private car and the need to travel in this way. Developments under this option would create opportunities to provide easily accessible and safe links into the town and rural service centres and to protect and enhance the role of Faversham town centre

**Option D - More of the overall local plan requirement at the eastern end of the borough**

3.30 This option seeks to deliver a more even distribution overall when considering the quantum of development required by both the adopted local plan, Bearing Fruits and the Local Plan Review. This approach would see a greater proportion of development in the eastern, more viable end of the borough in and around Faversham. Windfalls would again equate to 30% of the total need over the plan period with the remaining need distributed as follows:

- Sheppey – 7%
- Sittingbourne - 7%
- Faversham - 45.5%
- Rural areas 10.5%

Such an approach would consider several SHLAA sites around the periphery of Faversham as well as the strategic development site to the east. The level of

development would require significant infrastructure investment that would benefit new and existing communities in this part of the borough but there would be a considerable impact on the character and setting of this historic town and on the character of its rural hinterlands to the south and east in particular.

3.31 The pros of this option are:

- Further rebalancing of the distribution of growth east/west in the borough;
- Focusses development in the more viable eastern half of the borough and in turn is more likely to deliver more affordable homes;
- Supports the range of sites needed to maintain a rolling 5 year supply of housing sites
- provides certainty on the location of new development post 2038
- Provides opportunities to look at the role of the A2 at Faversham and divert traffic to the M2 allowing greater integration of sites south of the A2;
- Enables greater emphasis towards sustainable development by securing greater viability of shops and services, e.g. locations with existing services, existing employment sites etc.
- Would result in significant infrastructure investment that would benefit existing and new communities

3.32 The cons of this option are:

- Capacity issues at Brenley Corner, junction 7 of the M2
- New development could impact on the vitality and viability of Faversham town
- Extra development could put further pressure on A2 and the AQMA at Ospringe until mitigation was secured
- Significant impacts on the character and setting of Faversham town
- Significant impacts on the character of the countryside to the east and south of the town
- Could limit development led infrastructure benefits in other parts of the Borough.

**Option E - Focus on Strategic Development Sites (New Garden Communities) primarily located within existing rural areas**

3.33 This option was initially explored at the early stages of the local plan review. A prospectus was prepared and a call out for the submission of potential sites for consideration. The following sites are available for consideration:

- Bobbing
- Highstead Park
- East of Faversham/ Duchy
- North Street/ Gladmans

3.34 The detailed proposals and the pros and cons of each of the 4 sites has already been presented to Members and discussed at length. In terms of the percentage distribution, windfalls would again equate to 30% of the total need over the plan period, the remaining need distributed as a percentage as follows:

- Sheppey – 3%
- Sittingbourne – 5.5%
- Faversham - 5.5%
- Rural areas – 56%

There is an adequate supply of sites to comfortably accommodate this option bearing in mind that the Strategic Development Sites were also assessed in the SHLAA and would need to be included with this option (either one or more in combination with SHLAA sites). Members can refer back to the reports presented in October 2019

<https://services.swale.gov.uk/meetings/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=216&MId=2195&Ver=4> for more details but by way of summary, the proposals are as follows;

- **Bobbing** – circa 3,000 homes (up to 40% affordable housing), 100 ha of open space, community facilities including primary school, health centre, local centre, village hall and sports pitches, employment floorspace (Inc. starter units), re-alignment of Sheppey Way and green infrastructure.
- **North Street, Sheldwich, Faversham** – circa 5,000 homes (a ‘strong emphasis’ on affordable housing). Employment provision, a High Street for retail/mixed use, primary and secondary school, community uses, allotments, community orchard, playing fields, open space and woodland. Re-alignment of the A251 through the site is indicated, together with improvements at J6 M2.
- **South East Faversham** - Circa 2,500 homes (aim for 40% affordable housing), up to 20,000 sq. m of commercial space. Community uses (local centres, health centre), education (primary schools and potentially a secondary school), sport and leisure (Inc. possible relocation of cricket club and football ground), network of green infrastructure. This proposal would be considered a Faversham development rather than a rural areas development given that it would act as an urban extension.
- **South East Sittingbourne** - circa 8,000 homes (20% affordable housing), new commercial space, Kent Science Park now within the red line, community uses, local retail space, medical facilities, education (3 x 3FE primary schools, secondary school, Inc. 6th form and further education provision), sport and leisure, green infrastructure and a new motorway junction and M2/A2 link road.

3.35 The amount of development that this option could deliver would comfortably meet the required needs and yield many significant benefits around the delivery of all types of infrastructure and opportunity to create highly sustainable communities that meet the local plan review objectives. However, sites of this scale have a long lead in time before homes are delivered meaning that this approach will have implications for housing delivery during the early years of the local plan review. Additional, small/medium sized sites would also need to be allocated to



support housing delivery in the early years of the plan period. Members will be aware there are significant risks to the Council if it cannot demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply, namely that the borough is more vulnerable to 'ad hoc' development and 'planning by appeal'. These risks are exacerbated by following this approach as it is, in essence, 'placing all the eggs in one basket' even if more than one new settlement option was taken forward. This approach leaves no flexibility or resilience in the event that issues arise that affect timely delivery of the site. It would, however, potentially support development opportunities further beyond the Local Plan Review period.

3.36 Given market conditions, it is likely that at best only two strategic sites could be delivered, one in the east and one in the west of the Borough should the Council consider this an appropriate approach to meeting development needs.

3.37 The pros of this option are:

- these are ultimately self sustaining developments that provide their own infrastructure and therefore do not add additional pressure elsewhere;
- due to economies of scale, they provide greater certainty regarding the provision of infrastructure;
- provides possibilities for sustainable transport focussing on walking, cycling, public transport and reducing the need to travel by car within their sites.
- Ability to comprehensively masterplan the whole of the site

3.38 The cons are:

- Very little resilience or flexibility should there be issues with the delivery of the site(s) in question;
- Sites of this scale would not deliver much in the way of housing numbers during the early years of the plan meaning that other small/medium sized sites would still need to be allocated to secure a rolling 5 year housing land supply;
- This option only allows for infrastructure provision within a localised area that would not benefit existing communities across the wider Borough.
- Due to the scale of the development, there would be significant adverse impacts on the character and appearance of the localised countryside area and the ability to maintain the separate identities of local smaller settlements.
- The risk that sites would still not be large enough to be truly self-sustaining in terms of job creation, and be likely to develop into large dormitory-type developments

3.39 Overall, this option would only be an appropriate development strategy if one or two of the sites came forward during the plan period and was married with a deliverable selection of small/medium sites that would come forward during the early years of the local plan to secure a rolling 5 year supply of housing land.

#### **Summary of the options and key considerations**

3.40 The five main options have been outlined above along with the pros and cons of each. They have been formed on the basis that they can achieve the local plan objectives. Every local plan must be informed and accompanied by a

Sustainability Appraisal (SA). SA plays a key role throughout the plan making process and an important part in demonstrating that the local plan reflects sustainability objectives as far as possible and has considered reasonable alternatives. The Council's Sustainability Appraisal objectives are identified in the Scoping Report (December 2018) and guided the formation of the local plan vision and objectives set out above. The final SA will be published alongside the Reg 19 documents and is also consulted on.

- 3.41 In sustainability terms, the Council is not specifically required to select the 'most sustainable' option but must be able to explain how and why the option that has been selected best meets the needs of the borough.
- 3.42 In determining which option to support, it is important to consider the points below because the Inspector at the Examination will need to be satisfied that the local plan review fully addresses these.
- If the development strategy can deliver the development needs of the borough over the plan period (to 2038) as a minimum
  - If the strategy is appropriate and takes into account the reasonable alternatives and is guided by evidence
  - If the development needs are deliverable over the plan period and that cross-boundary strategic matters have been addressed with our neighbouring authorities
  - If it is consistent with national policy
- 3.43 Sitting below those high-level requirements, Member are invited to consider the contribution each of the options make to delivering the local plan review objectives and if their preferred strategy represents a proportionate policy response to meet the assessed needs, would adequately address infrastructure needs and has the least impact on environment/amenity and heritage assets.

#### **Allocations for other land uses**

- 3.44 As well as the need for new housing, the local plan review must identify enough land to accommodate:
- 41ha of B2/B8 (manufacturing/warehouse and distribution) land; and
  - 15ha of B1
- 3.45 The distribution and allocation of employment sites will be a matter for discussion for this Panel at a later date. The approach Members wish to take with depend on various factors, including the broad distribution of housing development.
- 3.46 Similarly, other uses such as retail, leisure, education and health facilities, community centres and open space will be discussed at a later meeting of this Panel. The location and amount of other uses will largely depend on the pattern and scale of housing development as determined by this steer.

## 4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 This report sets out a range of development growth options upon which to potentially progress the drafting of the Local Plan Review. Other more extreme development growth strategies could be pursued such as directing all growth to one area or spreading growth across the Borough often in what would be considered in unsustainable locations. Neither of these strategies are likely to demonstrate sustainable development or meet the corporate objectives of the Council and therefore, would not recommend such approaches.
- 4.2 The local plan review cannot progress without a Member steer on a development strategy. Remaining evidence cannot be completed without an identified preferred option from Members and policies cannot be prepared without this information. Members could choose not to provide a steer but this would cause significant delays to the process and is therefore not a realistic option.

## 5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 The preparation of the Local Plan review will need to conform with government regulations and the Council's agreed Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). This stage of preparation has followed an initial 'Issues and Options' consultation (Regulation 18) and builds on the responses received at that stage. Once the Council agrees to a draft of the Local Plan Review, the document will be subject to full public consultation (Regulation 19) and the representations made will form the basis upon which examination of the Local Plan review will be undertaken by an independent Inspector appointed by the Secretary of state.

## 6 Implications

| Issue  | Implications   |
|--|--|
| Corporate Plan                               | Priority 1: Building the right homes in the right places and supporting quality jobs for all   |
| Financial, Resource and Property             | The costs and resources for progressing the Local Plan have been identified within the Councils budgets.   |
| Legal, Statutory and Procurement             | The Local Plan review is being prepared in accordance with Government regulations and the Council's constitution.  |
| Crime and Disorder                           | None identified at this stage.   |
| Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency | The Local Plan review will develop policies relating to the environment and climate change taking into account progress on the Climate Change Action plan. |
| Health and Wellbeing                         | Health and well being is a golden thread running through the production of the Local Plan.   |
| Risk Management and Health and Safety        | None identified at this stage.   |

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Equality and Diversity      | Local plan preparation will require a full community impact assessment. |
| Privacy and Data Protection | None identified at this stage   |

**7 Appendices**

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix i: local plan evidence table
- Appendix ii: Table showing % distribution of growth

**8 Background Papers**

None

**Appendix i: Local Plan Review completed evidence**

| <b>Evidence (completed)</b>                            | <b>Purpose of evidence</b>   | <b>Key findings</b>  | <b>Implications for a Development Strategy</b>  |
|--|--|--|---|
| Employment Land Review (ELR)                           | To identify the amount of additional employment land needed during the local plan review period  | 41ha of additional B2/B8<br>15ha of additional B1  | No specific implications for the development strategy as location of new employment land would be met through policy and specific allocations that consider existing employment sites.                                      |
| GTAA   | To identify the requirement for additional pitches for those who meet the definition of 'Traveller' in government policy. To identify the requirement for additional Travelling Show Person plots. | 51 additional pitches for Travellers and 1 additional Travelling Show Person plot.   | No specific implications for the development strategy as these needs would be met through policy and/or specific allocations regardless of the preferred option.  |
| Local Landscape Designation Review                     | To recommend Areas of High Landscape Value across the borough  | 10 Areas of High Landscape Value recommended   | Identifies areas of the borough with high landscape value. Development in these areas will have a greater impact on landscape character than other parts of the borough not covered by this or national level designations. |
| Landscape Sensitivity Study                            | Assessment of the landscape implications of possible extensions to the borough's urban centre and their sensitivity to change from development.  | Identifies the sites on the periphery of urban centres where harm to the landscape character is most significant. Harm would be most significant to the south east of Sittingbourne, to the south of Sheerness, Minster and Halfway and to the west and north of Faversham | This evidence supports a strategy that would see development allocated to the east and south of Faversham's settlement confines and to the west and east of Sittingbourne.  |
| Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) | To identify land that is suitable, achievable and deliverable to meet the development needs  | There are enough sites to meet the development needs of the  | The range and availability of sites is generally sufficient to support any of the five options although some sites that are   |

| Evidence (completed)                             | Purpose of evidence  | Key findings   | Implications for a Development Strategy   |
|--|--|--|---|
|  | of the Borough for the local plan review period.   | borough for the local plan review period.  | not 'suitable and deliverable' may need to be considered. This will only be appropriate where constraints can be mitigated against and can be justified and explained through the site selection process. |
| Local Housing Needs Assessment (standard method) | To identify the borough's housing need using the government's mandatory 'standard method' calculation  | Local plan review housing number is not 'fixed' until the plan is submitted. For this reason, a range was prepared based on different scenarios. The number is 1,038 per annum but this will need to be updated prior to submission of the local plan review.  | Any development strategy must be able to deliver, as a minimum, approximately 10,374 dwellings.   |
| Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)       | To identify the housing need for the Borough in terms of size, mix, tenure and needs of specific groups e.g. elderly within the overall need figure. | The tenure split is 72.8% market housing, 18% affordable rent; 4.3% shared ownership; 4.9% help to buy/starter homes. Size profile: greatest demand in market housing is for 3 bed properties, for HtB/Starter Homes the demand is reasonably level with 3 bed and 2 bed properties, then 4+ beds. Affordable rent demand is highest for 3 bed properties, then 1 bed, 4+ be and then 2 bed properties. Specialist dwellings for older persons need is for 516 additional units of sheltered housing required. | No specific implications for the development strategy as these needs would be met through policy and/or specific allocations regardless of the preferred option.  |

| Evidence (completed)  | Purpose of evidence   | Key findings   | Implications for a Development Strategy  |
|---|---|--|--|
|   |   | An additional 305 registered care spaces (nursing and residential care) will be needed.  |  |
| Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)  | To assess flood risk within the borough from all sources now and into the future as well as assessing the impact that cumulative land use changes and development will have on flood risk   | Assessment and mapping of all sources of flooding across the borough, including the impact of climate change   | The options have been prepared with this information in mind, in that land at risk of flooding is avoided <i>unless</i> there are over-riding benefits for sustainability and any risks can be mitigated. This information will be considered in further detail at the site selection stage. |
| Retail & Leisure Needs Assessment   | To identify the future retail and leisure needs of the Borough in terms of floorspace and facilities. Also assessed the retail hierarchy and reviewed the vitality and viability of both the town and local centres in the Borough. | Sittingbourne: 1,900 sq. m. of convenience goods floorspace; between 12,300 and 22,600 sq. m. comparison goods floorspace. Faversham: 2,700 – 4,700 sq. m. comparison goods floorspace only. Sheerness: 1,200 sq. m convenience floorspace and between 4,500 and 7,900 sq. m. of comparison goods floorspace. Between 7 and 9 new gyms across the Borough. | No specific implications for the development strategy as these needs would be met through policy and/or specific allocations regardless of the preferred option.   |
| Transport modelling   | To assess the capacity of the road network and potential mitigation measures against different development scenarios.   | No show stoppers long term but significant mitigation required along with sustainable transport measures (modal shift) to deliver the required development needs.  | M2 junction 7 capacity constraints are likely to hinder short term delivery in the east of the borough during the early years of the local plan review regardless of preferred option  |
| Assessment of New Settlements submission sites (Strategic Development Option sites) | To assess the risks, opportunities and uncertainties associates with the four submitted garden communities in Swale. The assessments  | Each of the four settlements could deliver some of the borough's development needs as part of the strategic options although the site at North Street,   | No specific implications for the development strategy although one or more of these Strategic proposals would assist with the delivery of the borough's development needs and help to meet the   |

| Evidence (completed)        | Purpose of evidence   | Key findings  | Implications for a Development Strategy  |
|-----------------------------|---|---|--|
|                             | looked at various issues including infrastructure needs, affordable housing provision, viability and landscape impacts. | Sheldwich would have a significant impact on the setting of the AONB.   | local plan review objectives, delivering significant infrastructure investment.  |
| Open Space Assessment Study | To assess the quantum of open space in the Borough and to identify the OS needs for the local plan review plan period.  | Additional open space should be sought in line with local standards that are derived from the Council's Open Space Strategy | No specific implications for the development strategy as these needs would be met through policy and/or specific allocations regardless of the preferred option. |



**Appendix ii: Table showing indicative distribution of dwellings against Development Growth Option**

|                 | Bearing Fruits (14,124 dwellings*) |       |        |        |           | Local Plan Review (10,000) |       |       |       |            | COMBINED (24,124 dwellings) |        |        |       |           |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|-------|--------|--------|-----------|----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|------------|-----------------------------|--------|--------|-------|-----------|
|                 | SH                                 | SIT   | FAV    | RA     | Windfalls | SH                         | SIT   | FAV   | RA    | Windfalls^ | SH                          | SIT    | FAV    | RA    | Windfalls |
| <b>Option A</b> | 25.0%                              | 40.0% | 15.75% | 10.75% | 8.6%      | 17.5%                      | 30.5% | 12.5% | 8.5%  | 30%        | 22.5%                       | 36.0%  | 14.2%  | 9.7%  | 17.5%     |
| <b>Option B</b> |                                    |       |        |        |           | 14.0%                      | 21.0% | 24.5% | 10.5% | 30%        | 20.5%                       | 32.0%  | 19.5%  | 10.5% | 17.5%     |
| <b>Option C</b> |                                    |       |        |        |           | 14.0%                      | 10.5% | 35.0% | 10.5% | 30%        | 20.5%                       | 27.75% | 23.75% | 10.5% | 17.5%     |
| <b>Option D</b> |                                    |       |        |        |           | 7.0%                       | 7.0%  | 45.5% | 10.5% | 30%        | 17.5%                       | 26.5%  | 28.0%  | 10.5% | 17.5%     |
| <b>Option E</b> |                                    |       |        |        |           | 3.0%                       | 5.5%  | 5.5%  | 56.0% | 30%        | 16.0%                       | 25.5%  | 11.5%  | 29.5% | 17.5%     |

\*Total minimum number of dwellings allocated, see Bearing Fruits Policy ST4

^Based on annual windfall delivery from 2014, averaging circa 250 dwellings per year last 12 years of Local Plan Review plan period (i.e.2026 to 2038)

**NB Percentage split of total distribution may not add up to 100% due to rounding**

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