

Council	
Meeting Date	30 th July 2025
Report Title	Local Plan Review - Timetabling and Way Forward
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Joanne Johnson, Head of Place
Lead Officer	Natalie Earl, Planning Manager (Policy)
Classification	Open
Recommendations	1. To agree the updated Local Development Scheme as set out under Option 1 in the appended Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group report.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the background to the recommendation made by Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group (PTPWG) during its meeting on 15th July 2025 and Policy and Resources Committee (P&R) on 21st July 2025 with regard to the Local Development Scheme.
- 1.2 The purpose of the PTPWG report was to set out the barriers to progressing the Local Plan in line with the current Local Development Scheme (LDS) and to present the options for overcoming them.
- 1.3 The report (at Appendix II) set out alternative options available to Members and the advantages, disadvantages and risks associated with those.
- 1.4 It further set out the Council's previous three decisions in relation to the emerging Local Plan:
 - ensuring the next Local Plan is adopted within the transition window (Policy and Resources Committee, 16th October 2024);
 - awaiting the Highsted Inquiry decision before progressing the Reg 18 consultation (Full Council, 4th December 2024); and
 - undertaking a draft Full Plan Regulation 18 consultation (Full Council, 24th July 2024).
- 1.5 A key factor is that at the Highsted Inquiry on 12th June 2025 the Inspector advised that the Inquiry would need to sit for a further 2 weeks. The Inquiry is now scheduled to end on 31st October 2025. This is a significant delay compared with the previous end date of 29th July. The report assessed the LDS options available in the light of this change.
- 1.6 Members discussed this report at the Planning and Transportation Working Group (PTPWG) meeting on 15th July 2025 and voted unanimously to recommended to Policy and Resource Committee to recommend to Full Council

to select Option 1 (Delay the Regulation 19 stage to July - September 2026, once the Highsted decision has been received. Reduce the scope of the Reg 18 stage to include a vision, objectives, portrait of the borough and Development Management policies, and schedule accordingly). The draft minutes can be seen at Appendix III.

- 1.7 It was subsequently discussed at the Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 21st July 2025 and Members unanimously voted in favour of the recommendation.
- 1.8 Policy and Resources Committee Members discussed a variety of issues including:
- The valuable discussion on the report at PTPWG
 - Option 1 is a sensible course of action but still has risks
 - Swale is in a far from ideal situation caused by circumstances outside of its control
 - Uncertainty around when the Highsted decision will be received
 - Swale need a Local Plan to assist with development management decisions, especially appeals
- 1.9 If Full Council agree the recommendation, a new LDS will be published as soon as practically possible.

2 Background

- 2.1 The PTPWG report set out the recent history of the progress of the Local Plan and the relevant decisions that have been taken in terms of timeframe, format and dependencies. It also set out the risks of not having an up to date Local Plan. This can all be seen in Appendix II.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 To agree the updated Local Development Scheme as set out under Option 1 in the appended Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group report.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 There are a number of alternative options for progressing the Local Plan which have been considered. These are set out and assessed in the appended Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group report.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 All formal stages of a Local Plan go through public consultation stages with the public, Parish/Town Councils, Statutory and non-Statutory consultees and local interest groups. The draft [Statement of Community Involvement](#) sets out the Council's proposed approach.
- 5.2 There has been no specific consultation on the options within this report beyond the discussion by PTPWG on 15th July 2025 and P&R on 21st July 2025.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	<p>The Local Plan supports the delivery of all Corporate Plan priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community• Economy• Environment• Health and housing• Running the Council <p>The Plan contains a specific objective to 'progress a Local Plan with local needs and capacity at its heart.'</p>
Financial, Resource and Property	<p>The Local Plan work programme is fully funded across a combination of base budget, committed reserves and a contribution from the Government's Local Plans Delivery Fund.</p> <p>Some of the rejected options would have incurred additional costs which were unbudgeted (additional modelling and assessment for multiple workstreams, and extra staff capacity).</p>
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	<p>Preparation of a Local Plan is carried out under a national legislative and regulatory framework.</p> <p>Officers will seek Legal advice on the approach and timings of the recommended LDS, given the unique circumstances regarding Highsted Inquiry.</p>
Crime and Disorder	<p>There are no direct crime and disorder impacts arising from this decision. However, once drafted there will be policies within the Local Plan intended to positively impact crime and disorder within Swale.</p>
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	<p>The Local Plan will be supported by its own Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment at each key stage in decision making and these assess the environmental impact of the Local Plan as a whole. Some scenarios would allow innovative climate change policies.</p>
Health and Wellbeing	<p>There are no direct health and wellbeing impacts arising from this decision. However, once drafted there will be policies within the</p>

	Local Plan that will positively affect the health and wellbeing of local residents.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None identified at this stage.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	The risks of the decision required and of the available options are set out in the main body of this report.
Equality and Diversity	None identified at this stage, although the Local Plan Review itself will be subject to equality impact assessments at key stages as advised by the policy team.
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: Policy and Resources Committee report 21st July 2025

Appendix II: Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group report 15th July 2025

Appendix III: Draft Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group Minutes 15th July 2025

8 Background Papers

- 8.1 [Agenda Reports Pack](#) and [Minutes](#) for Policy and Resources Committee on Wednesday, 16 October 2024, 7.00 pm
- 8.2 [Agenda Reports Pack](#) and [Minutes](#) for Full Council on Wednesday, 4 December 2024, 7.00 pm
- 8.3 [Agenda Reports Pack](#) and [Minutes](#) for Full Council on Wednesday, 24 July 2024, 7.00 pm