

<b>Full Council</b>	
<b>Meeting Date</b>	10 <sup>th</sup> December 2025
<b>Report Title</b>	Local Plan Review – Regulation 18 Consultation Launch
<b>EMT Lead</b>	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
<b>Head of Service</b>	Joanne Johnson, Head of Place
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Natalie Earl, Planning Manager (Policy)
<b>Classification</b>	<b>Open</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To approve the draft Local Plan Regulation 18 document in Appendix I and the draft Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report Update in Appendix III for consultation purposes.</li> <li>2. To delegate to the Head of Planning, in consultation with the Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group Chair, the making of minor amendments and corrections to the Local Plan Regulation 18 document prior to the start of the consultation period.</li> </ol>

## **1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report sets out the background to the recommendations made by both the Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group (PTPWG) during its meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2025 and the Policy and Resources Committee (P&R) on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2025 with regard to the draft Local Plan Regulation 18 (Reg 18) document and the draft Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report Update.
- 1.2 The purpose of those reports was to present the draft Reg 18 Local Plan and the refreshed Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report. The officer recommendation at both meetings was to recommend both documents for approval for consultation purposes.
- 1.3 Members discussed the reports at both the PTPWG meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2025 and at P&R on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2025 and at both meetings, voted unanimously in favour of recommending that consultation be launched, with delegation to the Head of Service, in consultation with the PTPWG Chair, to make any minor amendments and corrections to the document prior to the start of the consultation period.
- 1.4 This will be a formal Reg 18 consultation that seeks feedback from stakeholders and the public to a series of questions about the draft Local Plan's vision, objectives and draft Development Management (DM) policies.

## **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. It explained why the Council is intending to consult on a Reg 18 Local Plan now and set out the structure of the document, describing how and why the policies had been drafted. The Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report refresh was outlined and the importance of the Local Plan timeline in relation to previous member decisions was reinforced. Finally, plans for the consultation process were set out.
- 2.2 A list of all the policies within the draft Reg 18 Local Plan is set out in Appendix II.
- 2.3 A full list of the comments made and changes proposed at PTPWG is included at Appendix IV alongside the officers' response and a full list of the comments made and changes proposed at P&R is included at Appendix V alongside the officers' response.
- 2.4 At Full Council on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2025 a mental health crisis in Swale was declared. The Vice Chair of PTPWG agreed it was important to reference this in the Reg 18 Local Plan, in the section which sets out the key issues and challenges facing Swale. Additional wording to reflect the parts of the declaration relevant to the Local Plan has been added after paragraph 3.2.52 under a new sub-heading of 'Health' in the Reg 18 Local Plan at Appendix I. The wording added is *'The Council declared a mental health crisis in Swale at a meeting of Full Council on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2025. Among a wider list of actions, the Council resolved to two actions which relate to the Local Plan:*
- 1. Declare a mental health crisis in Swale; and*
  - 2. Called on central government and Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Trust to urgently improve the doctor to patient ratio in Swale and to ensure better access to mental health services at the point of need.'*
- 2.5 At the next stage of the Local Plan, the Regulation 19, there will be a Strategic Health policy and this policy will link actions and projects within the Local Plan to the declaration.

## **3 Proposals**

- 3.1 To approve the draft Local Plan Regulation 18 document in Appendix I and the draft Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report Update in Appendix III for consultation purposes.
- 3.2 To delegate to the Head of Planning, in consultation with the Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group Chair, the making of minor amendments and corrections to the Local Plan Regulation 18 document prior to the start of the consultation period.

## **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 Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group report of 4<sup>th</sup> November 2025.
- 4.2 The Council could choose not to progress with a Local Plan review and not to publish the Reg 18 Local Plan. This would be contrary to central government expectations, and to the Council’s Corporate Plan objective to “progress a Local Plan with local needs and capacity at its heart.”
- 4.3 The Council could choose not to include some, or all, of the five substantially updated policies in the climate change chapter and to only lightly update existing policies. However, they will assist the Council to meet the aims of its Climate and Ecological Emergency, so this option is not recommended.
- 4.4 The Council could choose to produce fewer development management policies and to rely more heavily on policies within the National Planning Policy Framework. However, this does not allow for locally distinct policies that reflect the challenges and unique character of Swale, and is therefore not recommended.

## **5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed**

- 5.1 All formal stages of a Local Plan go through statutory consultation with the public, Parish/Town Councils, Statutory and Non-Statutory Consultees and local interest groups. Details of this can be seen in the draft Statement of Community Involvement.
- 5.2 The consultation programme will include press releases, a presentation to the Local Parish Councils’ Liaison Forum, articles in Inside Swale, Swale’s business newsletter, the Swale Green Grid newsletter, social media videos and FAQs.

## **6 Implications**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Implications</b>
Corporate Plan	<p>The Local Plan supports the delivery of all of the Corporate Plan priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Community</li><li>• Economy</li><li>• Environment</li><li>• Health and housing</li><li>• Running the Council</li></ul> <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	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.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	Preparation of a Local Plan is carried out under a national legislative and regulatory framework. Due to Swale's unique circumstances with the Highsted Inquiry, officers obtained legal advice on the robustness of the proposed approach in terms of both the content of the proposed Reg 18 and the timings. No concerns were raised.
Crime and Disorder	There are no direct crime and disorder impacts arising from this report. There will be policies within the Local Plan that will positively affect crime and disorder within Swale.
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. Five expanded and innovative climate change policies are proposed on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable design and adaptation principles,</li> <li>• Net zero operational carbon in new build residential development,</li> <li>• Net zero operational carbon in new build non-domestic development,</li> <li>• Embodied carbon and waste and</li> <li>• Renewable energy development and infrastructure.</li> </ul>
Health and Wellbeing	There are no direct health and wellbeing impacts arising from this report. There will be policies within the Local Plan that will positively affect the health and wellbeing of local residents. The recently declared Mental Health emergency has been referred to within the Reg 18 Local Plan.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None identified at this stage.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	There is a risk to the Council of not having a Local Plan as set out in section 4 of the 'Local Plan Review - Timetabling and Way Forward' report to Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group on 15 <sup>th</sup> July 2025.
Equality and Diversity	None identified at this stage, although the Local Plan Review itself will be subject to equality impact assessment at the next stage – Reg 19.
Privacy and Data Protection	Representations will be processed and published in line with the council's privacy and data protection policy.

## **7 Appendices**

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

Appendix I: Draft Regulation 18 Local Plan

Appendix II: Table I: List of Draft Regulation 18 Local Plan Policies

Appendix III: Draft Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report Update, October 2025

Appendix IV: Table of Comments Made and Changes Requested at PTPWG 4<sup>th</sup> November 2025

Appendix V: Table of Comments Made and Changes Requested at P&R 18<sup>th</sup> November 2025

## **8 Background Papers**

[Planning and Transportation Working Group Report - Local Plan Review: Regulation 18 Consultation Launch](#), 4<sup>th</sup> November 2025

[Policy and Resources Committee Report - Local Plan Review: Regulation 18 Consultation Launch](#) 18<sup>th</sup> November 2025

[PTPWG Report - Local Plan Review: Timetabling and Way Forward](#) 15<sup>th</sup> July 2025

[Draft Statement of Community Involvement](#)