

| Local Development Framework Panel | | Agenda Item: |
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| Meeting Date | 28 March 2018 | |
| Report Title | The 'New Garden Communities Prospectus' | |
| Cabinet Member | Cllr Gerry Lewin, Cabinet Member for Planning | |
| SMT Lead | Emma Wiggins | |
| Head of Service | James Freeman | |
| Lead Officer | Gill Harris | |
| Key Decision | No | |
| Classification | Open | |
| Forward Plan | Reference number: | |
| Recommendations | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Panel, subject to any further changes, agrees to publish the 'New Garden Communities' Prospectus to invite submissions from parties interested in developing such communities in Swale. 2. That the Panel agree that the final version of the launch Prospectus be signed off by the Chair. 3. That the Panel note the arrangements for the advertising and launch of the Prospectus and the opportunities to receive further updates upon close of the submission deadline. | |

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 At February's meeting, the Panel noted and agreed that the Council would prepare a 'New Garden Communities' Prospectus in order to gauge the appetite amongst landowners and developers to develop such communities in Swale. This followed the early thinking undertaken on behalf of the Council by consultants Peter Brett Associates considered at the last meeting.
- 1.2 Attached to this report at Appendix I is a draft (pre-design) of the Prospectus, which will be published and launched at the end of April for 16 weeks, with an initial 6 week period within which expressions of interest can be made. The Prospectus will make clear its association with the next Local Plan, but will not be subject to consultation in its own right (unlike the Looking Ahead document elsewhere on this agenda). Readers will be introduced to the principles of 'garden' communities and be asked to make submissions for locations for such

communities for at least 2,500 dwellings. It will be clear from the document that this is a process that will enable the Council to decide whether this approach should form any part of the next key stage of the Local Plan – the formal Issues and Options consultation document in Summer 2019. Even then, Members should note that the approach would only be one of a number of potential ways forward that would be subject to consultation and engagement and further testing.

- 1.3 The Panel is asked to agree the document for publication and launch, subject to any further changes it might agree.

2 Background

- 2.1 Alongside the agreement by Panel Members in February to the publication of the 'Choices for Housing Growth' document prepared for the Council by consultants Peter Brett Associates (PBA), the Panel also noted the preparation of both a Local Plan consultation and engagement document (Now called 'Looking Ahead' - see agenda item elsewhere on the agenda) and a 'New Garden Communities' Prospectus' intended to gauge the appetite amongst landowners and developers to develop such communities in Swale.
- 2.2 An initial draft (pre-design) version of the Prospectus is included in Appendix I. It should be noted that there is still some work to do on it; notably in its design and presentation.
- 2.3 The Prospectus strongly indicates a preference toward settlements confirming to the 'Garden' community principles defined by The Town and Country Planning Association:
 - Land value capture for the benefit of the community.
 - Strong vision, leadership and community engagement.
 - Community ownership of land and long-term stewardship of assets.
 - Mixed-tenure homes and housing types that are genuinely affordable.
 - A wide range of local jobs in the Garden City within easy commuting distance of homes.
 - Beautifully and imaginatively designed homes with gardens, combining the best of town and country to create healthy communities, and including opportunities to grow food.
 - Development that enhances the natural environment, providing a comprehensive green infrastructure network and net biodiversity gains, and that uses zero-carbon and energy-positive technology to ensure climate resilience.
 - Strong cultural, recreational and shopping facilities in walkable, vibrant, sociable neighbourhoods.
 - Integrated and accessible transport systems, with walking, cycling and public transport designed to be the most attractive forms of local transport.

2.4 The draft Prospectus has needed to tread a line between active promotion of Swale as a prospective location for new settlements and indicating that no final decision has been made (without diluting the need to promote the idea). It has been drafted with landowners, investors and developers as the prime audience, recognising that this target audience will also include those outside the Borough who may have never heard of Swale. The overall tone of the document is deliberately promotional on the basis that it was considered important to engage those likely to make submissions back to the Council. However, regardless of the tone set, it will not prevent those who believe that the Council has made up its mind from saying so. Members can be satisfied that the document contains the relevant caveats that would be expected, given its relationship with the Local Plan.

2.5 The draft Prospectus is structured as follows:

- Explains that we are seeking submissions for locations for at least 2,500 homes and potentially 10,000 or more.
- Explains our vision and ambitions, setting out the key issues and design principles
- Explains the relationship with the Local Plan.
- Explains what 'garden' communities are.
- Sets out the standards the Council it wants to see (these could potentially be more ambitious than set out in the adopted Local Plan). The Prospectus indicates ambitions for 40% affordable housing and high standards of sustainable design and construction and life-time homes, as well as benchmarks for green infrastructure, biodiversity and SUDs.
- Having set out a two stage process, by which an expression of interest is initially made (within 6 weeks), followed by formal submissions (10 weeks later), the Prospectus requires formal submissions to address a range of questions intended to establish whether proposals can address 'garden' principles, especially around land value capture and infrastructure provision and how proposals can address the key issues and design principles set out.

2.6 Setting the right balance through the questions has been a challenge. However much we might want it, it will not be reasonable to expect promoters to have all the answers at this stage and a key issue will be, on close of submissions, to determine what further level of information will be required to take submissions to the next stage. Even then, the Panel will understand that still further work would be needed for before such proposals were submitted for Examination as part of the Local Plan.

2.7 Whilst publishing the Prospectus does not in any way commit the Council to proceeding with a new settlement(s), it is nevertheless a serious step for it on a number of levels. If submissions are made that are not proceeded with via the local plan, scheme promoters may choose to continue to press for them. Also, were it the case that a submitted new settlement required a wider partnership

role, it could require the Council to behave more pro-actively to support its delivery.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 Appendix I contains the draft pre-publication/launch version of the 'New Communities' Prospectus. Members may wish to comment, propose and agree changes to the document prior to its publication and launch (see below). Given that the document is not in its final 'graphical' form, the Panel is asked to agree to the final version of the document being 'signed off' by the Chair. The Panel is also asked to agree to the broad launch arrangements (see below).

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 The Panel could agree to make changes to the document as appropriate or choose to undertake different launch arrangements. Depending upon the scope of these, they could impact upon timescales for the launch and progress thereafter and could even impact upon the overall timescales for preparing the local plan.
- 4.2 The Panel could change its view (as agreed at the last Panel meeting) as to the appropriateness of the approach to canvassing interest in new communities. However, the Council needs to be open minded at this stage in terms of options to meet the challenges ahead. It is not committing itself to any approach and there will be ample opportunity to canvass public views and test proposals at a later date. Gauging whether there is appetite amongst those who might build communities is necessary if such an approach is to proceed any further. Likewise, given the current national emphasis on new communities, the Council should at least be able to demonstrate that it has seriously considered them as an option.
- 4.3 Furthermore, if the new settlements approach is to be progressed, it is absolutely vital to set out early the expectations being sought by the Council. If this is not done and is allowed to progress via some other means, the result is unlikely to deliver the high quality sustainable approach sought in accordance with 'garden' principles.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 The 'New Garden Communities' Prospectus, although a consultation document in the sense that it is seeking submissions from the development industry, is not a consultation document in its own right. In other words, the Council is not inviting comments on the document itself. Comments submitted to it by other parties will not be considered.
- 5.2 Those wishing to direct views on the principle of new settlements are able to engage via the 'Looking Ahead' consultation document.
- 5.3 The Prospectus will be launched at the end of April with a 16 week period within which submissions can be made. At the end of 6 weeks, parties will have been

expected to indicate their intentions to make a submission, in order to give the Council notice of what may be to come.

- 5.4 To support the launch all landowners, developers and agents on the Council’s mailing list will be contacted with the option available to attend the formal launch. In addition, slots will be booked in local and national ‘trade’ magazines/sites in order that the Prospectus has the widest reach possible.
- 5.5 Following the submission and assessment of new settlement proposals, the following is currently envisaged as the means to ensure that Members are kept updated and that other key evidence is in place to support decision making on the local plan:
- Independent technical assessment of new settlement submissions – August to October 2018.
 - Member presentation by leading new settlement scheme promoters – September 2018.
 - Panel to consider Strategic Land Availability Assessment and draft of new settlement independent assessment report – October 2018.
 - Panel to establish scope of reasonable spatial alternatives and to indicate possible preferred option choice. This meeting will also indicate whether new settlements should be further progressed as spatial alternatives – November 2018.
 - Panel receipt of Sustainability Appraisal of reasonable spatial alternatives to enable confirmation of initial preferred option – January 2019.
 - Panel receipt of Issues and Options consultation document, indicative preferred option draft Local Plan and Sustainability Appraisal – May/June 2019.
 - Consultation on Issues and Options and indicative preferred option Local Plan – July 2019.

6 Implications

| Issue | Implications |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Corporate Plan | Supports all Council’s corporate priorities. |
| Financial, Resource and Property | Within the budget for plan preparation work. |
| Legal and Statutory | Will meet requirements for Councils to give stakeholders the opportunity for early engagement and influence on the content of the Local Plan Review. |
| Crime and Disorder | None identified at this stage. |

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|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Sustainability | None identified at this stage. |
| Health and Wellbeing | None identified at this stage. |
| Risk Management and Health and Safety | None identified at this stage. |
| Equality and Diversity | None identified at this stage. |

7 Appendices

Appendix I: 'New Communities Prospectus', the draft consultation document.

8 Background Papers

None.