

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO AND DECISION OF PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE ON 7 JUNE 2022

SUBJECT: Arun Local Plan Update – Six Month Review

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DATE: 20 May 2022

EXTN: 737857

PORTFOLIO AREA: Planning

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: This report briefs Members on matters arising from national policy and any other matters that would inform whether a decision should be taken by the Planning Policy Committee to resume the Arun Local plan update or continue the current pause until 2023.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee is asked to recommend to Full Council that:

1. The Arun Local Plan update be resumed.

1. BACKGROUND:

- 1.1 Members agreed in October 2021 (Background paper 1) to: -

RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL

Option 3 to pause the preparation of a revised Local Plan until details of the new plan making system be agreed, and that the pause be reviewed in six months' time.

- 1.2 The decision to pause the plan was taken because of significant risks and uncertainties pending planning reforms signalled in the Planning Bill in 2021. This report, therefore, presents the 6 months review on the position and whether the pause should be reconsidered.

- 1.3 This report updates members on the position nationally and locally with respect to plan making and potential legislative and policy changes. The context for the decision to pause plan making included: -

- Slippage in the Local Plan timeable arising from not being able to agree a Vision and Objectives with which to steer the work on the Local Plan;

- Government reforms signalled in 'Planning for the Future' consultation (6 August 2020) were anticipated in the Planning Bill (Queen's Speech 11 May 2021) to be voted on in Parliament summer 2021;
- A limited number of Local Plan update evidence studies had been committed which advance the Council's climate change priorities, however, a significant number of further evidence studies to be commissioned would be put on hold to minimise the risk of abortive expenditure.

1.4 Members agreed Option 3 of the Committee Report which was to pause the preparation of a revised Local Plan until details of the new plan making system were agreed.

1.5 In the interim, a number of Topic Papers would be progressed to explore local issues that may impact on the Local Plan update, identified under the 'Duty to Cooperate with respect to A27 transport mitigation; Wastewater Capacity; Water Neutrality; and non-strategic infrastructure (reported separately on the agenda).

National Planning Reforms

1.6 In the Planning for the Future white paper, the Government recognised a number of weaknesses in the current planning system. This included the limitations around managing growth at a strategic scale, and specifically, ensuring that spatial planning decisions are aligned with infrastructure prioritisation and delivery. Although the White Paper proposed the abolition of the Duty to Cooperate (the main mechanism for managing planning across local planning authority boundaries), it did not include any fully formed alternative.

1.7 Since the initial proposals were published in the White Paper in August 2020, it has been reported in the planning and national press in early 2022 that Michael Gove, the Secretary of State for Levelling-up Housing and Communities (replacing Robert Jenrick in September 2021) stated that the government will not now proceed with the Planning Bill proposed in the Queen's Speech in May 2021. It is considered this is partly to address some of the criticisms raised through the consultation, particularly in relation to the impact some of the proposals would have on democratic accountability and on community engagement in planning

1.8 It is worth noting that after almost 1.5 years since the Planning White Paper, the Government has not yet issued its response to the consultation. However, it is understood that the role of planning is still being kept under review.

1.9 In the interim, more modest planning changes will be incorporated into the 'Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill' which was proposed in the 'Levelling-up' White Paper published earlier this year (2 February 2022). The Levelling-Up Bill will focus more on 'overlooked families and undervalued' communities, seeking to address regional inequalities and improving people's prospects.

1.10 The Levelling up White Paper provides details of 12 new missions (see Appendix 1: Annex A: The 12 Missions to Level Up the UK) across four broad areas: -

1. boosting productivity and living standards by growing the private sector
2. spreading opportunities and improving public services
3. restoring a sense of community, local pride and belonging
4. empowering local leaders and communities

- 1.11 It commits to further consultation on the metrics used to measure the success of these missions and to creating a statutory responsibility on Government to report on their progress.

Reforming the Planning System in England

- 1.12 Within the 305-page Levelling up White paper, there are only 4 mentions for Local Plan preparation. Page 227 states that: -

“Only 39% of local authorities have adopted a plan within the last five years, which limits effective community engagement about development. Local plans will be made simpler and shorter, and improved data that underpins plans will ensure that they are transparent, understandable and take into account the environment that will be developed. All of this will result in a system that is easier to engage with and works more efficiently, with communities having more of a say and more councils agreeing local plans.”

- 1.13 In related respects, the Levelling-Up White paper sets out a sense of ensuring natural beauty is accessible to all will be central to the planning system, with improved Green Belts around towns and cities, supported by Local Nature Recovery Strategies reflected in plan making, and woodland creation supported across the UK; with the emphasis about regenerating 20 of our towns and cities. Other proposals set out which will help to shape the emphasis and delivery of planning include: -

- Tackling poor housing quality, overcrowding and a reliance on temporary accommodation for vulnerable families which contribute to unnecessarily poor health and quality of life for many;
- Building more housing in England including more genuinely affordable social housing;
- A new drive on housing quality to make sure homes are fit for the 21st century;
- Empowering local leaders and communities through devolution across England so that by 2030, every part of England (that wants one) will have a devolution deal with a simplified, long-term funding settlement (Mission Twelve);
- Sharper and clearer accountability across the local government sector
- Strengthen transparency for local people; and
- Publish rigorous, comparable data on performance.
- A new independent body will be set up to drive this, empowering citizens, strengthening local leaders’ knowledge of their services, and increasing central government’s understanding of the sector

What happens next		
1.14 The Government is expected to publish the second report on how government departments are working to support; levelling up in rural areas; rural proofing in England, this spring.		
1.15 Future publications are signalled that will be setting out further detail on a number of these policy commitments. In addition, legislation will be introduced to Parliament to underpin the changes fundamental to levelling up, alongside wider planning measures.		
Conclusions		
1.16 Officers consider that is highly unlikely that significant scale planning reforms signalled in the Planning bill will proceed. The Levelling up White Paper signals a more modest set of proposals for improving the effectiveness, legibility and transparency of Local Plans. While the matter of planning reform is still subject to review, there will be a significant timescale to bringing back any significantly amended proposals including further consultation and response, in addition to the necessary primary and secondary legislation that would be needed. Officers, therefore, suggest that given the significant risks of not having an up-to-date Local Plan, that the Local Plan update should proceed because the risk of abortive work with radical changes to the planning system, no longer applies.		
2. PROPOSAL(S):		
That the local Plan update is resumed in order to ensure that the development of Arun and the impact on communities is sustainable and supported by necessary infrastructure.		
3. OPTIONS:		
To note the; or not to note the.		
4. CONSULTATION:		
Has consultation been undertaken with:	YES	NO
Relevant Town/Parish Council		x
Relevant District Ward Councillors		x
Other groups/persons (please specify) Chairman and vice Chairman of Planning Policy Committee.	x	
5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below)	YES	NO
Financial	x	
Legal		x
Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment		x

Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act		x
Sustainability	x	
Asset Management/Property/Land		x
Technology		x
Other (please explain)		x

6. IMPLICATIONS:

The resumption of the Local Plan update will help to deliver sustainable patterns of development within Arun, serving local communities and will require the allocation of budgeted resources for procuring the necessary evidence base, community consultation and engagement.

7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:

To ensure that the development of Arun and the impact on communities, is sustainable and supported by necessary infrastructure planning and provision.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Background Paper 1: Item 10 Local Plan update 6 October 2021: -

<https://democracy.arun.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=349&MId=1458>

Appendix 1: Annex A: The 12 Missions to Level Up the UK

1. By 2030, pay, employment and productivity will have risen in every area of the UK, with each containing a globally competitive city, with the gap between the top performing and other areas closing.

2. By 2030, domestic public investment in Research & Development outside the Greater South East will increase by at least 40% and at least one third over the Spending Review period, with that additional government funding seeking to leverage at least twice as much private sector investment over the long term to stimulate innovation and productivity growth.

3. By 2030, local public transport connectivity across the country will be significantly closer to the standards of London, with improved services, simpler fares and integrated ticketing.

4. By 2030, the UK will have nationwide gigabit-capable broadband and 4G coverage, with 5G coverage for the majority of the population.

5. By 2030, the number of primary school children achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths will have significantly increased. In England, this will mean 90% of children will achieve the expected standard, and the percentage of children meeting the expected standard in the worst performing areas will have increased by over a third.

6. By 2030, the number of people successfully completing high-quality skills training will have significantly increased in every area of the UK. In England, this will lead to 200,000 more people successfully completing high-quality skills training annually, driven by 80,000 more people completing courses in the lowest skilled areas.

7. By 2030, the gap in Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE) between local areas where it is highest and lowest will have narrowed, and by 2035 HLE will rise by 5 years.

8. By 2030, well-being will have improved in every area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas closing.

9. By 2030, pride in place, such as people's satisfaction with their town centre and engagement in local culture and community, will have risen in every area of the UK, with the gap between the top performing and other areas closing.

10. By 2030, renters will have a secure path to ownership with the number of first-time buyers increasing in all areas; and the government's ambition is for the number of non-decent rented homes to have fallen by 50%, with the biggest improvements in the lowest performing areas.

11. By 2030, homicide, serious violence, and neighbourhood crime will have fallen, focused on the worst-affected areas.

12. *By 2030, every part of England that wants one will have a devolution deal with powers at or approaching the highest level of devolution and a simplified, long-term funding settlement.*