

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

CABINET – 24/09/20

**TELFORD & WREKIN LOCAL PLAN REVIEW, ISSUES & OPTIONS
CONSULTATION**

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR – HOUSING, EMPLOYMENT &
INFRASTRUCTURE**

**LEAD CABINET MEMBER – CLLR FOR ECONOMY, HOUSING,
TRANSPORT & INFRASTRUCTURE**

PART A) – SUMMARY REPORT

1. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES AND MAIN PROPOSALS

- 1.1 Telford & Wrekin Council has to plan for the Borough's future development needs. This includes addressing current social and economic challenges and planning for the next phase of growth of the Borough. The Review of the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan (TWLP), launched in January, is central to ensuring that growth continues to be delivered in a sustainable and measured way that benefits the environment, communities and the economy of the borough.
- 1.2 The review provides the Council with a means of proactively addressing the economic challenges we currently face providing opportunities to support a swifter economic 'bounce back' and develop stronger, more resilient communities. It is also a key means to support the delivery of the Council's commitment to address Climate Change.
- 1.3 In January the Council established four core objectives to underpin the review:
- Employment led growth through **inward investment and job creation**
 - A '**Forest Community**' approach which affords the **protection, enhancement and accessibility of the natural environment and green spaces that characterise the Borough**
 - Support for **regeneration of our Borough Towns, new town estates and infrastructure**
 - Meet local housing needs including providing more **affordable and specialist accommodation** to support people to live longer and healthier at home

- 1.4 These continue to be the drivers for the review with a clear priority to balance the need and opportunities to be derived from growth with the enhancement of the Borough's environment and greenspaces which characterise the Town and are valued by local communities.
- 1.5 The Review, is now entering the next stage. An Issues & Options document has been prepared for public consultation and Cabinet are asked to note its content. The document is proposed to go out for public consultation between the 12th October and 4th December and will be supported by a communications strategy that focusses on digital measures. The Issues & Options document includes;
- policy proposals put forward by the Council,
 - a new employment land requirement for the borough,
 - options for the boroughs new housing requirement,
 - options for the distribution of the housing development, and
 - proposals to help deliver a carbon neutral borough.
- 1.6 This stage of the plan-making process does not identify sites for development. The consultation responses will inform the development of the Council's development strategy which will be set out in the Preferred Options stage. This will be subject to further public consultation, anticipated in mid-2021.
- 1.7 In August the Government published the Planning for the Future White Paper. This is currently subject to public consultation and, depending on the outcome of that, if the proposals are to be brought into force, amendments to legislation will be required. Central to the Government's concern is maintaining pace in the delivery of Local Plans and ensuring that development supports housing delivery and economic recovery and growth. The approach set out by the Government would see the development needs for the borough largely determined at a national level if all proposals are taken forward.
- 1.8 A delay in bringing forward the review to await the final outcome of the Government's White Paper would detrimentally affect the boroughs ability to 'bounce back' post-recession. A delay would lead to a position where the Council could not respond positively to inward investment opportunities and new jobs, was unable to deliver vital infrastructure including enhancing the Borough's greenspaces that have become ever more important in recent months and less able to properly respond to meet local housing needs. It would also limit the Council's ability to address climate change and plan for clean growth.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet note the content of the report and the appendices**
- 2.2 That Cabinet authorise the Director Housing, Employment & Infrastructure (and any other officer authorised in writing by this postholder) to exercise all the Council’s powers (besides those which are non-executive powers) under the relevant provisions of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and all other enabling legislation, relating to preparation, publication, consultation and processing, to progress the delivery of the Local Plan Review.**
- 2.3 That Cabinet authorise the Director: Housing Employment & Infrastructure, Housing and Communities (and any other officer authorised in writing by this postholder) to exercise the Council’s powers relating to its duty to cooperate in relation to the planning of sustainable development as set out in Section 33A Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and any other associated legislation and guidance.**
- 2.4 That Cabinet authorise the Director: Housing Employment & Infrastructure, Housing and Communities (and any other officer authorised in writing by this postholder) to enter into formal arrangements with any person or body referred to or prescribed in accordance with Section 33A Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and any other associated legislation and guidance and authorise the Lead Cabinet Member for Economy, Housing, Transport and Infrastructure also to sign and confirm the Council’s agreement to those formal arrangements if required.**

3. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Co-Operative Council priority objective(s)?	
	Yes	The review of the TWLP contributes towards all Co-operative Council priority objectives.
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	
	Yes	The impact will be borough wide
TARGET COMPLETION/DELIVERY DATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cabinet approval to consult on Issues & Options Document – October – December 2020• Cabinet approve Preferred Options Document for consultation – Spring 2021	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet approve Publication Plan and final stage of consultation – Autumn 2021 • Cabinet approve submission of Plan to Planning Inspectorate – (date) • Full Council approve submission of (Reviewed) Publication Plan – (date) • Adoption at Full Council – dates subject to outcome of independent examination
FINANCIAL / VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT	Yes	<p>The Local Plan review obtained Cabinet approval on 2nd January 2020 with total funding of £946k, including £391k approved from Capacity fund.</p> <p>This funding covers all activities within the Local Plan review including the Issues & Options consultation process. (AEM 24/08/20)</p>
LEGAL ISSUES	Yes	<p>Regulation 10A of the 2012 Town and Country Planning (local Planning) (England) Regulations requires local planning authorities to review local plans at least once every 5 years. The product of the review will be a new Local Plan document and rules within the 2012 Regulations and the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 have to be applied in the processing of the review. Regulation 18 of the 2012 Regulations requires the Council to notify certain bodies/persons of the subject of the proposed local plan and invite them to make representations to the Council about what the local plan ought to contain. The Council then continues to prepare the local plan and must take into account any representation received. After this Regulation 18 stage is completed, the Council prepares the version of the local plan which it considers is ready for submission to the Secretary of State for independent examination. Approval of the version of the local plan to be submitted to the Secretary of State will require a decision of Full Council. The purpose of the independent examination is to determine whether, in respect of the reviewed local plan, a number of specified requirements are satisfied and whether the local plan is “sound”. The independent examiner is required to make recommendations to the Council and give reasons for those recommendations. The outcome of this stage of the process may be a recommendation that the local plan be adopted or that it not be adopted or the independent examiner may recommend modifications which enable the Council to adopt. Adoption of the local plan is a non-executive function to be exercised by Full Council.</p> <p>Section 33A Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 places a legal duty on local planning authorities and prescribed public bodies to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis to maximise the effectiveness of local plan and in the context of strategic cross boundary matters. Officers are responding to this duty as required and as explained in this report. (IR04.09.20)</p>

OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES	Yes	<p><u>Impacts</u> – a review will have a positive impact on the wider regeneration and development agenda and enable the Council to refresh policies, secure inward investment and jobs, contribute positively to regeneration of town and district centres and protect and enhance the natural environment and green spaces.</p> <p><u>Risks</u> – A delay in the Review timetable will increase the risk of Local Plan policies being deemed out of date and the Council unable to maintain its Five Year Housing Land Supply exposing the Borough to speculative housing pressures.</p> <p><u>Opportunities</u> – the Review process is the most effective means of maintaining a relevant and up to date plan at the same time as addressing the land supply needs of the Borough.</p>
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	No	Borough wide

(PART B) – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

4. INFORMATION

Introduction

- 4.1 Telford & Wrekin Council has to plan for the boroughs future development needs, this includes meeting the current economic challenges as well as looking beyond to the next phase of growth for the area. The Review of the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan (TWLP) will be critical to ensuring that growth continues to be delivered in a sustainable and measured way that benefits the environment, communities and economy of the borough.
- 4.2 Telford Development Corporation planned infrastructure to accommodate a population of 225,000 for Telford. The current population of the borough is around 179,850 so this next phase of the boroughs growth will see the borough, and Telford in particular, start to reach its full economic potential.
- 4.3 Cabinet approved the review of the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan in January 2020 underpinned by 4 strategic objectives:
- Employment led growth through **inward investment and job creation**
 - A **‘Forest Community’** approach which affords the **protection, enhancement and accessibility of the natural environment and green spaces that characterise the Borough**
 - Support for **regeneration of our Borough Towns, new town estates and infrastructure**
 - Meet local housing needs including providing more **affordable and specialist accommodation** to support people to live longer and healthier at home
- 4.4 A clear priority for the review and the TWLP going forward will be to balance the need for growth with protection of the boroughs green space. The uniqueness of Telford is to a large extent down to the areas of publicly accessible green space including Local Nature Reserves, Wildlife Sites, Green Guarantee sites and ‘green network’. The review will provide an opportunity to reinforce the protection of existing green space as well as create new ecologically valuable areas through new development that can positively contribute towards tackling climate change.
- 4.5 The Issues & Options consultation is the next stage of the review process and will provide an opportunity for feedback on options for growth, the distribution of growth as well as proposals for the development management policies within the plan. This will inform the Council’s development strategy and the Preferred Options stage of the review.

Issues & Options (I&O) Document

4.6 The I&O document includes:

- The proposed extension of the TWLP to 2040
- Proposals for refocussing the vision and aims of the plan to address changes in legislation and local circumstances as well as new priorities for the borough
- Proposals for amending (and introducing new) development management policies within the plan
- A new employment land requirement for the borough
- Options for the boroughs new housing requirement
- The proposed methodology for selecting new development sites within the borough
- proposals to help deliver a carbon neutral borough.

4.7 The I&O document identifies six development priorities that the TWLP will need to focus on moving forward. These are based on the four objectives underpinning the review that were identified in the 2 January Cabinet Report and add emphasis to addressing climate change and building resilient, healthy communities:

- **Tackling climate change and achieving carbon neutrality**
- **Protection and enhancement of green and natural environment**
- **Maximising inward investment and job opportunities**
- **Securing better homes for all**
- **Delivering stronger communities through regeneration and renewal**
- **Improving health, wellbeing and tackling health inequalities**

4.8 The evidence base for the Council's employment and housing requirements is provided through the Economic & Housing Development Needs Assessment (EHDNA). The Scoping Report for the Integrated Appraisal provides baseline information for the Integrated Appraisal of the plan. These documents will be published alongside the I&O document as part of the consultation.

4.9 The Council are currently carrying out a call for sites which closes on the 8th January 2021. This process will inform the Council's land supply position. The Council are therefore taking an open approach to the I&O consultation and will consider other reasonable alternative development strategies that may be put forward through the consultation, that are supported by appropriate technical evidence and justification.

New and Updated Policy Proposals

- 4.10 The I&O document sets out proposals to amend some development management policies and the inclusion of new policies where necessary, based on:
- **Addressing the Council's strategic priorities** – for example, a range of proposals are included that help to tackle climate change in areas such as urban greening, electric vehicle infrastructure, renewable energy and the protection of green space. Policy proposals also seek to support the regeneration of town and district centres and address the renewal of our older estates
 - **Legislative or regulatory changes that need to be incorporated into updated policies** – an example of this is the introduction of bio-diversity net gain
 - **A need to update policy** – this is where, for example, policies refer to figures that will require updating as a result of the review such as a new requirements for housing and employment land
- 4.11 Changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) require the Council to consider viability at the plan making stage. As such, a whole plan viability assessment will be used to test proposed policies and this will inform the development of the Preferred Option stage of this review.

The Boroughs Future Employment Land Requirement

- 4.12 To support growth the Council need to bring forward further employment land supply. The TWLP allocates 148.5ha of employment land of which 100ha is either completed or in the planning process. This leaves a balance of 48ha available to respond to inward investment opportunities. This take up of land supply is a mark of the Borough's success in attracting inward investment but is also a challenge as it reduces flexibility in responding to inward investment enquiries, especially for industrial and commercial land. To maintain a strong competitive economy and create jobs the Council recognise the need to provide additional employment land supply.
- 4.13 The EHDNA provides the evidence base to inform options for the Council's employment land requirements. The evidence supports options between 167ha and 189ha of employment land between 2020 and 2040. Once existing employment land supply is taken into account the requirement proposed is an additional 77ha – 99ha of employment land over the plan period. The Council will be seeking to deliver additional flexibility in the choice and supply of employment land over the requirement figures above.

The Borough's Future Housing Requirements

- 4.14 The extension of the TWLP until 2040 will allow the Council to plan for growth beyond the immediate period of recession. There are a number of key benefits of forward planning growth:
- It gives certainty to local communities about the location of growth over the medium to long term. The absence of planned growth would expose local communities to speculative housing growth.
 - Planned housing growth enables Councils to secure community benefits such investment in education facilities, public transport and walking and cycling infrastructure.
 - It provides certainty and confidence in the local economy especially in the local construction sector.
 - To do this the Council is required to 'reset' the boroughs housing requirement from 2020 – 2040 and to consult on alternative scenarios for growth.
- 4.15 Three scenarios for the boroughs housing requirements up to 2040 are set out within the I&O document:
- An option which will address the boroughs **economic growth**. This scenario is below the housing growth target in the existing TWLP and below recent rates of housing delivery. This scenario would result in a housing requirement of 16,960 homes (8,065 net new homes through allocations¹).
 - An option that meets the boroughs **economic growth ambitions and population projections**. This option is based on housing required to meet the Council's economic growth as well as providing scope to stimulate additional economic activity by delivering more flexibility in the labour force as a result of meeting future population projections. This scenario is broadly in line with the average annual rate of housing completions in the borough since 2011. This scenario would result in a total housing requirement of 19,280 homes (10,385 net new homes through allocations).
 - A **housing led** option which is based on the delivery of a certain number of homes over the plan period. This option allows the Council to test the benefits of higher housing growth including a greater proportion of affordable housing. This option could also provide

¹ There are currently 8,895 homes with planning approval. This figure is deducted from the housing requirement and the net figure is the number of new homes which would need to be allocated in the Plan

additional benefits around economic growth as well as infrastructure delivery through new development. By way of comparison this scenario is broadly in line with the best performance of the housing market over the previous 5 years. This scenario would result in a housing requirement figure of 23,000 homes (14,105 net new homes through allocations over the next 20 years).

Summary Table of Consultation Options

New Allocations 2020-2040	Economic Growth	Economic Ambition & Population Growth	Housing-Led
Housing Requirement	16,960	19,280	23,000
Houses with planning approval but not yet built	8,895	8,895	8,895
New housing to be allocated*	8,065	10,385	14,105

*Housing requirement net of houses with planning approval

- 4.16 Prior to the White Paper, the Government launched a consultation on changes to the standard methodology for the calculation of housing need². Should Government adopt these proposals the calculated housing need figure for Telford & Wrekin is anticipated to be 941³ homes per annum. Over the plan period this would equate to a baseline housing requirement of 18,820 homes, as indicated by Central Government's proposals, up to 2040 and a net allocation figure of 9,925 new homes. The consultation closes on the 1 October and the Council will monitor changes that may result and will respond accordingly at the next stage of the TWLP review.
- 4.17 Given the level of development under construction or with permission in Telford the review will need to consider the need to extend Telford beyond its existing urban boundary to accommodate additional growth to 2040. This is likely to happen under any of the potential housing requirement options and under the housing baseline figures that the government are consulting on in terms of housing need. Such an approach also accords with the Council's commitment to protect and enhance the interconnected, accessible green spaces that characterise the Town, support biodiversity

² Changes to the current planning system (August 2020)

³ Lichfield's <https://lichfields.uk/grow-renew-protect-planning-for-the-future/how-many-homes-the-new-standard-method/#section18>

and climate change and to prevent the over-intensification of development within the Town. Such proposals would be expected to deliver high quality, sustainable 'places' that address the Plan's priorities and are well connected to existing urban areas.

Options for the Distribution of Growth Requirements

4.18 As a borough with two urban centres of Telford and Newport and a surrounding rural area means there are a limited number of potential options for the distribution of growth. The existing TWLP focusses the majority of growth into Telford with a smaller % into Newport and the Rural Area. It is anticipated that this broad distribution will be maintained because:

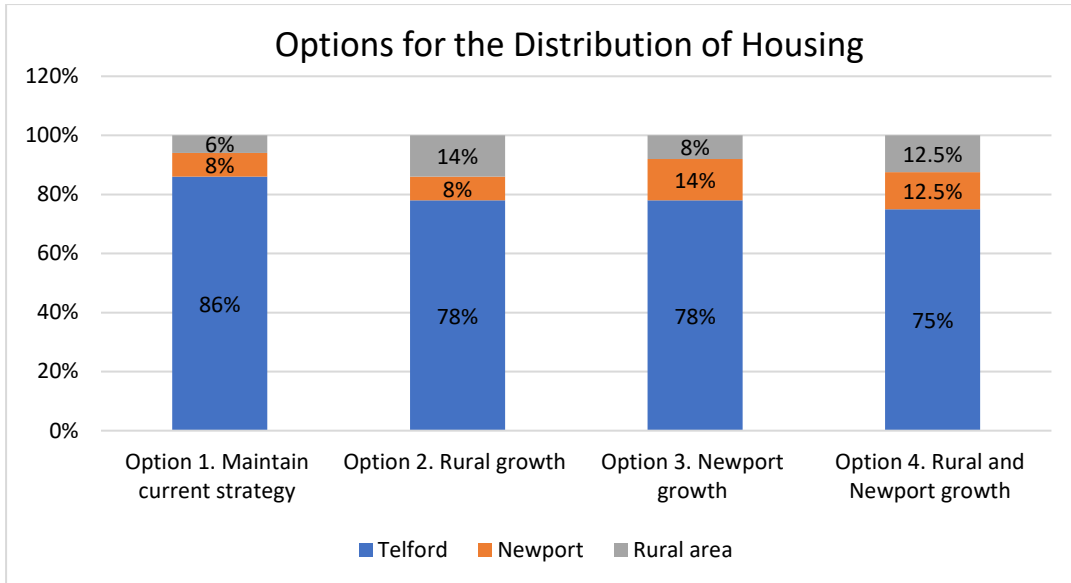
- Telford is the main Town recognised by the Council and reflected in the Marches LEP Strategic Economic Plan.
- Telford Development Corporation developed infrastructure to accommodate a population of 225,000. Although patterns of movement and employment may have changed the 'trunk infrastructure' is in place to support further growth within or connected to the Town.
- A distribution of growth significantly above the proportions set out below would dramatically alter the built environment and character of Newport and the rural area. It would also put potentially unacceptable burdens on development in the provision of extensive new highway infrastructure and other infrastructure such as drainage and utilities provision.
- A strategy for the dispersal of growth across Telford, Newport and the rural area would reduce the potential to secure benefits from larger sites such as Sustainable Urban Extensions including; renewable energy provision, a better mix of housing, mixed use development and the provision of publically accessible green space.

4.19 Focussing on Telford, Newport and the rural area four options for the distribution of the boroughs housing requirement have been included for consultation in the I&O document, these include:

- **Option 1. Maintaining continuity with the adopted TWLP** with Telford remaining the focus for growth, but with some new housing in the rural area and Newport. This option is included as:
 - It maintains consistency with the existing Local Plan strategy and focuses growth on Telford
 - Telford is the best connected and well served area for employment, services and facilities

- It focuses development in an area that can be served more easily by public sector agencies including police, fire, ambulance and NHS
- It provides the best opportunity to plan for and deliver infrastructure over the plan period
- **Option 2. Increased levels of growth within the rural area.** This option would see some additional growth within the rural area and less growth focussed on Telford. This option is included as:
 - It provides an opportunity to test the benefits of additional housing growth in the rural area including more affordable provision
 - It provides an opportunity to test alternative distribution options for housing in the rural area including allocated development sites, additional key settlements and / or infill within existing villages
 - It supports the long term sustainability and viability of village services and facilities through increased housing within the rural area
 - It has the potential to increase economic activity in the rural area and grow local businesses.
- **Option 3. Increased levels of growth within Newport.** This option would see some additional growth in Newport and less growth focussed on Telford. This option is included as:
 - It provides an opportunity to test the benefits of additional development in the Newport area that could include infrastructure improvements and additional affordable housing.
 - Further growth in Newport could support the sustainability of the town centre and provide opportunities for mixed employment and housing development
- **Option 4. Increased growth for the rural area and Newport.** This would see a quarter of the housing requirement split evenly between the rural area and Newport and less development focussed on Telford. This option is included as:
 - It provides an opportunity to test an increase in levels of growth in Newport and the rural area.
 - Further growth in both areas provides greater opportunity to support the sustainability of the both Newport and the rural area and address housing affordability.

4.20 The chart below sets out the proposed distribution options for housing growth between Telford, Newport and the rural area.



4.21 The Council are seeking comments and views on policy options, the development requirement scenarios and options for distribution of growth and are not at this stage in the review process identifying a preferred option. The strategy for growth will be determined as part of developing the plan (as reviewed) and consulted on at the Preferred Options Stage.

Duty to Cooperate

4.22 Local authorities are expected to address strategic cross boundary matters in development plans and demonstrate how they have engaged in strategic planning through the 'Duty to Cooperate'. This is a legal obligation and a matter of soundness with which the Council is required to comply.

4.23 The Duty requires: Councils and public bodies to "...engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis..." to develop strategic policies. The scope for such engagement is broad but, typically, discussions cover housing, waste and minerals management, traffic impacts and reviewing how environmentally sensitive sites in one local authority will be protected as a result of growth being promoted in another one.

4.24 The Duty to Cooperate is not a 'duty to agree'. However, all local planning authorities are expected to demonstrate evidence of having cooperated to plan for issues with cross-boundary impacts when their local plans are submitted for examination. Where there are cross boundary matters local authorities discharge this Duty by agreeing memoranda of understanding.

The Council will engage with nearby local authorities in the review of the TWLP and will continue to engage with them as they prepare their Local Plans/documents.

- 4.25 The Council have, for example, been approached by the Association of Black Country Authorities to assist meeting their unmet development needs. The Council has maintained the view (endorsed at the Examination in Public of the TWLP) that insufficient evidence is available to support such a request. However, to accord with the Duty to Cooperate the Council will continue to engage in dialogue with the ABCA and keep this issue under review.
- 4.26 It is proposed that the powers regarding the exercise of the Council's duty to cooperate be delegated to the Director: Housing Employment & Infrastructure, This will enable this Director to negotiate, agree and enter into arrangements with other bodies/local planning authorities including memoranda of understanding to demonstrate how the Council has cooperated with neighbouring authorities. The lead Cabinet Member will be kept informed and formal arrangements may need to be signed by an elected member(s).

Next steps

- 4.27 The I&O document is proposed to be published for public consultation between the 12th October and 4th December. Following the conclusion of the I&O consultation and consideration of the responses the Council will:
- Finalise the Strategic Housing & Employment Land Availability Assessment following the close of the Call for Sites on the 8 January 2021
 - Commence preparation of the Preferred Options Stage of consultation, including the preparation of a draft set of land allocations and an amended Local Plan.
 - Keep under review progress with the Government's White Paper 'Planning for the Future'. (At this stage of the review and given the potential uncertainty around the form and implementation of new legislation it is considered appropriate to continue with the I&O consultation.)
- 4.28 The consultation will be supported by a comprehensive communications strategy that will include:
- Promotion of the consultation through social media, the Council's website and press releases to local outlets

- Making consultation documents available on the Council's website
- Provision of consultation documents for inspection in main Council buildings (Addenbrooke, South Water One, Wellington Civic Offices and key libraries)
- Promotion by e-mail to parties registered on the Council's Planning Policy consultation database, Parish Councils, elected Members and stakeholder organisations
- Direct engagement with stakeholder groups via video conferencing

5. IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

6. PREVIOUS MINUTES

16th June 2016, Cabinet

2nd January 2020, Cabinet

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Practice Guidance

Council's Statement of Community Involvement

Council's Local Development Framework

Annexes

Annex 1 – Issues & Options consultation document

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