

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Report of Deputy Chief Executive & Executive Director

To

Cabinet

On

Date 27 July 2021

Report prepared by: Mark Sheppard and Kevin Waters

Agenda
Item No.

Southend New Local Plan

Refining the Plan Options *Refining the Strategy for Growth and Change*

Regulation 18 Public Consultation

Place Scrutiny Committee Cabinet Member: Councillor Mulroney *Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)*

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek Member approval to publish 'Refining the Plan Options' for public consultation as part of the next stage in preparing the Southend New Local Plan. The documentation has been amended to include the additional text suggested at Full Council on 15 July 2021 where the Local Plan was referred back to Cabinet.
- 1.2 The Covid Pandemic has had a significant impact on the global and local economy. The Local Plan can play a key role in helping to act as a catalyst to recover from this impact. It will be important we continue to monitor the impacts of Covid and the post pandemic recovery as the Local Plan is prepared.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **Approve the amended 'Refining the Plan Options' document (attached at Appendix 1), which includes the additional text suggested at Full Council on 15 July 2021, by way of clarification, as the second stage of the preparation of the Southend New Local Plan to be published for public consultation under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.**
- 2.2 **Note the feedback received during the previous stage of consultation, the *Southend New Local Plan Issues and Options Document 2019*, as set out in the accompanying Consultation Statement (Appendix 2).**
- 2.3 **Agree to delegate authority to the Interim Chief Executive and Acting Executive Director for Growth and Housing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment, Culture, Tourism and Planning, to:**

- make minor amendments to the Southend New Local Plan – Refining the Plan Options prior to consultation; and
- take all necessary steps to ensure compliance with the relevant statutory processes and procedures to undertake the consultation.

2.4 That, in view of the constraints within the Borough and given the potential effects on the Green Belt in meeting our housing needs in full, being consulted upon in Options C and D of the Local Plan Consultation Document, that the Council seek the assistance of the local Members of Parliament to effect a meeting with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government in order to lay before him the difficulties which the Council finds itself in meeting the housing figures imposed by the Government without impinging on substantial green belt land or over-densification of the urban area and the consequent detrimental effect on the health and wellbeing of residents of the Borough.

3. Background

Full Council 15 July 2021

3.1 The Local Plan was referred back to Cabinet at Full Council on 15 July. During the meeting a form of words was suggested to be included in the preamble of the Local plan Consultation Document by way of clarification. The words of that addition are included within the preamble, as highlighted in the underlined text below:

“Introduction

Having an up-to-date Local Plan that is shaped through community engagement, provides an important tool to help manage future development proposals that would otherwise come forward without local policies guiding the type, scale and location of new development.

The Covid Pandemic has had a significant impact on the global and local economy. The New Local Plan can play a key role in helping to act as a catalyst to recover from this impact. It will be important that we continue to monitor the impacts of Covid and the post pandemic recovery as the New Local Plan is prepared.

This document represents the second stage of consultation in the preparation of the Southend New Local Plan. We are seeking views on refining the Plan before we develop specific policies and proposals.

Your views are vital if we are to build a future plan for the Borough that is comprehensive and inclusive.

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council is united in its desire to avoid building on the Borough’s Green Belt. However, in order to produce a sound Local Plan we are required by Government to consult on all options so as to provide robust evidence for consideration by the Government’s Inspector.

The document does not set out a preferred strategy or criteria-based policies, rather it sets out draft proposals, potential development sites and possible interventions to generate feedback as we progress the New Local Plan.”

- 3.2 The addition is in keeping with the Local Plan consultation documentation considered at Cabinet on 15 June 2021 where it explains the document “*follows national planning policy by ensuring all opportunities to meet housing needs are explored **before** looking at sites within the Green Belt*”.
- 3.3 Accordingly the addition has been included into the Local Plan consultation documentation (**Appendix 1**).

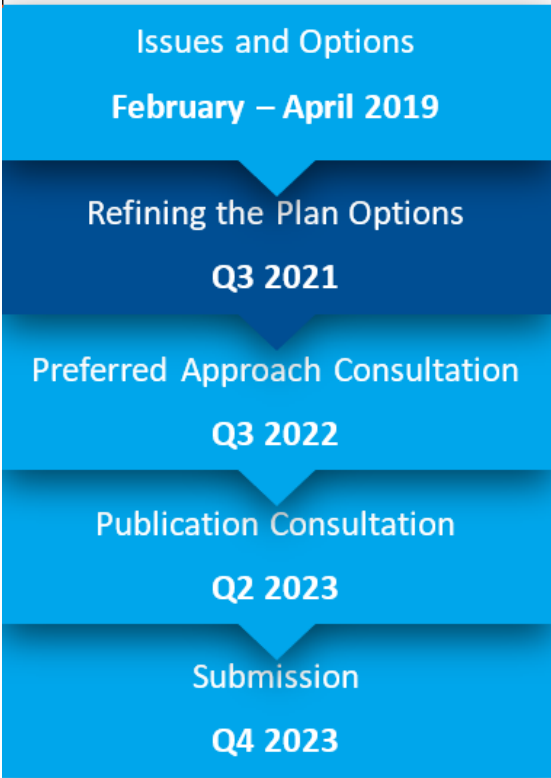
Preparation of Local Plan Background

- 3.4 In June 2018 Members agreed a new approach to reviewing the Development Plan for Southend. This approach comprised the preparation of a new local plan for Southend in parallel to preparation of a wider South Essex Plan, the latter to be produced in partnership with other South Essex local authorities and Essex County Council.
- 3.5 In 2019 an ‘Issues and Options’ document was published for public comment as part of the first stage in the preparation of the Southend New Local Plan (5th February to 2nd April 2019). Details of feedback to the Issues and Options consultation were published in August 2019 in a Consultation Report ¹. The cross-party Environment and Planning Working Party received a presentation on the results of the consultation at its meeting on 7 November 2019 and were able to seek clarification and ask questions on the consultation results. The results of the consultation were noted.
- 3.6 Noting that a number of emerging cross-boundary strategic issues could not be fully addressed in isolation and/or entirely within Southend’s administrative area, particularly relating to housing provision, in early 2019, Members also approved the principle of preparing the Southend New Local Plan in two parts: Part 1 covering cross-boundary strategic issues to be prepared jointly with Rochford District Council, and Part 2 covering local issues relating to Southend.
- 3.7 However, following subsequent discussions with Rochford District Council, Rochford determined it wished to pursue its own local plan on an individual basis. In that context it was agreed that instead, the two authorities would closely coordinate in their plan preparation so as to effectively address key cross-boundary strategic development issues. An updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) was agreed by Cabinet in February 2021 to take account of these changed circumstances.
- 3.8 A ‘Refining the Plan Options’ consultation document covering the administrative area of Southend Borough has now been prepared as part of the second stage of preparing the Southend New Local Plan. The consultation document is attached to this report, for Cabinet approval. If approved, the Council would undertake 8 weeks’ consultation, in Q3 2021.

¹ [Southend New Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation Report Southend on Sea Borough Council, August 2019](#)

3.9 Following consultation on the ‘Refining the Plan Options’ document, officers will begin to draft the Preferred Local Plan for consultation in 2022, before finalising the Southend New Local Plan for a final round of consultation and formal Submission for independent examination in 2023, in accordance with statutory procedures. The forthcoming stages of local plan preparation are depicted in the **Figure 1** below.

Figure 1: Stages of Local Plan Preparation²



Calendar Year (action listed commencing)

3.10 Once adopted the Southend New Local Plan will be a key document in guiding and facilitating new development and growth in the Borough over the next 20 years, helping to deliver some of the key aspirations of Southend 2050 and acting as a catalyst to assist economic recovery from the Covid pandemic. When adopted, the new Local Plan will replace the existing suite of documents that currently comprise the Local Development Framework, including the Southend Core Strategy (2007), Development Management Document (2015) and Southend Central Area Action Plan (2018).

4. Refining the Plan Options

Objectives

4.1 The successful delivery of the Southend New Local Plan will contribute significantly to the fulfilment of a number of elements of the Council’s vision, themes and outcomes as referenced below.

² As an approximation, the period from submission to adoption may range from 9 to 12 months dependent on the scope of the plan, issues arising during examination and scheduling of meetings.

- 4.2 The Issues and Options document published in 2019 identified several major planning issues facing the future development of the Borough and discussed possible options for resolving these. The feedback generated from the public consultation has been invaluable in helping to frame the contents of 'Refining the Plan Options' consultation document.
- 4.3 However, since the publication of the Issues and Options report there have also been significant changes which were unforeseen at the time, notably the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic and proposed Government changes to planning legislation first outlined in the Governments White Paper³, 'Planning for the Future'.
- 4.4 The White Paper proposed a package of measures seeking to reform the planning system including how Local Plans are prepared and presented. If brought into legislation, the White Paper proposals may have an impact on how the Southend New Local Plan is prepared and taken forward, depending upon the nature of any 'transition arrangements' put in place.
- 4.5 The preparation of the 'Refining the Plan Options' document is therefore designed to provide a degree of flexibility so that the changes proposed in the White Paper can be satisfactorily accommodated as appropriate as the local plan progresses. It is worth noting that the White paper proposals were clearly not intended to halt the progression of local plans currently in preparation and therefore indicate that Government intends that the process should be proceeded with on their appropriate timetables as agreed in the Local Development Scheme, approved by Cabinet and adopted by Council on 18 March 2021.
- 4.6 In addition, last September the Government agreed changes to the Use Classes Order⁴ which allowed greater freedoms for changing retail to other uses and as a result, impact on current retail planning policy.
- 4.7 All these considerations have been taken into account in preparing 'Refining the Policy Options' consultation document. It is NOT the purpose of the consultation document to set out a preferred strategy or detailed criteria-based policies at this stage. Rather, the consultation document sets out draft proposals, potential development sites and possible interventions to generate further public feedback as the Local Plan is progressed.

Contents of the Consultation Document

- 4.8 The Plan is divided into three Parts: 1. Aim and Objectives; 2. Spatial Strategy; 3. Southend Neighbourhoods. The primary focus of the consultation is seeking views on the Aim and Objectives, Spatial Strategy and a number of key

³ Planning for the Future, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, March 2020.

⁴ The Government Recently introduced under the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020 radical changes to the Use Class Order retail uses which fell within Use Classes Order A1 (Shops), A2 (Financial and professional services), A3 (Food and drink), have now been consolidated into a new Class E (Commercial, Business and Services). Office, research and development and light industrial uses which were in Use Classes B1 (Business) and medical and health services, creche, day nursery and day centre uses (Class D1), and indoor sports, recreation and fitness uses which were in Class D2 (Assembly and leisure) are also consolidated into the new Class E.

strategic development issues. The Neighbourhood sections set out the draft proposals in more detail for those wishing to focus on certain areas of the Borough or where they live.

- 4.9 'Refining the Plan Options' seeks public comment on a range of more detailed issues and possible options which are summarised below and set out in full at **Appendix 1**. A Non-Technical Summary (**Appendix 3** of this report) will also be made available during the consultation.

Part 1. Aim and Objectives (Southend 2050 Ambition)

- 4.10 The document sets out a draft Aim for where we want to be in 20 years' time together with draft Development Principles and Spatial Objectives, all in the context of Southend 2050. The Local Plan will also incorporate other relevant Council and stakeholder strategies, including the emerging Southend Culture Vision.

Part 2. Spatial Strategy

- 4.11 The Local Plan is required to set out a clear and positive strategy for the pattern, scale and quantity of development. The consultation document identifies a draft strategy which seeks to satisfactorily accommodate future development needs for the next 20 years, including new homes, jobs and supporting infrastructure and services, whilst safeguarding the character and amenities of areas and the natural environment.

Economic Recovery and Meeting Employment Needs (Southend 2050: Opportunity and Prosperity)

- 4.12 All the sections of the Local Plan will play an important role in facilitating job growth and economic recovery. The provision of new homes will provide construction jobs and attract investment and spending to the area, whilst a growing population will generate more jobs in schools and health related services as well as shops, cafes and restaurants in our town, neighbourhood and local centres. Transport and access improvements will be vital for attracting economic investment and there remains considerable economic growth potential at London Southend Airport.
- 4.13 The consultation document sets out options for safeguarding the existing employment stock; identifies land for additional employment provision; and suggests the potential re-allocation of some underutilised employment to other uses. These options are put forward in the context of needing to find land and opportunities sufficient to generate up to 11,000 new jobs in the period up to 2040.

Providing Community Services and Infrastructure (Southend 2050: Active and Involved)

- 4.14 Growth within Southend needs to be infrastructure led, ensuring key services and facilities are delivered when and where they are needed, taking account of existing capacity and the phasing of future development. The document asks what infrastructure provision is required in respect to new development and outlines that an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) will be prepared to sit alongside the Local Plan.

Providing New Homes (Southend 2050: Safe and Well)

- 4.15 In relation to housing specifically, Local Authorities must seek to meet their housing needs in full. The identified housing need for the Borough up to 2040 is approximately an additional 23,500 homes.
- 4.16 The consultation document builds on the options put forward in the 2019 'Issues and Options' consultation and responses received and considers in further detail the options for meeting the Borough's future housing needs by:
- *Increasing urban capacity* – development within the existing urban area of Southend through windfall, existing allocations and planning permissions and sites located on previously developed land;
 - *Facilitating urban change* – housing regeneration on existing housing estates in public ownership that may benefit from some renewal, redevelopment or expansion; outmoded/under used employment land that could be better put to alternative residential use; and sites on open space and agricultural land within settlement limits that could be suitable for housing;
 - Bearing in mind the preamble to the document as stated at paragraph 3.1 above - *Building new neighbourhoods* - development on the edge of the existing urban area of Southend that has the potential to create a comprehensive new neighbourhood including new jobs, supporting infrastructure, improved access, and public open space. This includes 1,859 new homes at Fossetts Farm and an estimated 5,395 additional homes on land currently designated as Green Belt; and
 - *Considering the potential for new development outside the Borough* - Rochford District Council is preparing a new Local Plan and is also considering a range of spatial options and sites to meet its own development needs. One option that could contribute to meeting housing needs within both Rochford and Southend is through providing a series of new neighbourhoods on the north-eastern edge of Southend. These neighbourhoods could be created with distinct identities or be part of a comprehensive growth area (such as a garden settlement) delivering new jobs and infrastructure including schools, provision for further education, new health facilities, a new country park, new sport and leisure facilities and the creation of other new community facilities to provide for new sustainable communities. A comprehensive development would also include all the land necessary to deliver new road and transport links required to facilitate the delivery of land both within Southend Borough and Rochford District, and through its green infrastructure provision, would help to facilitate the creation of a new sub-regional scale South Essex Estuary Park (SEE Park) being brought forward in South Essex.

Retail Provision and Centres Hierarchy (Southend 2050: Opportunity and Prosperity)

- 4.17 To ensure that across the Borough, the Plan helps to provide for healthy, 'complete' neighbourhoods and encourages local employment opportunities, the consultation document identifies a hierarchy of centres and proposes to promote and enhance a mix of commercial uses within these by defining each

of them as “Commercial Areas” within which the ground floor use should be within the new Class E of the Use Classes Order⁴. The document also seeks feedback on the options to accommodate future retail and other commercial needs.

Town Centre and Central Seafront

(Southend 2050: Opportunity and Prosperity)

- 4.18 In the light of changing retail patterns, the Plan notes the need to promote a greater mix of uses within our town and local centres. Building upon the policy provisions within the Southend Central Area Action Plan (SCAAP), recent public realm improvements and actions taken by the Council and its partners to date, the Plan recognises that town centre needs to be reimagined and refocussed to ensure that it adapts and evolves.
- 4.19 The Local Plan therefore invites feedback on a range of draft Opportunity Sites and Interventions that could help to transform and re-imagine the Town Centre and its environs.

Protecting and Enhancing Green Space and the Coastline

(Southend 2050: Pride and Joy; Safe and Well)

- 4.20 To provide protection against inappropriate development of existing open spaces such as parks, woodlands, coastline and to protect natural habitats, the consultation document identifies areas to be safeguarded; supports the ambition to help create a new Country Park (South Essex Estuary Park) to improve access to green space for residents in the north east of the Borough; and identifies areas of search where new and improved open spaces will be promoted within areas currently lacking access to local green space.

Transport and Access

(Southend 2050: Connected and Smart)

- 4.21 The consultation document identifies draft priorities for transport provision and considers the extent of accessibility to town and neighbourhood centres and tourism attractions. It also seeks views on the principle of creating a new link road including sustainable travel routes (i.e. bus priority lanes, cycleways etc.) from the A127 to Shoeburyness to facilitate the development of new neighbourhood/s to the north of Southend.

London Southend Airport

(Southend 2050: Connected and Smart; Opportunity and Prosperity)

- 4.22 Options for updating and reviewing policy provisions relating to the airport, airport growth and its economic potential, taking account of existing runway capacity, environmental and noise issues together with transport provisions and links to the airport are also set out for public comment.

Part 3. Southend Neighbourhoods

(Southend 2050: Safe and Well, Pride and Joy, Active and Involved)

- 4.23 The consultation document looks at each of Southend’s neighbourhoods in detail and sets out a range of options and issues affecting the Boroughs eight defined neighbourhoods, namely Eastwood, Leigh, Prittlewell, Westcliff, Southend Central (including, Town Centre and Central Seafront), Southchurch,

Thorpe Bay and Shoeburyness. It also sets out draft priorities and considers how 'complete' each neighbourhood is in terms of community facilities and accessibility and identifies potential sites for various uses to meet local needs.

- 4.24 Other land use considerations and criteria-based policies that will eventually help to shape and manage the form and function of development, such as those to address design, heritage, housing tenure and climate change, have not been explicitly identified within the consultation document. They will be included at the Preferred Options stage of the Southend New Local Plan preparation.

5. Other Options

- 5.1 The failure to prepare a new local plan for Southend would result in its current plans becoming progressively out of date and the Council becoming increasingly unable to positively influence the scale, nature and location of development within the Borough. Without the certainty of a recently adopted local plan which includes up to date policies and proposals for the location of development and new infrastructural investment, potential investors in new development may be dissuaded from investing in the local area, leading to fewer new homes (including affordable homes), fewer new jobs and facilities being provided, and/or not being provided in the right places to best support the local economy and community. The local community would also be left with little certainty of where and how new development would happen in future years.
- 5.2 An out-of-date local plan also brings the potential risk of "planning by appeal" with the responsibility for decision making being passed from the Council and the local community to the Planning Inspectorate and the Secretary of State, as the council's existing local plan becomes increasingly out of date. Councils can be directed to prepare a local plan by Government where they have not kept their local plan up to date and can even have plan-making powers taken away, should they fail to progress plan preparation in a timely manner, or refuse to prepare a plan.
- 5.3 The preparation of the Southend New Local Plan and associated documents in close collaboration with neighbouring local authorities is considered to provide the most effective way forward for the Borough, bearing in mind the intention of neighbouring districts to prepare their own local plans. Ongoing co-operation with neighbouring councils and across the wider South Essex area (through ASELA), will continue to progress cross-boundary strategic development issues.
- 5.4 In light of instructions from Government, delaying the progress of a Local Plan currently in preparation is not a defensible option.

6. Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 The recommendations set out in this report are intended to help ensure the expeditious production of a new Local Plan for Southend, which when adopted, will set a clear, up to date planning policy framework to manage and guide future development in the Borough. Once adopted, the Plan will also ensure the Council has strong control of decision making and will continue to be able to make planning decisions, aligned to a clear strategy which has been the subject of widespread public engagement with the local community.

7. Corporate Implications

Contribution to the Southend 2050 Road Map

- 7.1 The successful delivery of the Southend New Local Plan will contribute significantly to the fulfilment of a number of elements of the Council's vision, themes and outcomes, for example, meeting local housing needs, improving transport provision and infrastructure, improving economic prosperity, providing for regeneration and protecting and enhancing the natural and built environment. This is set out below.
- 7.2 The delivery of the Southend New Local Plan is included as a Southend 2050 outcome on the Opportunity and Prosperity theme. In addition, it will make an important contribution to recovery and renewal following the impacts of Covid 19.

The New Local Plan will contribute to the following Southend 2050 Outcomes:



1. There is a tangible sense of pride in the place and local people are actively, and knowledgeably, talking up Southend.
2. The variety and quality of our outstanding cultural and leisure offer has increased for our residents and visitors and we have become the region's first choice coastal tourism destination.
3. We have invested in protecting and nurturing our coastline, which continues to be our much loved and best used asset.
4. Our streets and public spaces are valued and support the mental and physical wellbeing of residents and visitors.
5. We act as a Green City with outstanding examples of energy efficient and carbon neutral buildings, streets, transport and recycling.



2. Southenders are remaining well enough to enjoy fulfilling lives, throughout their lives.
3. We are well on our way to ensuring that everyone has a home that meets their needs.
4. We are all effective at protecting and improving the quality of life for the most vulnerable in our community.
5. Residents feel safe and secure in their homes.



2. Residents feel the benefits of social connection, in building and strengthening their local networks through common interests and volunteering.
4. A range of initiatives help increase the capacity for communities to come together to enhance their neighbourhood and environment.
5. More people have physically active lifestyles, including through the use of open spaces.



1. The Local Plan is setting an exciting planning framework for the Borough.
2. We have a fast-evolving, re-imagined and thriving town centre, with an inviting mix of shops, homes, culture and leisure opportunities.
4. Key regeneration schemes, such as Queensway, seafront developments and the Airport Business Park are underway and bringing prosperity and job opportunities to the Borough.
5. Southend is a place that is renowned for its creative industries, where new businesses thrive and where established employers and others invest for the long term.
6. Southend provides fulfilling careers for our residents, and enough job roles to match the needs of the population.
7. Southend businesses feel supported to respond to economic shock; adapt to evolving global markets; and, have the tools to preserve their businesses by responding effectively and positively to change.



1. Working with the public transport providers to enhance and encourage the use of the existing provision moving towards a long-term aspiration to open new routes, enabling a wider accessibility to public transport options.
2. People have a wide choice of transport options.
3. We are leading the way in making public and private travel smart, clean and green.
4. Southend is a leading digital city with world class infrastructure that reflects equity of digital provision for the young, vulnerable and disadvantaged.

Climate Change Implications

- 7.3 There is a legal duty on local authorities to ensure climate change mitigation and adaptation are integrated across all local planning policy. The Local Plan must also take into account the Council's declaration of a climate emergency and be the spatial expression of the Council's corporate policies and strategies.
- 7.4 Seeking to prevent and mitigating the impacts of Climate Change will be integral to the preparation of the Local Plan. This is included within the draft Aim and Objectives set out in the consultation document. Specific policies relating to Climate Change will be included and gain a prominent focus in the next iteration of the New Local Plan.

Financial Implications

- 7.5 Financial and human resource input is necessary to fulfil the requirements of all statutory stages in the preparation and delivery of the Southend New Local Plan. It should be noted that taking a development plan document through to adoption does have significant financial implications owing to the statutory process which has to be adhered to.
- 7.6 Funding for the preparation of the Southend New Local Plan was approved as part of the 2019/20 budget and is reprofiled across the years as part of the Resourcing Better Outcomes Outturn report.

Legal Implications

- 7.7 To meet its objectively assessed housing need, each local authority must engage with adjoining local authorities under the Duty to Co-operate provisions set out in the Localism Act. The Act places a legal duty on local planning authorities to engage constructively, actively and on an on-going basis to maximise the effectiveness of development plan preparation in the context of strategic cross boundary matters.
- 7.8 Local planning authorities should make every effort to secure the necessary cooperation on strategic cross boundary matters before they submit their Local Plan for examination. Local planning authorities must demonstrate how they have complied with the duty at the independent examination of their Local Plan. If a local planning authority cannot demonstrate it has complied with the duty then the Local Plan will not proceed further in examination.

- 7.9 Local planning authorities are responsible for satisfying themselves about whether they have complied with the duty. As part of their consideration, local planning authorities will need to bear in mind that the cooperation should produce effective and deliverable policies on strategic cross boundary matters.
- 7.10 The 'Refining the Plan Options' consultation document and supporting evidence shows that Southend is unable to accommodate all its housing needs to 2040 within the administrative area of the Borough. In such circumstances the Borough Council will continue to engage with Castle Point Borough and Rochford District Councils as neighbouring authorities and other South Essex authorities, to determine whether the shortfall in housing need can be delivered elsewhere. Strategic scale development through the delivery of a series of new neighbourhoods on the edge of Southend including land, within Rochford District, could assist in meeting the Borough's full housing need in the Plan period.
- 7.11 The status of a Local Plan is prescribed in Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, which gives primacy to the development plan. It states: "if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise." As such, having an up-to-date Local Plan in place allows the local authority to plan positively and direct development to those sites and locations that are in accordance with the council's strategy for regeneration and growth. It also provides the authority with the framework to robustly defend planning decisions at appeal.

People Implications

- 7.12 Staff resources from the Strategic Planning Team will continue to be required in order to contribute to the ongoing preparation of the Southend New Local Plan. Support from Performance and Business Support will also continue to be required, particularly with regards to the public consultation process.
- 7.13 As the new local plan is cross-cutting in its coverage, inputs from a number of other Council teams will be required particularly in relation to transport and highways, housing, employment, tourism, recreation, health and well-being, nature conservation and corporate strategy and communication. Local plan preparation can be controversial and requires close co-operation on a range of strategic planning and infrastructure issues, along with clear co-ordination, oversight and strong place-making leadership to help progress the plan successfully.

Property Implications

- 7.14 A new Local Plan for Southend will provide allocations and planning policy for all land in the Borough, including potentially, some Council owned assets.

Consultation

- 7.15 One of the key elements of the local planning system is the recognition of the need for early and full community engagement in the preparation of new planning documents. The Southend New Local Plan will be subject to statutory consultation under the 2012 Regulations, as amended. In addition, local plans are subject to an examination in public held by an independent government appointed planning inspector to consider whether the plans are 'sound' and may be put forward for adoption.
- 7.16 The Southend New Local Plan public consultation process will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 7.17 An equalities impact assessment will be produced and updated as the Southend New Local Plan progresses. The public consultation will give the opportunity for all sections of the community to input into the plan making process.

Risk Assessment

- 7.18 The plan preparation timetable for the Southend New Local Plan is challenging. Significant staff resources within the Strategic Planning Team will continue to be required to take forward the plan through its various statutory stages including the examination stages at inquiry before an independent inspector.
- 7.19 If the Local Plan were not to be published and taken forward to adoption, the absence of up-to-date planning policies may result in significant uncertainty for potential investors, with a consequential reduction in new development investment locally, holding back job creation, and the provision of homes, facilities and infrastructure coming into the Borough.
- 7.20 It may also lead to inappropriate development taking place within the local authority area to the detriment of the local environment and supporting infrastructure. In addition, there would be no policy to manage the development of key sites and infrastructure, as well as having adopted planning policy to help secure Government funding particularly in relation to securing significant improvements to infrastructure provision.
- 7.21 A failure to progress a plan could also result in Government intervention where plan making powers are taken away from the Borough Council. The Minister of State for Housing wrote to the Borough Council and other local authorities earlier in 2021 to remind them of the importance of maintaining progress on producing up-to-date Local Plans. The letter also stated that the Minister would consider contacting those authorities where delays to plan-making have occurred to discuss the reasons why the has happened, and to explore what support the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government can offer.
- 7.22 Preparation of the Local Plan will need to be cognisant of future changes to national planning policy and legislation, including those which may result from the Planning White Paper, if brought into legislation in due course.

Value for Money

- 7.23 The preparation of an up-to-date Local Plan brings significant new investment to an area. That investment manifests itself through the investment in construction of new homes, commercial premises, community facilities and infrastructure. Associated with the delivery of new development comes the ability to provide new affordable homes, the creation of significant new jobs and household income for workers living locally, greater spend to local businesses, developer contributions towards the provision of new community facilities, infrastructure and services, the ability to bid for a wider range of government funds to help facilitate growth and additional funds through council tax, business rates and homes bonus funding etc. to help provide new and improved council services.
- 7.24 In terms of the process of plan preparation itself, the work proposed will be carried out using in-house resources wherever possible. This will have generic benefits in terms of building in-house experience and expertise for officers, as well as utilising local knowledge and experience within the Strategic Planning team which would not be gained otherwise.

Community Safety Implications

- 7.25 The Southend New Local Plan will seek to improve the natural and built environment (including designing out crime in development and the public realm) thereby contributing towards improving community safety. These issues will be considered in the next stage of Local Plan preparation.

Environmental Impact - Sustainability Appraisal

- 7.26 All iterations of the Southend New Local Plan will require a Sustainability Appraisal to be undertaken. The Sustainability Appraisal is an assessment of the potential significant social, environmental (including Climate Change) and economic impacts of development. It forms an integral part of the plan making process. It ensures that all policies and proposals are prepared with a view to contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. A Sustainability Appraisal will be made available for comment alongside the Local Plan document as part of 'The Refining the Plan Options' consultation.

Environmental Impact - Habitats' Regulations Screening Report

- 7.27 Southend-on-Sea and the surrounding districts are home to a number of important designated sites for nature conservation. Habitats' screening is an assessment of the potential significant effects of a policy on European Sites designated for their nature conservation importance. These include Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, and international Ramsar sites. As part of the preparation of the Southend New Local Plan each policy included in the plans will need to be assessed for any significant impacts on sites designated of nature conservation value. Policy should only be approved after determining that it will not adversely affect the integrity of such sites.

8. Background Papers

- 8.1 Southend Cabinet Report 15 June 2021 - Southend New Local Plan Refining the Plan Options
- 8.2 Southend Cabinet Report 19 June 2018 - Southend Development Plan Review: Comprising South Essex Joint Strategic Plan and Southend New Local Plan
- 8.3 Minutes of the Environment and Planning Working Party
- 8.4 Southend Cabinet Report 16 January 2020 - Southend New Local Plan Update
- 8.5 Southend Cabinet Report 23 February 2021 Southend New Local Plan – Revised and Updated Local Development Scheme
- 8.6 The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012.
- 8.7 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004
- 8.8 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF,2018)
- 8.9 Planning for the Future, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, March 2020
- 8.10 Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020
- 8.11 Southend Local Development Scheme (2021)
- 8.12 Southend New Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation (February 2019)
- 8.13 Southend New Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation Report Southend on Sea Borough Council, August 2019
- 8.14 Statement of Community Involvement (2020)

9. Appendices

- 9.1 **Appendix 1:** Southend New Local Plan, Refining the Plan Options Refining the Strategy for Growth and Change Regulation 18 Public Consultation
- 9.2 **Appendix 2:** Southend New Local Plan, Issues and Options Document Consultation Report (2019):
<https://localplan.southend.gov.uk/issues-and-options/issues-and-options-reports>
- 9.3 **Appendix 3:** Non-Technical Summary Southend New Local Plan, Refining the Plan Options