

## Local Plan Issues and Options

### Planning Policy Committee Thursday, 15 January 2026

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive

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Purpose: For decision

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Publication status: Unrestricted

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Wards affected: All

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#### Executive summary:

The government is requiring every local planning authority to prepare and adopt an up-to-date Local Plan as soon as possible. Local Plans are planning documents that determine how much development is needed, where it should go, and how it should be supported by infrastructure and environmental safeguards. Once adopted, the Local Plan is the key consideration in making all planning decisions.

Adopting a local plan in Tandridge District that meets its full development needs will be a considerable challenge as the district is one of the most constrained in the country with 94% Green Belt, two national landscapes, large areas of flood risk, protected biodiversity designations and significant infrastructure deficits. However, not having an up-to-date local plan in place puts the district and its residents at significant risk of unacceptable unplanned and speculative development being allowed in locations that would normally be inappropriate.

The Council is, therefore, committed to bringing forward a new local plan as soon as possible to respond to these challenges and put in place a refreshed planning strategy that is genuinely plan-led and achieves the right balance between delivering new development, but which properly reflects the constraints and challenges that exist in the district.

The first stage of a local plan under the current system is to consult its residents and other interested parties on issues and options. This is often referred to as a 'Regulation 18' consultation as it relates to corresponding part of the legislation. A consultation document has been prepared in **Appendix A** that sets out the high-level context that will underpin the plan, and the key issues that will need to be addressed.

Options are presented for consultation that will then inform the next stage of local plan preparation. At this stage, there are no decisions to be taken on specific sites or strategies but our residents' comments on the high-level options are crucial to help inform the next stages. The consultation is proposed to run for the statutory 6-week period from Monday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2025 to Sunday 1 March 2026.

## Recommendation to Committee:

The Committee is asked to approve the release of the Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation document in Appendix A under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2012 for the prescribed 6-week period.

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## Reason for recommendation:

To progress the Local Plan in accordance with statutory requirements.

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### This report supports the Council's priority of:

- Protecting and enhancing our environment.
- Delivering affordable housing for local people.
- Financial prudence and sustainability.
- Putting residents at the heart of what we do.
- A safe, healthy and caring community supporting those most in need.
- A thriving economy.

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<b>Contact officer</b>	Nick Perrins, Planning Policy Manager NPerrins@tandridge.gov.uk
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## Background and context

1. The National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') confirms the importance of a plan-led planning system to set out a positive vision for the future of each area, and a local planning framework for meeting housing and other economic, social and environmental needs.
2. The Tandridge District Council Local Plan comprises the Tandridge District Core Strategy adopted in 2008 and the Tandridge Local Plan Part 2: Detailed Policies adopted in 2014. With so much change in national planning policy in recent years, including the new standard method for calculating housing needs published in December 2024, certain aspects of the adopted development plan require updating.
3. The Council adopted a Local Development Scheme for its new Local Plan in 2024. This was amended in February 2025 to reflect the proposed Government changes to the Local Plan system that are expected to be brought in shortly. In accordance with the March 2025 Local Development Scheme, work is now underway on a series of important evidence base workstreams that are needed to prepare an up-to-date new Local Plan.
4. The Government also published new guidance in November 2025 setting out further details on the proposed new Local Plan system. This includes confirmation that the regulations to formally introduce this (and repeal the existing system) will be published shortly in 2026. At the time of this report being published, however, the new regulations have not been published.
5. The Government also published a proposed new NPPF in December 2025 that makes a series of key national policy changes including the introduction of non-mandatory National Development Management Policies and further relaxation of Green Belt policy. The draft NPPF also includes new national policy to support the implementation of the new Local Plan system. The draft NPPF is being consulted upon until 10 March 2026. It is not known when the new NPPF will be finalised and published but in view of the

consultation period it is reasonable to assume it won't be before April 2026 at the earliest.

6. With there being considerable uncertainty over when both the new Local Plan regulations and new NPPF will be in force (both are needed to progress a plan on the proposed new system), it is considered prudent to progress the Council's local plan under the current arrangements. This will ensure that our communities see tangible progress in the Council's commitment to a new Local Plan as well having the opportunity to comment on the range of issues and options that will remain largely unchanged and needing to be dealt with regardless of what local plan system the plan is ultimately adopted within.

### **Proposal Details**

7. The Local Plan Issues and Options consultation document (Appendix A) sets out in Chapter 1 the introductory context to why a plan is needed, the scale of the development challenge that needs to be tackled (particularly relating to housing needs) in the district and details of the consultation period and how people can respond.
8. Chapter 2 is a description of the district as it exists today. Understanding how the district functions and is affected by constraints is a crucial part of planning for its future.
9. Chapter 3 is the main body of the consultation document and set outs the key issues and possible options that the Council could explore to address them. It starts with a proposed draft vision for what the district could look and feel like by 2044, which is the end of the proposed local plan period. Respondents are asked to provide feedback on the draft vision, which will be considered in finalising it for later parts of the plan process.
10. The document then goes into detail on the types of locational strategy options that might exist for accommodating new development. These are identified as being:
  - Towns and larger village intensification – this would see growth predominantly delivered on previously developed land within existing towns and the larger villages, where services and transport links already exist. However, this option would likely require significant changes to the character of our towns and villages through promoting more flatted developments and other higher density forms of development.
  - An even distribution of development across the district – This would see an even spread of development across the district with all towns and villages being allocated a proportionate share including exploring the release of Green Belt / Grey Belt land. This would also allow for proportionate growth at smaller rural settlements to meet local housing needs and help sustain local shops, schools, services and the local economy.
  - A focus on new settlements – This option would see a significant amount of the housing need being delivered through one or more new settlements. This would enable new communities to be formed with the required infrastructure to support delivery of sustainable development. This could also enable there to be proportionately less development at existing settlements in the district.
  - Balanced mix of the above – this option would combine the most sustainable and environmentally acceptable aspects of the above three options to deliver needs. For example, this could promote use of previously developed land, allow some organic

growth on the edges of existing settlements and also deliver a new settlement in an appropriate location in the district.

11. No decisions have been made on which of these options might be considered further but are presented for consultation so residents and interested parties can provide their views as this early stage of plan preparation.
12. The remaining parts of the document set out context and related questions on housing, affordable housing, the economy, infrastructure including transport, our places, the historic environment, the natural environment, health and wellbeing, climate change and monitoring and delivery. The comments received on these aspects will inform the proposed future draft policies in the later stages of the plan.
13. All the consultation responses will be analysed and used to inform the next stage of plan preparation. The next stage of plan preparation will also be informed by the outcomes of emerging evidence work including housing and economic needs, retail needs, infrastructure, Green Belt assessment and land availability.

### **Other options considered**

14. The other option considered is not to proceed with the consultation and delay the local plan to await the implementation of the new Local Plan system. As this option will remain available, and the new system has already been delayed by over 2 years, it is considered appropriate to consult under the current system as we are ready to do so and actively start the process of working with our residents on how best to address our area's challenges. The feedback from the consultation will remain useful evidence within whichever system is in place both now and in the future.

### **Consultation**

15. The draft document has been subject to internal informal engagement with members and other senior officers. These views have been incorporated in the proposed consultation document in Appendix A.

### **Implications of Recommended Option Financial and Legal Implications**

<b>Implications</b>	<b>Officer</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Financial Implications	Chief Finance Officer / S151	The Director of Resources/Finance Officer confirms that there are no financial implications arising from this report.
Legal Implications	Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer	<p>The preparation of a Local Plan must follow the statutory procedures set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. Releasing the Issues and Options document for consultation fulfils the Council's duty under Regulation 18 to seek views at an early stage.</p> <p>While this stage does not commit the Council to any specific policy approach, the consultation must be carried out lawfully, transparently, and for an appropriate period. Failure to comply with statutory requirements or</p>

		accepted consultation standards could expose the Council to legal challenge, including judicial review, and may delay the Local Plan process.
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### Other implications

There are no human resources, property, risk management, ward, climate emergency and sustainability, value for money implications arising from this report.

### Equality and Diversity Implications:

Have you completed an Equality Impact Assessment?

No

If you have not completed an Impact Assessment, please explain your reasons:

This is a consultation and as such no decisions will be made that would impact on equality and diversity matters.

### Summary of Equality and diversity impacts

Please indicate: P = Positive impact; 0 = Neutral; N = Negative; Enter "X"			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Age		x	
Disability		x	
Gender reassignment		x	
Marriage & civil partnership		x	
Pregnancy & maternity		x	
Race/ethnicity		x	
Religion or belief		x	
Sex/gender		x	
Sexual orientation		x	

### Appendices

Appendix A – Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation Document.

### Background papers

None

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