

chapter 1

introduction

The purpose of the Plan

- 1.1 The Epping Forest District Draft Local Plan sets out the proposed strategy for meeting the District's needs for the next 17 years. It is not a final Plan but represents the Council's preferred approach based on the evidence currently available and the results of the previous consultations in 2010/11 and community choices in 2012. It is published to gather the views of residents, businesses and others with an interest in the area and is accompanied by a questionnaire for completion.
- 1.2 This document sets out the proposed approach and detailed draft policies for the whole District for the period up to 2033. It sets out:
 - the Council's vision and objectives for the District's development over the Plan period;
 - draft policies to ensure that development delivers high quality, sustainable homes, drive the quality of design and maintain our high quality built and natural environment;
 - the future distribution for housing growth and requirements for affordable housing;
 - draft policies to build a strong, competitive economy and the future distribution for new employment land space and thus new jobs;
 - draft policies to maintain and enhance the vibrancy and vitality of our towns centres
 - draft policies to support a sustainable transport and road infrastructure network; and
 - proposals for delivery including a Draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) to demonstrate the infrastructure requirements necessary to support the site allocations and other proposals.
- 1.3 The Epping Forest District Local Plan will shape how the District changes, and what is protected, by attracting and guiding investment in the District from the private sector, the Council itself, and other public bodies. Such investment will include new homes, new offices and employment opportunities, colleges and schools, shops and leisure centres, GPs and clinics as well as improvements to existing physical and green infrastructure. It will guide decision making on planning applications to build or change the use of buildings and land. It will also provide the strategic policies that form the context for any Neighbourhood Plans produced in the District.
- 1.4 This Draft Local Plan includes the draft policies that the Council considers to be the most suitable way to develop the District in the future and explains other options it has considered and decided not to take forward together with the reasons for those decisions. Once adopted, the new Epping Forest District Local Plan will replace all of the surviving policies of the Local Plan 1998 and the 2006 Local Plan Alterations (see Appendix 2) but Minerals and Waste Policy remains the responsibility of Essex County Council. The current Minerals Plan was adopted in July 2014 and a replacement Waste Plan is currently being produced. More information can be found from the Essex County Council website.

The existing Plan

- 1.5 The current Development Plan consists of the following documents:
- Combined Policies of Epping Forest District Local Plan Alterations (1998) and Alterations (2006) published February 2008;
 - Essex Minerals Local Plan 2014; and
 - Essex and Southend Waste Local Plan 2001.

The Requirements of Plan Making

- 1.6 The Epping Forest District Draft Local Plan has been prepared under the legislative provision of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and appropriate regulations including the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The Draft Local Plan has taken into account national planning policy, currently set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (DCLG, 2012), Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (DCLG, 2015) and the web based published Planning Practice Guidance. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which is the core aspect of national planning policy.
- 1.7 The Council's policies must be backed up by credible, robust and proportionate evidence that supports the approach taken and justifies what is being proposed. The evidence base for the Plan is extensive and is listed at Appendix 4. It is the Council's job to balance all of the evidence and find the most suitable way forward. This evidence base includes research on housing, employment, retail, health and wellbeing, the built and natural environment, accessibility and flooding as well as the views of local people, businesses, landowners and public agencies involved in the District.
- 1.8 The Council must identify needs for development in an objective manner and seek to provide for the development need it identifies. As well as meeting the identified need the proposals in the Plan have to be economically viable for delivery by the market and achievable. The Epping Forest District Draft Local Plan cannot therefore be unrealistic and the first stage of a Viability Assessment has been undertaken by independent consultants and is published as evidence to support the Plan. Further viability testing of the Draft Local Plan will be undertaken prior to publication and submission for examination.

- 1.9 In accordance with the 'Duty to Co-operate' set out in the Localism Act 2011 the Draft Local Plan has been produced through close partnership working with the neighbouring authorities to ensure that sub-regional and cross boundary planning issues have been taken into account. This work under the 'Duty to Cooperate' replaces the role of the old East of England Plan – which was revoked by the Government in January 2013. A number of cross boundary and strategic matters in this Plan are the result of work with partners. This is discussed in more detail in 'Chapter 2 – Setting the Scene'.
- 1.10 To ensure that the draft policies set out in the Draft Local Plan are in line with the objective of sustainable development, an Interim Sustainability Appraisal has been prepared. The appraisal is intended to assess the impact of draft planning policies in terms of their social, economic and environmental impacts. The Sustainability Appraisal addresses the requirements of the European Union Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (OJEC, 2001) and compliance with the Habitats Directive (OJEC, 1992). This document suggests recommendations for policies on sustainability grounds.
- 1.11 An Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out on the Draft Local Plan prior to its submission to the Secretary of State. The Equality Impact Assessment will consider issues relating to gender, age, ethnicity, religion/belief, disability, sexuality and low disposable income.

The Plan Making Process

- 1.12 The key stages involved in putting this version of the Plan together are outlined below with the next stages in Figure 1.1. The Council has consulted throughout the preparation of the Plan and in particular through two formal consultations Community Visioning in 2010/11 and Community Choices in 2012. There has been ongoing consultation with Parish and Town Councils through a range of workshops and briefings. The results of the previous public consultations can be found on the Council's website at the following location: www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/planningourfuture. All of the comments received have been considered during the production of this Draft Local Plan and the text of this document refers to the issues that people and organisations have raised. Prior to submission of the Draft Local Plan for examination a full consultation statement will be prepared.

Figure 1.1 - The Plan making process

Source - Adopted Local Development Scheme July 2016

| Plan making stage | Dates and timetable |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Initial evidence gathering and background work | 2010 onwards |
| Consultation on the Vision for the District “Planning Our Future - Community Visioning” | 8 November 2010 – 7 January 2011 |
| Consideration of the responses to the consultation. Preparation of Issues and Options for the Plan together with initial sustainability appraisal | January 2011 – July 2012 |
| Consultation on issues and Options “Planning Our Future – Community Choices - Issues and Options for the Local Plan” | 30 July 2012 – 15 October 2012 |
| Consideration of responses to Consultation Further evidence gathering and preparation of the Draft Plan | October 2012 – October 2016 |
| Consultation on the Draft Plan | We are here 31 October 2016 – 12 December 2016 |
| Consideration of responses to the Draft Plan Preparation of the submission Plan | October 2016 – April 2017 |
| Publication of submission Plan for representations on soundness | June/July 2017 |
| Submission of the Plan, evidence and representations to the Secretary of State | November/ December 2017 |
| Examination of the Plan by an Independent Inspector | Likely Spring 2018 but subject to discussion with Planning Inspectorate |
| Inspector reports on the Plan - if found sound and legally compliant | July 2018 |
| Council adopts the Plan as policy | October 2018 |

Neighbourhood Planning

1.13 Neighbourhood Planning is a new right for communities introduced through the Localism Act 2011. Communities can shape development in their areas through the production of Neighbourhood Development Plans, Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders. When made, following an examination and successful referendum, neighbourhood plans will become part of the development plan for the area. Locally distinctive Neighbourhood Plan policies will need to reflect the strategic policies of the new Epping Forest District Local Plan.

1.14 At the moment there are Neighbourhood Plans in various stages of production by the following town and parish councils:

- Moreton, Bobbingworth and the Lavers
- Chigwell
- Theydon Bois
- Epping Town
- Buckhurst Hill
- Loughton
- Epping Upland
- North Weald Bassett
- Waltham Abbey



Neighbourhood Planning

Finding your way around this document

1.15 The document is structured as follows:

- chapter 2 sets the scene explaining some key characteristics of the District;
- chapter 3 explains the overall vision and objectives for the Draft Local Plan and the key issues it needs to address together with the draft strategic policies which set out:
 - how much development is to be planned for;
 - where that development should be located together with major transport infrastructure;
 - Green Belt boundaries and draft policy; and
 - Green networks.
- chapter 4 contains draft policies that apply to a number of themes across the whole District such as housing, employment, transport, historic and built environment, design and environmental draft policies;
- chapter 5 contains draft policies that apply to specific places and has a section on each of the main settlements and town centres;
- chapter 6 sets out the draft infrastructure policies and approach for seeking contributions from developers as well as how the Plan will be delivered and monitored;
- the appendices include a range of key supporting evidence and references to the evidence base.

Appendix 1:
Acronyms and Glossary

Appendix 2:
List of Draft Plan Policies replacing all policies of the Epping Forest District Local Plan (1998) and Alterations (2006)

Appendix 3:
List of potential measures to monitor the effectiveness of policies in the Draft Local Plan

Appendix 4:
List of Evidence to support the Draft Local Plan

Appendix 5:
Housing and Traveller Trajectories