

Surrey Heath Borough Council

Executive

28th February 2022

Draft Surrey Heath Local Plan: Preferred Options (2019 – 2038)

Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Adrian Page – Planning and People
Strategic Director/Head of Service	Bob Watson / Gavin Chinniah
Report Author:	Jane Reeves – Planning Policy Manager
Key Decision:	No
Wards Affected:	Whole Borough

1. Summary and purpose

- 1.1 The Surrey Heath Local Plan will set out a planning framework for the Borough, including new site allocations and Borough wide planning policies for the period up to 2038. Once adopted, the Local Plan will replace current Development Plan policies comprising:
- Saved policies in the Surrey Heath Local Plan, 2000
 - Core Strategy and Development Management Policies, 2012
 - Camberley Town Centre Area Action Plan, 2014
- 1.2 National planning guidance requires local authorities to produce local plans and sets out the required stages of production in national Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. This includes consultation on draft versions of local plans prepared in accordance with the requirements set out under Regulation 18. Following the consultation on a Surrey Heath Issues and Options document in the summer of 2018, a further Draft Local Plan: Preferred Options has been prepared for consultation with residents and other stakeholders.
- 1.3 This 2022 Draft Local Plan (Regulation 18) sets out more detailed planning policies and site allocations policies than that contained in the 2018 Local Plan document. It also has regard to the most up to date national planning policy as well as technical evidence prepared to support the Local Plan. Changes include extending the plan period to 2038 to cover a minimum 15 year period from adoption as advised in national planning policy.

1.4 It is important to highlight as part of the development of the new Local Plan, that a Local Plan Working Group (LPWG), was formed, made of Councillors cross-party from the Council. The LPWG have discussed in detail a full range of spatial strategies, topics and policies over the past few years and this process has been very collaborative. As a result of all this work, detailed policies and site allocations supported by the LPWG have been developed. At a meeting on 24 January the LPWG endorsed and supported this version of the Draft Local Plan being considered for approval by Executive. It should be noted that the LPWG will continue to be involved in the development of the new Local Plan at all stages of the process.

1.5 In summary the Draft Plan:

- Delivers a positive vision for the future of Surrey Heath balancing the need for development against significant environmental constraints.
- Sets a strategy to focus new development within the settlement areas to the West of the Borough to optimise delivery of development in the most sustainable and accessible locations.
- Supports high quality and high-density development on key sites in Camberley Town Centre to provide new homes, support regeneration and future vitality and viability.
- Supports the local economy by designating 17 strategic and locally important employment sites.
- Promotes healthy, sustainable and cohesive local communities through good design and supporting infrastructure delivery.
- Supports action on climate change through mitigation and adaptation measures, including facilitating active travel.
- Protects environmental assets and sets policies to secure biodiversity net gain.

1.6 The objectives of the Draft Local Plan are broad and cross cutting and will contribute to a range of corporate work. The Local Plan will help deliver priorities in the 5 Year Strategy under the themes of Environment, Economy and Quality of Life. More detail is set out in section 6 of this report.

- 1.7 Responses from the consultation on the draft Local Plan (Regulation 18) and any additional evidence will be used to prepare the next version of the Local Plan, known as the Pre-Submission version (Regulation 19), which will be subject to further consultation before the Plan is submitted to the Secretary of State for independent Examination (Regulation 22). Consultation on this Draft Local Plan is therefore an important stage in seeking the views of the local community and stakeholders. The Executive are asked to agree the Draft Local Plan (Regulation 18) for an eight week period of consultation, along with consultation on an Interim Sustainability Appraisal.

2. Recommendation

2.1 The Executive is advised to RESOLVE that:

- (i) the Draft Surrey Heath Local Plan: Preferred Options (2019 – 2038) and associated Mapping booklet, attached at Annex 1 and 2, are agreed for a period of 8 weeks consultation from March to May 2022; and
- (ii) the Interim Sustainability Appraisal, attached at Annex 3, is agreed for a period of 8 weeks consultation from March to May 2022; and
- (iii) minor changes to the draft Local Plan and Mapping booklet be agreed by the Head of Planning in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and People.

3. Background and Supporting Information

Local Plan content

- 3.1 The new Surrey Heath Local Plan will provide a robust and up-to-date planning framework for future development in the Borough. It includes a vision, objectives and spatial strategy for the level and distribution of development, site allocations and a suite of development management policies.
- 3.2 The Draft Plan is informed by national planning policy and guidance, other County and local plans and strategies and a detailed evidence base on matters such as housing needs, flood risk, climate change, Gypsy and Traveller needs, climate change and future economic needs. The consultation responses from the Issues and Options consultation in 2018 have also been taken into account, and these are summarised in a background evidence document. However, there have been significant changes in national planning policy and guidance since 2018 and the current version must reflect the most up to date national guidance.

- 3.3 In preparing the draft Local Plan, consideration has been given to the considerable environmental and policy constraints that affect Surrey Heath Borough. These include the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, which affects 23% of the borough with a further 19% in the 400m buffer zone within which residential development cannot take place. Approximately half of the Borough lies within the metropolitan Green Belt and there are areas at risk of flooding and with important ecological habitats.

Housing

- 3.4 A key purpose of a Local Plan is to set out the scale and location of new homes to be built over the plan period. In determining the housing requirement for the Borough, over the period to 2038, officers have had regard to a range of evidence. The Government's standard methodology sets an annual housing need figure for Surrey Heath of 327 dwellings per annum, which over the Plan period, identifies a housing need for 6,213 new homes.
- 3.5 A number of studies have been undertaken to inform the approach to housing delivery including a Countryside Capacity Study, a Strategic Land Availability Assessment and a Housing Needs Assessment. In total 728 new dwellings have already been built in the Borough since 2019 and a further 2,424 have planning permission (as of 31/3/21). This includes, for example, the development of the former Princess Royal Barracks at Deepcut, which will provide 1,200 dwellings and which is under construction. The remaining supply will come from sites allocated for housing in the Draft Local Plan, sites identified in the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) and 'windfall' sites¹.
- 3.6 Work undertaken on potential capacity identified that sites from within settlements and appropriate Countryside beyond the Green Belt sites, and other sources listed above, did not provide sufficient capacity to deliver the housing need set out by the standard methodology. In line with guidance in national planning policy and under the duty to co-operate, discussions were held with neighbouring authorities as to whether unmet needs could be met elsewhere.
- 3.7 The adopted Hart Local Plan sets out a commitment to deliver 41 dwellings per annum towards meeting unmet needs in Surrey Heath. Through duty to co-operate discussions Hart District Council has reconfirmed this commitment. Over the overlapping Local Plan timescales (2019 – 2032) this means that a total of 533 new homes will be delivered in Hart to meet unmet needs in Surrey Heath.

¹ Sites not specifically identified through the Local Plan process, for example small sites of under 5 dwellings.

- 3.8 To determine the housing requirement figure for the Draft Local Plan (Regulation 18) account has been taken of environmental and planning constraints, the standard methodology local housing need figure, Housing Need Study, the Countryside Capacity Study, the SLAA and supply in the Hart Local Plan to arrive at a Local Plan housing requirement figure of 5,680 new homes. This is the minimum number of homes to be delivered in the Borough up to 2038. It is important to demonstrate that there is some flexibility in the identified supply of sites to deliver the Local Plan housing requirement, particularly at this stage in the plan making process, so the housing supply from all sources identifies a small supply buffer.
- 3.9 To demonstrate deliverability of the Draft Local Plan (Regulation 18) housing requirement the Plan identifies the potential to deliver 6,082 new homes, as set out in Table 1 below. A significant proportion of new homes will be located within Camberley town centre contributing to future regeneration proposals. Completions are new homes that have already been built and commitments are homes that are either under construction or which have planning permission. Table 2 sets out the sites that are specifically allocated for residential development in Policy HA1 in the Draft Local Plan. In addition, the following strategic sites are allocated and are subject to specific Draft Local Plan policies:
- Mindenhurst (former Princess Royal Barracks) – 1,200 new homes (some already completed/under construction);
 - London Road Block – approximately 550 new homes and other town centre uses;
 - Land East of Knoll Road – approximately 475 new homes.

Table 1 – Number of dwellings per delivery source by location in the borough

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	Number of dwellings (net) per source of delivery			
Location	Completions	Commitments	SLAA	Total
West of the Borough				
Bagshot	48	236	134	418
Camberley	218	498	1,491	2,207
Deepcut	118	1113	138	1,369
Frimley	51	107	215	373
Frimley Green	0	23	177	200
Mytchett	8	254	23	285
Total	443	2,231	2,178	4,852
East of the Borough				
Bisley	0	0	32	32
Chobham	52	14	114	180
Lightwater	1	2	17	20
West End	220	20	96	336
Windlesham	12	173	36	221
Total	285	209	295	789
Non-Spatial				
Windfall Allowance	-	-	457	457
Lapse-Rate	-	-16	-	-16
Total	728	2,424	2,967	6,082

Table 2 – Site Allocations for residential uses in Policy HA1

Policy Reference	SLAA Site ID	Site Name / Address	Number of homes allocated (net)
HA1/01	181	134 and 136 London Road, Bagshot	26
HA1/02	247	Bagshot Depot and Archaeology Centre, London Road, Bagshot, GU19 5HN	50
HA1/03	921	Land East of Park Street, North of Princess Way (former House of Fraser)	120
HA1/04	865	84-100 Park Street, Camberley	61
HA1/05	240	Camberley Centre, France Hill Drive, Camberley, GU15 3QG	35
HA1/06	25	Camberley Station, Station House, Pembroke Broadway	75
HA1/07	833	York Town Car Park, Sullivan Road, Camberley	27
HA1/08	552	Land at Frimhurst Farm, Deepcut Bridge Road, Deepcut	65
HA1/09	907	Sir William Siemens Square, Chobham Road, Frimley	200
HA1/10	557	Land west of Sturt Road, Frimley Green	160
HA1/11	178	Land east of Benner Lane (partial Housing Reserve Site), West End	73
HA1/12	177	Housing Reserve Site, East of Heathpark Drive, Windlesham	116
HA1/13	447	Chobham Rugby Club, 50 Windsor Road, Chobham, GU24 8LD	91

Table 2 continued – Site Allocations for C2 Development (Residential Institutions) in Policy HA1

Policy Reference	SLAA Site ID	Site Name / Address	Number of homes allocated (net)
HA1/14	801	Pinehurst, 141 Park Road, Camberley	44 (C3 Equivalent)

Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

- 3.10 The Council has a responsibility through the National Planning Policy Framework and other legal requirements to assess and plan for the housing needs of all residents, including the Gypsy and Traveller community. A Gypsy and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople Study prepared to support the Draft Local Plan shows a need for at least 32 pitches for Gypsies and Travellers and 14 plots for Travelling Showpeople over the plan period. Following the granting of planning permission for two pitches on a site to the South of the M3 junction in Lightwater, the outstanding need is for 30 pitches.
- 3.11 A number of options have been explored to identify sufficient sites to meet this need. However, this is challenging given the limited availability of land to deliver pitches and plots, in addition to the environmental and policy constraints in the Borough. At this point in time the Draft Local Plan does not include sites to meet all of the identified need. One specific site allocation for 4 pitches is identified at Diamond Ridge Woods on the edge of the Old Dean and is included as a site allocation in Policy H12. A further call for sites for Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation will take place alongside the Draft Local Plan consultation and other site opportunities will be investigated further. An additional consultation on Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites is programmed to take place in Summer 2022. This additional consultation event is included in the revised Local Development Scheme timetable for producing a new Local Plan, as detailed in that Executive report.

Employment and Retail

- 3.12 Evidence prepared for the draft Local Plan suggests that there are a range of different economic forecasts that can be used to determine how much employment land is needed in the Borough over the plan period. Using the lower range forecasts, evidence suggests that employment land requirements can be met from existing land supply and redevelopment of older stock. The Draft Local Plan identifies the most important employment sites as either strategic or locally important employment sites and seeks to protect them for employment uses where planning permission is required.

- 3.13 Evidence on town centre uses suggests that there is no need for additional retail floorspace in the Borough in addition to existing commitments and vacant floorspace and having regard to the changing way in which people shop and the growth of internet shopping. Camberley town centre will continue to be the focus for town centre uses along with the District and Local Centres, and the neighbourhood parades will continue to serve an important local function. As set out previously, a significant increase in the number of new homes in Camberley town centre is proposed.

Green Belt

- 3.14 The Draft Local Plan sets out that the current extent of the Green Belt will be maintained with the exception of the insetting of Chobham Village. No Green Belt sites are allocated for residential development in the Draft Plan, although a number of sites were submitted by landowners/developers for consideration, including a proposal for a larger scale development at Fairoaks. There is an assumption that some redevelopment of small brownfield sites in the Green Belt will take place to provide new homes over the Plan period.
- 3.15 National policy states that Green Belt boundaries should only be amended in exceptional circumstances and highlights the need to promote sustainable patterns of development when reviewing boundaries. The options of including in the Plan either a number of smaller Green Belt sites or a larger scale development for Fairoaks for housing were assessed through the Sustainability Appraisal process. However, in line with national policy, capacity from other sources of supply in the Borough, along with provision for some unmet needs to be met from Hart District does not warrant the need for sites in the Green Belt to be released for housing. Policies for the Green Belt follow national planning guidance with development being strictly limited.
- 3.16 Historically Chobham village has been ‘washed over’ by the Green Belt. However, since the last review of the Green Belt boundaries in 1987 there have been changes to national planning policy regarding the approach to designation of settlements within the Green Belt. Two broader Green Belt Studies have prepared to support the Local Plan, a Green Belt and Countryside Study, 2017 and a Surrey Heath Green Belt Review 2022, and in addition a specific Chobham Village Green Belt Study was undertaken. The Chobham Village Green Belt Study concluded that much of the settlement does not exhibit an open character and does not contribute significantly to the openness of the Green Belt. Combined with changes in national policy, the Draft Local Plan therefore includes the insetting of Chobham Village from the Green Belt.

Environment and Sustainability

- 3.17 A key objective of the Draft Local Plan is protection of the Borough's extensive environmental assets through a broad range of policies. This includes protection of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area and other areas of biodiversity and geodiversity, as well as securing biodiversity net gain and protecting greenspaces.
- 3.18 Policies in the Draft Local Plan promote sustainability and seek to ensure that new developments contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation. This includes helping to reduce carbon emissions by measures including low/zero carbon design, improved energy efficiency, promoting sustainable modes of transport and supporting green infrastructure. Policies also support climate change adaptation and healthy living through good design.

Development Management Policies

- 3.19 The Draft Local Plan includes a number of non-strategic development management policies. These cover a broad range of matters including:

Housing – affordable housing, First Homes, specialist housing and loss of housing

Design and Heritage – overarching design principles, trees, space standards, density standards and heritage assets

Climate Change – building emission standards, renewable and low carbon energy systems, flood risk

Green Belt and Countryside – Green Belt policies, equestrian uses, landscape, rural economy

Natural Environment – biodiversity and biodiversity net gain, Thames Basin Heaths SPA, pollution

Infrastructure – green infrastructure, open space provision and protection, community facilities, transport and digital infrastructure

Sustainability Appraisal

- 3.20 An Interim Sustainability Appraisal (SA) has been prepared to support the Draft Local Plan and is attached at Annex 3. In line with statutory requirements, it will also be subject to consultation. The purpose of the SA is to ensure that the Plan contributes to sustainable development and to assess different reasonable alternative approaches to the scale and location of future development as well as realistic policy options against a set of Sustainability objectives. The findings of the SA support the approach set out in the Draft Local Plan. Sustainability Appraisal is an iterative process and will continue to inform the next stages of the Local Plan.

Background evidence

3.21 National Policy and guidance sets out that Local Plans must be supported by appropriate evidence. A range of technical studies have been prepared either in-house or by external consultants to support the Local Plan and are available on the Local Plan evidence base page of the website. Key evidence includes:

- Habitat Regulation Assessment
- Strategic Land Availability Assessment
- Housing Needs Assessment
- Countryside Capacity Assessment
- Climate Change Study
- Greenspaces Background Paper
- Infrastructure Delivery Plan
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
- Employment Land Technical Update Paper
- Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment
- Green Belt Review
- Chobham Village Study
- Landscape Study
- Town Centre Uses and Future Directions Study

Further evidence will be required to inform the preparation of the next version of the Local Plan, known as the Pre-Submission Local Plan (Regulation 19). This will include a full Transport Assessment, Air Quality Assessment and Whole Plan Viability Study. In addition, further work on a corporate Camberley Town Centre Strategy will inform the next version of the Local Plan.

Consultation

3.22 Consultation is proposed on the Draft Plan between 14 March and 9 May 2022. Consultation must be consistent with the principles set out in the adopted Statement of Community Involvement and in summary will comprise:

- Notification to all those on the Planning Policy database (includes statutory consultees)
- Information on the Councils website including dedicated consultation site
- Information in libraries and at Parish Council offices
- Article in Heathscene to be distributed in March
- Public exhibitions
- Online information sessions

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 It is important that the Council has an up-to-date and robust planning framework to guide development which reflects current national policy and guidance. An up to date Local Plan ensures that the Council can guide development to the most appropriate locations rather than reacting to developers proposals and risking the loss of planning appeals.
- 4.2 The Government is clear that local authorities should have an up to date Plan in place by December 2023 or risk Government intervention. The revised Local Development Scheme, set out elsewhere on this Agenda, sets out the timetable for the remainder of the Local Plan preparation process.
- 4.3 The process for preparing Local Plans is set out in Regulations². These require that the Local Plan is prepared in consultation with the local community and other stakeholders. The proposed consultation will allow continued engagement and comments received will help inform the content of the next version of the Local Plan.
- 4.4 The timetable for producing a Local Plan must be set out in a document called a Local Development Scheme (LDS), details of which are set out in another item on this agenda. A draft LDS was considered and supported by the Local Plan Working Group in January 2022.

5. Proposal and Alternative Options

- 5.1 The available options for the Executive to consider are:
- i. to approve the draft Surrey Heath Local Plan: Preferred Options, Mapping booklet and Interim Sustainability Appraisal as set out in Annexes 1, 2 and 3 of this report; or
 - ii. to approve the draft Surrey Heath Local Plan: Preferred Options, Mapping booklet and Interim Sustainability Appraisal as set out in Annexes 1, 2 and 3 of this report with changes; or

² Regulation 18 of the Town and Country (Planning)(England) Regulations 2012

- iii. to not agree the draft Surrey Heath Local Plan: Preferred Options, Mapping booklet and Interim Sustainability Appraisal as set out in Annexes 1, 2 and 3 of this report.

6. Contribution to the Council's Five Year Strategy

6.1 The Local Plan, once adopted, will help to deliver on the following themes:

- i. **Environment** – enhance and improve access to the Borough's green spaces and natural environments for the enjoyment of generations to come, balancing our commitments to housing delivery and economic growth.
- ii. **Environment** – tackle Climate Change, working with communities and partners.
- iii. **Health & Quality of Life** – provide infrastructure that would support our ambition to ensure everyone can access a safe, quality home to meet their needs.
- iv. **Economy** – invest in our towns, villages and communities, supporting our existing businesses and attracting new ones.
- v. **Economy** – work with partners to improve to the Borough's infrastructure.
- vi. **Effective & Responsive Council** – advocate on behalf of our community on issues outside our direct control.

7. Resource Implications

7.1 There are no immediate resource implications arising beyond those allowed for within current budgets. Resources will be needed in the following two financial years to deliver the Local Plan and these will be sought through the usual budget setting process.

8. Section 151 Officer comments

8.1 There are no direct additional budgetary implications arising from this report outside of existing budgets, with the exception of potential legal counsel cost in the next financial year, and a budget bid has been made to cover this. Whereas the local plan will involve a draw on Council budgets once approved, this is likely to be considerably less than the potential cost of not having a local plan.

9. Legal and Governance Issues

9.1 The preparation of the Local Plan is a statutory requirement of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) and Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 as amended. The Local Plan must be prepared in line with relevant legislation as well as having regard to national planning policy and guidance. The Draft Local Plan will be afforded more weight in the determination of planning applications as it approaches adoption. At this stage only very limited weight can be attributed to the draft policies.

10. Monitoring Officer Comments

10.1 No matters arising.

11. Other Considerations and Impacts

11.1 No matters arising.

12. Environment and Climate Change

12.1 The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that its Local Plan contributes to tackling climate change. In order to support policies in the Local Plan a Climate Change Study has been prepared. This has supported the development of policies in the Draft Local Plan which seek to ensure that new developments contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation and contribute to meeting the Councils overall targets for climate change. The Draft Local Plan also includes policies seeking to protect the natural environment including the requirement for biodiversity net gains on new developments. Local Plan policies will also assist in the delivery of the Climate Change Action Plan.

13. Equalities and Human Rights

13.1 The draft Local Plan is accompanied by an Equalities Impact Assessment which will be updated as the Plan progresses.

14. Risk Management

14.1 The Local Development Scheme identifies the risks to meeting the Local Plan milestones and sets out some mitigation to each risk. Of note are that the Draft Local Plan does not yet include sufficient Gypsy and Traveller sites to meet the needs identified in the technical background evidence and a further consultation on this issue will therefore be needed in the Summer 2022, and will need to be addressed before the Plan can be submitted for Examination. In addition, the date for submission of the Plan to the Secretary of State for independent examination is now later than previously proposed. The timetable for Examination and the receipt of the Inspectors Report prior to the adoption of the Plan by December 2023 will be challenging, although this part of the process will be the responsibility of the Planning Inspectorate rather than the Council.

14.2 The Government is also proposing changes to planning policy and legislation although at this time the extent and exact timing of these is not known and will need to be monitored as the plan progresses.

15. Community Engagement

- 15.1 The Draft Local Plan will be subject to a period of 8 weeks consultation as set out in the Recommendation in this report. This will be undertaken in line with relevant legislation and the Councils adopted Statement of Community Involvement.

16. Annexes

- 16.1 Annex 1 – Draft Surrey Heath Local Plan: Preferred Options (2019 – 2038)
- 16.2 Annex 2 – Draft Surrey Heath Local Plan: Preferred Options Mapping Booklet
- 16.3 Annex 3 – Interim Sustainability Appraisal and Non-Technical Summary

17. Background Papers

- 17.1 Background evidence that has been produced to support the Local Plan can be found on the Councils evidence page at <https://www.surreyheath.gov.uk/residents/planning/planning-policy/evidence-base>
- 17.2 National Planning Policy Framework, 2021 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework-2>