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**Environment and Communities  
Committee**

**30 January 2025**

**Local Development Scheme Update**

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**Report of: Tom Shuttleworth, Interim Director Planning and  
Environment**

**Report Reference No: EC/34/24-25**

**Ward(s) Affected: All**

**For Decision or Scrutiny: Decision**

**Purpose of Report**

- 1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for an update to the Council's Local Development Scheme ("LDS").

**Executive Summary**

- 2 The Council's LDS sets out a timetable for the preparation of the Local Plan. Following publication of a new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in December 2024, the Minister of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government has asked all local planning authorities to publish an updated local plan timetable by 6 March 2025.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Environment and Communities Committee is recommended to:

1. Approve that the update to the Local Development Scheme, included at Appendix A to this report is published to the Council's website and that a copy is sent to the Minister of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government by no later than 6 March 2025.

## Background

- 3 In November 2023 the Committee agreed that a 'new-style' local plan is prepared under the government's reforms to the planning system and that an 'Issues Paper' and call for sites was to be prepared to provide an initial opportunity for public engagement to help shape the direction of the Councils' new Local Plan.
- 4 Following this, on 6 March 2024, the Committee agreed to consult on the Issues Paper and supporting material, and also agreed to publication of an updated LDS.
- 5 Since then, a new government has been elected with a manifesto commitment to deliver 1.5million new homes during this parliament. In its ambition to do so, the government has now published a new NPPF and advice on how plans should be prepared to take account of a national uplift in housing requirements. Full guidance and legislation has not yet been published in regard to 'new style' local plans. The Minister of State has indicated this will be available in the summer of 2025.
- 6 LDSs enable local communities, businesses, developers, service and infrastructure providers, alongside other interested parties, to find out what local plan documents are proposed and the timetable for their preparation.
- 7 The timing of this update responds to a request from the Secretary of State for all local planning authorities to publish an up-to-date plan timetable and send a copy to the department by 6<sup>th</sup> March.
- 8 The government is in the process of publishing multiple new policy, legislation and guidance which will be relevant to plan making in the future and affect development of the new Cheshire East Local Plan. For example, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December a new NPPF was published setting out new national planning rules; on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December the 'English Devolution White Paper' was published, outlining an approach to introduce a regional level of local government; and a new Planning and Infrastructure Bill, anticipated to include a framework for producing local plans, is expected in March 2025.
- 9 The publication of a new NPPF included a new standard method to calculate housing requirements. Using the new approach means that Cheshire East can no longer demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land and therefore decision making must now take this into account. An update on the councils' land supply position will be published through the council's annual Housing Monitoring Update (HMU).

- 10 Given the ongoing roll-out of the governments' approach to planning reform, in the absence of the Minister's specific request, an update to the LDS would have been made later in the year once further detail on new local plan regulations is available.
- 11 Therefore, the uncertainties around the local plan timetable mean that the timetable in the updated LDS should be treated with caution and it should be noted that it is based on previously published guidance on new style local plan timetables.
- 12 An updated LDS is likely to be required once guidance on the process is published. However, the local plan process will require stages which include a further call for sites and the publication of spatial options that could meet the council's development requirements. These stages are currently expected to take place toward the end of 2025 or early 2026 and a further update on these matters will be brought back to the Committee as soon as possible.

### **Consultation and Engagement**

- 13 The Local Plan Issues Consultation was carried out in accordance with the Councils Statement of Community Involvement 2022, over a period of 12 weeks from March to June 2024.
- 14 Public consultation is not required for the update to the LDS.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

- 15 LDSs enable local communities, businesses, developers, service and infrastructure providers, alongside other interested parties, to find out what local plan documents are proposed and the timetable for their preparation.
- 16 The Minister of State has requested this update to the LDS, in response to recent national changes to planning policy.

### **Other Options Considered**

- 17 The update to the LDS responds to a request by the Minister of State that all local planning authorities update their plan timetables and therefore no other options have been considered.

### **Implications and Comments**

#### *Monitoring Officer/Legal*

- 18 Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires local planning authorities to prepare and maintain a LDS specifying,

among other things, the documents which will become part of the local plan for their area and the timetable for their preparation. A LDS must be made publicly available so that local communities and interested parties can keep track of plan-making progress.

#### *Section 151 Officer/Finance*

- 19 As far as possible, the cost of preparing the new Local Plan has been reflected in the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2025-29, which will continue to be reviewed in the light of changes to the legal and national policy framework for local plan preparation. The MTFS takes account of an existing earmarked reserve for Local Plan preparation.
- 20 Through national planning reforms, the Government is intending to speed up and streamline the local plan preparation process. However, in the absence of much of the detail governing how the new plan making process will operate, it is not yet possible to gauge whether the cost of a new-style plan will be lower or higher than a current style local plan. This detail is expected to emerge over the coming months, and future reports about the new Local Plan will provide additional information on plan preparation costs.
- 21 Updates to the LDS do not incur a specific cost, beyond officer time required to update the timetable. This resource is funded from existing budgets.

#### *Policy*

- 22 The LDS itself does not establish council policy however, the Local Plan sets out the council's policy for sustainable development in the Borough. The new Local Plan will be prepared within the context of the new Corporate Plan.

#### *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*

- 23 The LDS itself does not require an Equality Impact Assessment however one will be carried out during the preparation of the Local Plan.

#### *Human Resources*

- 24 There are no additional human resource implications arising from this report.

#### *Risk Management*

- 25 Appropriate risk management practices will be carried out as an integral part of the Plan's project management.

### *Rural Communities*

- 26 The LDS itself does not affect Rural Communities directly, but the new Local Plan would contain planning policies for the whole of the borough, including rural areas. The draft Issues Paper includes a chapter addressing rural matters.

### *Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)*

- 27 The LDS itself does not affect children and young people but the well-being of young people and cared for children would be an important objective that any revised policies will seek to support.

### *Public Health*

- 28 The LDS does not address public health matters but promoting good health for all will be a central objective of the new Local Plan. The draft Issues Paper includes a chapter addressing this matter.

### *Climate Change*

- 29 The LDS itself has no impact on climate change however, the new Local Plan will provide an opportunity to go further with planning policies to mitigate climate change, recognising the Council's pledge to become a carbon neutral borough by 2045. The draft Issues Paper includes a chapter addressing this matter.

<b>Access to Information</b>	
Contact Officer:	Tom Evans, Strategic and Environmental Planning Manager  Tom.Evans@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix A: Local Development Scheme 2025 (for approval)
Background Papers:	n/a