



## Planning Committee

Wednesday 22 February 2012 7.30pm

Council Chamber  
Runnymede Civic Centre, Addlestone

### Members of the Committee

Councillors G B Woodger (Chairman), J M Edwards and Mrs G M Kingerley (Vice Chairmen), J R Ashmore, Mrs F J Barden, J Broadhead, D A Cotty, J R Furey, Mrs E Gill, C Knight, M T Kusneraitis, Mrs Y P Lay, H W V Meares, Mrs M Roberts and J J Wilson

## AGENDA

### Notes:

- 1) Any report on the Agenda involving confidential information (as defined by section 100A(3) of the Local Government Act 1972) must be discussed in private. Any report involving exempt information (as defined by section 100I of the Local Government Act 1972), whether it appears in Part 1 or Part 2 below, may be discussed in private but only if the Committee so resolves.
- 2) The relevant 'background papers' are listed after each report in Part 1. Enquiries about any of the Agenda reports and background papers should be directed in the first instance to **Mr B A Fleckney, Department of Corporate Governance and Assets, Runnymede Civic Centre, Station Road, Addlestone (Tel: Direct Line: 01932 425620). (Email: [bernard.fleckney@runnymede.gov.uk](mailto:bernard.fleckney@runnymede.gov.uk)).**
- 3) Agendas and Minutes are available on a subscription basis. For details, please ring Mr B A Fleckney on 01932 425620. Agendas and Minutes for all the Council's Committees may also be viewed on [www.runnymede.gov.uk](http://www.runnymede.gov.uk).
- 4) Public speaking on planning applications only is allowed at the Planning Committee. For details please contact the Administrative Section of the Technical Services Department. **(Tel Direct Line: 01932 425153)** or view the guidance on the Committee web page.
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'see overleaf'

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## বাঙলা

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## اردو

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## **LIST OF MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION**

### **PART I**

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### **PART II**

#### **Matters involving Exempt or Confidential Information in respect of which reports have not been made available for public inspection**

- a) Exempt Information  
(No reports to be considered under this heading)
- b) Confidential Information  
(No reports to be considered under this heading)

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

TERM	EXPLANATION
BCN	Breach of Condition Notice. Formal enforcement action to secure compliance with a valid condition
BVPI's	Best Value Performance Indicators. Specified by central government to measure performance on a wide range of Council services
CHA	County Highways Authority. Responsible for offering advice on highways issues relating to planning applications as well as highways maintenance and improvement
CLEUD	Certificate of Lawful Existing Use or Development. Formal procedure to ascertain whether a development which does not have planning permission is immune from enforcement action
CLOPUD	Certificate of Lawful Proposed Use or Development. Formal procedure to ascertain whether a development requires planning permission
Conservation Area	An area of special architectural or historic interest designated due to factors such as the layout of buildings, boundaries, characteristic materials, vistas and open spaces
DC	Development Control – the area of planning service that processes planning applications, planning appeals and enforcement work
Design Statement	A design statement is submitted with a planning application and sets out the design principles that the applicant has adopted to make the proposal fit into its wider context
Development Plan	The combined policy documents of the Structure Plan, Local Plan, Minerals and Waste Plans. Will shortly be replaced by the South East Plan, the Local Development Framework and the Minerals and Waste Frameworks
DTS	Director of Technical Services
EA	Environment Agency. Lead government agency advising on flooding and pollution control
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment – formal environmental assessment of specific categories of development proposals
ES	Environmental Assessment under the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations
FRA	Flood Risk Assessment
GPDO	General Permitted Development Order. Document which sets out categories of permitted development (see 'PD')
HGV	Heavy Goods Vehicle
LBC	Listed Building Consent
LDD	Local Development Documents – component parts of the LDF
LDF	Local Development Framework. The policy document that will guide development in the Borough up to 2026
LDS	Local Development Scheme - sets out the programme and timetable for preparing LDDs
Listed building	An individual building or group of buildings which require a level of protection due to its architectural interest, historical interest, historical associations or group value
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
Local Plan	The current planning policy document that will be replaced by the LDF
LPA	Local Planning Authority
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership – Leads on the Community Strategy
Material Considerations	Matters which are relevant in determining planning applications
Net Density	As defined in PPG3: Housing. The density of a housing development excluding major distributor roads, primary schools, open spaces serving a wider area and significant landscape buffer strips

<b>TERM</b>	<b>EXPLANATION</b>
PCN	Planning Contravention Notice. Formal notice which requires information to be provided in connection with an enforcement investigation. It does not in itself constitute enforcement action
PD	Permitted development – works which can be undertaken without the need to submit a planning application
PDG	Planning Delivery Grant. An annual grant from central government which reflects the previous year's performance in delivering planning services
P & I	Policy and Implementation – the area of planning service that produces the Local Development Framework, monitors development and supports the Runnymede Business Partnership and Travel Initiative
PINS	Planning Inspectorate
POS	Public Open Space
PPG	Planning Policy Guidance. This is guidance issued by the Secretary of State detailing National Planning Policy within existing legislation
PPS	Planning Policy Statements. The replacement title for PPG
Ramsar Site	A wetland of international importance
RIPA	Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act. Provides limitation on covert surveillance relating to enforcement investigation
SAC	Special Area of Conservation – an SSSI additionally designated as a Special Area of Conservation under the European Community's Habitats Directive 1992 in order to maintain or restore priority natural habitats and wild species
SANGS	Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces
SCI	Statement of Community Involvement. The document and policies that indicate how the community will be engaged in the preparation of the LDF
SEA/SA	Strategic Environmental Assessment/Sustainability Appraisal – formal appraisal of the Local development Framework
Sec. 106	A legal agreement for the provision of facilities and/or infrastructure either directly by a developer or through a financial contribution, to meet the needs arising out of a development. Can also prevent certain matters
SNCI	Site of Nature Conservation Importance. A non-statutory designated area of county or regional wildlife value
South East Plan	Regional Planning Document produced in draft form by SEERA. Will provide regional planning guidance and housing targets for individual Councils for the period up to 2026
SPA	Special Protection Area. An SSSI additionally designated a Special Protection Area under the European Community's Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds 1979
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document – provides additional advice on policies in Local Development Framework (replaces SPG)
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SuDS	Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems. Providing urban drainage systems in a more environmentally sensitive way by systems designed to reduce the quantity of run-off, slow its velocity or provide for filtering, sedimentation and biological degradation of the water
Sustainable Development	Sustainable development is the core principle underpinning planning. It is defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"
TA	Transport Assessment – assessment of the traffic and transportation implications of a development proposal
TPO	Tree Preservation Order – where a tree or trees are formally protected and prior consent is needed for pruning or felling
TRICS	Computerised database and trip rate analysis used to estimate traffic flows to and from a variety of land uses, to assess transportation implications of new development in southern England
Use Classes Order	Document which lists classes of use and permits certain changes between uses without the need for planning permission

1. FIRE PRECAUTIONS

The Chairman will read the Fire Precautions which set out the procedures to be followed in the event of fire or other emergency.

2. NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

If Members have an interest in an agenda item please record the interest on the orange coloured form circulated with this Agenda and hand it to the Legal Representative or Committee Administrator at the start of the meeting. A supply of the form will also be available from the Committee Administrator at meetings.

Members who have previously declared interests which are recorded in the Minutes to be considered at this meeting need not repeat the declaration when attending the meeting. Members need take no further action unless the item in which they have an interest becomes the subject of debate, in which event the Member must leave the room if the interest is personal and prejudicial.

5. LOCAL PLAN PROGRAMME: ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES (DTS)

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 **To seek approval that the way forward on the Local Plan is to continue progressing the Core Strategy, in the light of the implications of the changing nature of the advice from the Coalition Government in respect of the preparation of Local Plans (aka the Local Development Framework).**

2. Background Information

2.1 The Council's Planning Committee, at its meeting on 14 July 2010, resolved to suspend the publication of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy (LDF), on which work had been proceeding for some time. The Committee was advised that the Coalition Government was continuing to review and reshape the planning system. In particular, the proposal to introduce legislation to revoke the South East Plan (SEP) will have a significant impact on future work on the Core LDF; this will formally take place as part of the Localism Act.

2.2 However, the Coalition Government has continued to make it clear that the revocation of the SEP is not a signal for local planning authorities to stop preparing plans for their area. There is still a requirement for Local Authorities to develop LDF's that reflect local aspirations.

2.3 The SEP was a fundamental part of the emerging Runnymede Development Plan (to comprise the SEP and the LDF) and its revocation will remove some key building blocks for the approach that was being adopted in the LDF. This has required the Council to consider how to reconstruct the LDF as a strategy that can guide development in the Borough for the period to 2026.

2.4 Accordingly, at the Planning Committee meeting of 30 March 2011, Members resolved that work on the Local Development Framework Core Strategy should be resumed. It was confirmed that the best way to progress the LDF was for detailed topic papers to be submitted to the Committee following initial consideration by the LDF Working Group. In addition, Interim Guidance was to be provided on car parking, affordable housing and housing in multiple occupation.

2.5 The policy background is further complicated by changes at the national level. The Coalition Government wishes to drastically reduce the amount of central direction currently in place. The aim is to translate the existing 1,000+ pages of national Planning policy into a single document, to be known as the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This will result in a reduction of policy to about only 5% of its present length. A draft version of the NPPF was published for public consultation between July and October 2011. This Council forwarded its view to the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in October 2011. It is anticipated that the final version will come into force in early 2012. There is no reason to believe that this version will be substantially different from the draft NPPF. The draft demonstrated a marked shift in guidance for the preparation of local Planning

policy in several ways. One of the most notable is the fact that there is no reference to the LDF concept. Rather, there is a stated expectation that each local planning authority (LPA) will produce one Local Plan.

- 2.6 While the draft NPPF does not state that LPA's must make the change from preparing an LDF (which the legislation currently requires) to a single Local Plan immediately, it is clear that the intention is that one should be prepared as soon as practicable.
- 2.7 At this time, although DCLG has not provided any useful guidance on the transitional arrangements for LPA's to move from the LDF system to a single-document Local Plan, they have acknowledged the need for such guidance. However, it has been made clear that, in the short term, adopted Core Strategies will be considered acceptable up-to-date policy and that, where applicable, LPA's may continue to prepare their Core Strategies (and other Development Plan documents) in place of a single Local Plan. This approach would be considered acceptable in the circumstances where to do otherwise, i.e. attempt to convert existing local documents to a single, comprehensive Local Plan, would create serious delay for the adoption of the policies. This is the case in Runnymede, where the proposed Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD's have not been progressed sufficiently to be able to provide the policy basis for an easy conversion to a comprehensive local policy document. To attempt to do so would cause a significant delay.
- 2.8 Runnymede Borough Council now has the option before it of either:
- i) carrying on with the preparation of the Core Strategy, with the final form of the document meeting the general requirements of the current guidance; or
  - ii) seeking to make the move now to a single-document Local Plan by bringing together the various elements of the documents, which are at various stages of production and which date from different times, as set out above. This would involve preparing the Local Plan on the best interpretation of the developing guidance, but which has not yet been issued.

### 3. Report

- 3.1 Whilst the Council will now be able to set the agenda for the Local Plan, approval of the plan will ultimately depend on the outcome of an independent examination. This examination is designed to assess conformity with national planning policy and the robustness of the evidence base on the plan that has been constructed. In particular the independent examiner will test the 'soundness' of the rationale and evidence base used to design the plan and whether the level of growth contained within it is deemed to be 'deliverable' with regard to the availability of 'suitable' sites and the robustness of the supporting Infrastructure Delivery Plan.
- 3.2 It is therefore critical that the Council ensures that it achieves the adoption of its new Local Plan with a full awareness of the potential risk of the differing options for making progress on the local plan.
- 3.3 It is proposed that RBC should carry on with the preparation of the Core Strategy.
- 3.4 It is important that the Borough's local planning policy is progressed efficiently to ensure that up-to-date policies are in place as soon as possible. The change to a new-style Local Plan at this stage would inevitably delay the adoption process of any policies. This delay would arise from the need to review all the saved policies in the adopted Local Plan that it was proposed to incorporate in the Local Plan, to draw up new policies as appropriate, to identify specific allocations to meet identified housing need, and to have an additional period of consultation on all these issues.
- 3.5 Set out below at Table 1 is a comparison of indicative timetables for the preparation of a Local Plan.

*Column A*) shows the required stages of the Local Plan adoption process.

*Column B*) sets out the forecast times for each of these stages if the Council works towards a 'hybrid' Local Plan made up of the Core Strategy policies and specific Development Management policies that have been identified as being in need of early update. These

relate to: car parking in residential areas; affordable housing; housing in multi-occupation (HMO's); Local Plan policy GB6 (Rebuilding of Dwellings and Residential Extensions in the Green Belt); and Local Plan policy HO9 (New Housing Development). This is the Option recommended for Members to adopt.

*Column C*) sets out the forecast times if the Council works towards a comprehensive review of the Local Plan. This approach would have the advantage of bringing a wider range of policies up-to date; the disadvantage would be the effect that this would have on the adoption timetable, which will necessarily be extended.

(A) Local Plan Stage	(B) 'Hybrid' Local Plan	(C) Full Review Local Plan
Public Consultation Draft (Draft new Reg. 19)	Completed (Preferred Options)	Approved by Council: Jul. 2012  Consultation: Sept./Oct. 2012
Publication of Draft Plan for Submission (Draft new Reg. 20)	Approved by Council: May 2012  Consultation: June/July 2012	Approved by Council: Jan. 2013  Consultation: Feb./Mar. 2013
Submission (Draft new Reg. 23)	Approved by Council: Oct. 2012 Submission: Nov. 2012	Approved by Council: June 2013  Submission: July 2013
EIP (Draft new Reg. 25)	May 2013	Jan. 2014
IDP/EIP	June 2013	Feb. 2014
Adoption (Draft new Reg. 27)	Dec. 2013	July 2014

**Table 1: Local Plan Programme: Alternative Approaches**

- 3.6 There is an additional difficulty with the option as set out at *Column C*. As the guidance from the centre for preparing the local plan has not yet been issued (see paragraph 2.7 above), and it is not clear when the appropriate Regulations will be forthcoming, the Council would have to make progress on the new approach with only limited information. From previous experience, when early work commenced on the LDF prior to working protocols being tested, a number of difficulties arose leading to the need for a revised approach to be adopted. The alternative is to adhere to the current guidance and approach for the preparation of the Local Plan. It is assumed that there will be a transitional period between the current advice and the new advice being applicable, although details of this have not been made available either.
- 3.7 Members will also recall from the Autumn briefing sessions that the draft NPPF builds on the existing requirement of maintaining a 5 year 'rolling supply' of identified sites suitable for accommodating housing growth and increases this 'supply' requirement by a further 20% to address issues of flexibility and deliverability.
- 3.8 The Council has already gathered a significant evidence base that will inform both the development of the Local Plan and the preparation for the independent examination. The previous consultation exercises undertaken have also tested whether the key 'Issues and Options' that the plan will need to address have been correctly identified.
- 3.9 Members should be aware that the Council will be exposed to a significant risk should the independent examination deem that the draft Local Plan it has submitted is 'unsound'. The draft NPPF specifically states that in the absence of an up to date Local Plan the presumption will be that any application for development will be granted if it accords with

national planning policy. Therefore, in the absence of an approved Local Plan the balance in decision making would be significantly tilted in favour of landowners/developers.

- 3.10 The consequences of such a scenario would be directly counter to the entire thrust of national planning policy which seeks to ensure that all development and growth is 'plan-led' and locally determined.
- 3.11 The finding at examination that the draft Local Plan was 'unsound' would also require the Council to start the process of preparing a new "sound" plan afresh. This would incur significant additional, unplanned, expense at a time that the Council is seeking to make considerable savings from its revenue budgets.
- 3.12 Whilst an up-to-date Local Plan is critical to the delivery of the Council's Vision, setting the spatial framework for the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS), its existence will not, in itself, bring forward the delivery of the various elements of that Vision. These will be achieved by the strategic delivery framework that will sit alongside the Local Plan beneath the overarching SCS.
- 3.13 It is also worth reiterating that the absence of a Local Plan, due to its production not keeping to timetable or it being found to be unsound at examination stage would have a significant detrimental impact on the Council's ability to deliver the Vision set out in its SCS.
- 3.14 It is therefore critical that the Council ensures that it seeks to achieve the adoption of its new Local Plan with a full awareness of the potential risk of the differing options for making progress, and that Members remain alert to the possibility of failure to pass the 'soundness' test at the examination stage.

#### 4. Council Policy

- 4.1 The LDF will form part of the land use planning policy framework for the Council. It will be framed within the context of the Sustainable Community Strategy, and will link with both the Corporate Plan and the Corporate Asset Management Plan.

#### 5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The work required to devise a sound Core Strategy is being met from within existing Local Plan resources.

#### 6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 In order to have a sound Local Plan the document needs to strike the balance between recognising the advice in the existing national and regional development plan and the new planning agenda emerging in the Localism Bill and the NPPF. It also needs to be founded on a sound evidence base having explored the various alternative strategies that might have been taken.

#### 7. Equality Implications

- 7.1 It is entirely possible that policies within the local plan will be relevant to equality. Policies will be screened as they are developed so that Equality issues can be explored.

#### 8. Conclusions

- 8.1 The Coalition Government has made it clear that, despite the forthcoming revocation of the SEP, and other significant changes to the Planning system, the requirement for Local Authorities to develop Local Plans that reflect local aspirations remains as strong as ever. Understanding how the new planning procedure will work is dependent on the enactment of the Localism Act, the subsequent detailed guidance, and the NPPF. In the meantime, the imperative to move towards adoption of the local authority's Local Plan remains. Under these circumstances, Officers recommend that the Council continues to progress with the Core Strategy. This should result in earlier adoption of a Local Plan with less risk of being derailed by national policy guidance changes, than the alternative approach of commencing work on a single document-style Local Plan.

**OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that –**

**the recommended way forward on the Local Plan of progressing the Core Strategy, as set out in the report, be approved.**

**(TO RECOMMEND)**

Background Papers

None

6. PREPARATION OF THE LOCAL PLAN (DTS)

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 **The purpose of this report is to restart the Local Plan process (formerly known as the Local Development Framework Core Strategy (LDF)) by considering the key planning issues affecting the Borough. This report also considers the alternative options available and recommends an initial way forward. This would enable Officers to explore the preferred options in more detail.**

2. Background Information

2.1 The Planning Committee, at its meeting on 14 July 2010, resolved to suspend work on the LDF as the Coalition Government had been, and still was, reviewing and reshaping the planning system. In particular, the proposal to introduce legislation to revoke the South East Plan (SEP) has caused considerable uncertainty and confusion on the LDF. The revocation of the SEP will now formally take place as part of the Localism Act.

2.2 The SEP was a fundamental part of the emerging Runnymede Development Plan (to comprise the SEP and the LDF) and its revocation will remove some key building blocks for the approach that was being adopted in the LDF. This has required the Council to consider how to reconstruct a strategy that can guide development in the Borough for the period up to 2026. This report is the start of the reconstruction process but under the banner of the Local Plan rather than the LDF.

2.3 The Coalition Government has continued to make it clear that the revocation of the SEP is not a signal for local planning authorities to stop preparing plans for their area. The Government still expects each Local Planning Authority to produce one Local Plan despite all this uncertainty and confusion about the policy background and the processes involved in adopting a Local Plan.

2.4 The policy background is further complicated by changes at the national level. The Coalition Government has heralded one of the most significant changes to the planning system in many years with the Draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This will result in a reduction of Government policy guidance to about only 5% of its present length. The Planning Committee considered and responded to the consultation on the Draft NPPF on 5 October 2011. It is anticipated that the final version of the NPPF will come into force in 2012.

2.5 In particular, there are two fundamental principles introduced by the NPPF:

- 1) the presumption in favour of sustainable development, (although there is no clear or practical definition of sustainable development in the draft NPPF) the 'golden thread' running through plan-making and decision-taking; and
- 2) the need to support economic growth through the Planning system.

2.6 The Draft NPPF states (paragraph 14) that local planning authorities should:

- 1) prepare local plans on the basis that objectively assessed development needs should be met, and with sufficient flexibility to respond to rapid shifts in demand or other economic changes;

- 2) approve without delay development proposals that accord with statutory plans; and
  - 3) grant permission where the plan is absent, silent, indeterminate or where relevant policies are out of date.
- 2.7 The thrust of the Draft NPPF, therefore, provides further support for the argument that the Local Plan needs to be progressed quickly in order to have some co-ordination about where development takes place in the Borough for the next 15 years. This report is the start of the Local Plan process. Answers to some fundamental questions are needed to provide some direction to Officers. This would enable Officers to explore the preferred options in more detail and discuss them with the Local Plan Working Group and report back to the Planning Committee at regular intervals.
3. The Key Questions
- (1) *What should be the annual residential target for Runnymede until 2026?*
- 3.1 Since 2001, Runnymede has always exceeded its housing targets. Between 2001/02 and 2005/06 the number of housing units completed ranged from 155 to 519 units. Between 2006/07 to 2010/11 the number of units completed ranged from 172 to 318.
- 3.2 In the last decade, approximately 50% of housing completions in Runnymede have been from windfall sites (housing sites not specifically allocated in the Local Plan). Windfall sites have, therefore, been critically important to the delivery of housing in the Borough. However, the Draft NPPF excludes windfall sites in the first 10 years of the housing supply targets.
- 3.3 The Draft NPPF seeks to boost the supply of housing. It requires a 5 year rolling supply of specific deliverable sites with an additional allowance of at least 20% in order to ensure choice and competition. For years 6 to 15, specific developable sites or broad locations for growth need to be identified.
- 3.4 Runnymede is restricted in its development options by a number of constraints including the Green Belt, the flood plain, the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area and mineral sites. Given this background of these constraints three alternatives have been considered. Background information relating to these options is attached as Appendix 'A' and they are summarised below:
- Option 1
- 3.5 If future housing development is restricted to the urban area (using the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment) it is estimated that 1701 housing units could be provided by 2026. This would equate to 113 units per year.
- 3.6 This annual rate would be below the current target of 161 units (set in the South East Plan) which would be contrary to the Coalition Government's drive to boost house building. This option would also rely to some extent on windfall sites which would require an exception local justification. Developing solely in the urban area for the next 15 years would mean that that specific deliverable sites need to be identified without relying on windfall sites. This is unlikely to be achieved without detrimental impacts on the character of the existing towns and residential areas.
- Option 2
- 3.7 This option would maintain the status quo by continuing with the existing target of 161 housing units per year. This figure is derived from the South East Plan following much scrutiny and deliberation. The figure derived from detailed population projections and migration estimates, tempered by constraints against development. This would form a sound basis for moving forward and would be an approach adopted by many other local authorities.
- 3.8 The annual 161 figure translates to a total of 2415 housing units over 15 years. This amount of housing exceeds the capacity of the urban area. Consequently, some land outside the urban area needs to be identified to meet this target.

- 3.9 The exclusion of the whole DERA site from the Green Belt or other sustainable site(s) currently in the Green Belt could provide a significant portion of the 2415 housing units over the plan period. A housing development of this scale would assist in providing more protection for existing urban areas from higher density or poorly planned schemes.

Option 3

- 3.10 Option 3 is based on meeting the full market and full affordable housing needs based on the Strategic Housing Management Assessment Needs report. This identified the need for 562 new households per year with 42% (237 households) of these households requiring affordable housing and including a backlog. This equates to a total of 8430 housing units in the plan period.
- 3.11 This option would require the release of significant tracts of Green Belt land and very careful consideration of the impacts on infrastructure. This annual rolling level of housing provision would exceed the highest number of housing units (519 in 2005/06) built in the last decade.
- 3.12 The Coalition Government wants to boost housing delivery, therefore, Option 1 which would reduce the annual housing target from 161 units to 113 units is not considered to be a realistic or justified approach given this national guidance. The other options require to differing degrees the release of some Green Belt land. Option 3 would set house building targets beyond those achieved in the Borough even in the boom times. Given the real constraints to development in Runnymede this is considered to be a very ambitious and almost unrealistic target to meet without a severe impact on infrastructure and the character of the Borough.
- 3.13 The implementation of Option 2 would be consistent with evidence-based used in the South East Plan and require the release of the DERA size site from the Green Belt. To implement Option 3 would probably require two DERA size sites to be released from the Green Belt.
- 3.14 **The Officers' recommendation is for further work to be carried out based on Option 2 (South East Plan approach) to provide 161 housing units per year.**

(2) Does the DERA site remain in the Green Belt?

- 3.15 If Members choose Option 2 (South East Plan approach) as the preferred annual housing target the most logical way to proceed would be to release the DERA site from the Green Belt. This is because DERA was specifically identified in the South East Plan for a large scale mixed use development. The DERA site, as a major developed site, has significant development on the northern side of the M3 with an extant consent of some 1m sq feet of commercial development, whilst the southern site has mix of uses with hard standing and buildings occupying a part of the area. It operated as a major employment site, with associated local impact, and its release from the Green Belt would be less harmful than the identification of another major undeveloped Green Belt site. The release of DERA from the Green Belt would be consistent with pursuing Option 2 (and 3).
- 3.16 To pursue Options 2 or 3 requires a review of the Green Belt boundaries. If Members decide to keep DERA in the Green Belt an alternative site(s) need to be identified to facilitate Option 2 or Option 3. A detailed paper on DERA will be forwarded to a later meeting of the Planning Committee.
- 3.17 **The Officers' recommendation is to release the DERA site from the Green Belt and to review the Green Belt boundary in the Borough.**

(3) What should be the level of affordable housing?

- 3.18 Linked to the housing issue is the need to confirm an approach with regard to the provision of affordable housing. There continues to be a need for more affordable housing despite the provision that has been made over the last few years. There has also been a significant rise in homelessness in recent months and the use of temporary accommodation has increased and seems set to rise still further.

- 3.19 New rented housing is needed to address this issue and to avoid the Council facing increasing expenditure on homelessness. The provision of other forms of affordable housing is also necessary to help retain young families who live and work in the Borough but who cannot afford to buy a home locally.
- 3.20 The Council's current policy on Affordable Housing is set out in its Supplementary Planning Guidance of December 2007. This requires 40% of new housing to be affordable on qualifying sites. In light of the concerns generated around the economic downturn and its impact on development viability, the Council commissioned a report to establish how policy should be developed. The Affordable Housing Site Viability Study advised that the highest target that can reasonably be sought at present without additional grant funding would be lower than the 40% SPG requirement.
- 3.21 In order to meet full affordable housing need this would require implementation of Housing Option 3 which for the reasons explained above is considered to be an unrealistic Option. Realistic affordable housing targets are more likely to be achieved by pursuing Option 2 and or restricting development to much larger sites where it is generally easier to provide significant number of affordable housing units.
- 3.22 Given the current economic climate and the lack of funding for affordable housing, an appropriate starting point, could be to consider the implications of a target of 25% affordable housing provision on all qualifying sites. This would apply to sites with 10 dwellings or more (net), 0.5 hectare and 10,000 sq m of commercial floorspace. For sites less than 10 units a commuted payment will be investigated. Should a developer challenge the quantum of affordable housing a full viability study will be required and the developer will fund an independent audit of the report.
- 3.23 **The recommended approach is to explore the implications of providing an affordable housing target of 25% on all qualifying sites. This will apply for at least two years at which the policy approach to be reviewed to reflect any changes in the economic climate. The approach on affordable housing will be developed in supplementary guidance to support the core strategy.**

(4) *What should happen to the Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt?*

- 3.24 In tandem with the consideration of the status of the DERA site the opportunity exists to consider the retention/removal from the Green Belt of the following major developed sites in the Green Belt (MDS):
- Royal Holloway University of London (in conjunction with the University's proposed master plan aspirations)
  - St Peter's/Bournewood Health Complex (reflecting the recent Master Plan)
  - Rusham Park (Procter & Gamble (Egham))
  - Thorpe Park (reflecting the recent Master Plan application)
  - Hillswood, and
  - the former Brunel University campus (reflecting the recent Master Plan application)

**Royal Holloway University of London (RHUL)**

- 3.25 RHUL, in common with other higher education establishments, is under increased pressure to develop and grow. Government policy continues to emphasise the key role played by higher education in the national economy. This inevitably means rising student numbers. The University is also committed to both enhancing its reputation and to maintaining its national position. To allow the University to grow and maintain its position, RHUL is in the process of preparing a new Master plan for 2010 to 2031. They now expect to provide accommodation on campus for 45% of their total student population by 2031.

- 3.26 Government Policy supports the University's desire for the future growth of the College. The University wish to remain on the campus but indicate that it is too constrained to accommodate their growth aspirations. The Council has always wished to retain the campus within the Borough and to accommodate growth where consistent with policy.
- 3.27 There are no alternative sites available outside the Green Belt which would meet the University's long term requirements and the university needs to expand as a consequence of the Government's priorities for the development of Higher Education. It would also be more sustainable for the university to concentrate and consolidate proposed growth, including student residences, at the existing campus thus minimising the need to travel, and as a Local Authority we support the university's commitment to enhancing its reputation and to maintaining its national position, in view of the economic and social significance it brings to the Borough.
- 3.28 There are also likely to be significant benefits to the permanent local residential community if the number of residential properties in student occupation off campus can be reduced. It is considered that there is merit in further work on these issues to potentially provide a range of benefits to the whole community in and around Egham and Englefield Green.
- 3.29 Royal Holloway University of London (RHUL) has expressed a desire for their campus to be removed from the Green Belt to facilitate expansion based on a comprehensive Master Plan. At present development on the campus is constrained by the Grade I Listed Founders Building, a centrally wooded area and substantial changes in level as well as its Green Belt status.
- 3.30 Although the campus is designated as a Major Developed Site in the Green Belt and this gives policy concessions in relation to be able to both replace buildings and have limited infill between existing buildings, the University wishes to have greater flexibility, particularly in relation to potential redevelopment of the playing fields adjoining Prune Hill, as part of a comprehensive plan especially aimed at increasing on-site accommodation for students and reducing the impact of this on the local community.
- 3.31 National planning policy both in the past and in the current draft National Planning Policy Framework has little reference to Further and Higher Educational needs, but there is no doubt that the restrictions imposed by Green Belt policy do conflict with national aspirations for universities to grow and be part of an increasingly globally competitive environment.
- 3.32 There are concerns that removing the site from the Green Belt could lead to future pressure for the site or part of it to be disposed of for an alternative use, or pressure for other sites to be similarly returned to the urban area. It is therefore considered that it should remain with the Green Belt.
- 3.33 However, it is recommended that flexibility be applied to future development at the site, based on a revised Master Plan, which could include development of the playing field area (subject to some replacement provision nearby). It would therefore be accepted that future development would be likely to go beyond what would currently be seen as being within the bounds of acceptability given the constraints of Green Belt policy, although this would be based on a very explicit policy that it would be for RHUL development only and based on an agreed Master Plan. Background information is set out in Appendix 'B'

#### **The other Major Developed Sites**

- 3.34 The other Major Developed Sites in Runnymede are either surrounded by countryside/open land, or else adjoin the urban area on one side only. In each case, the question has been asked as to whether the site should be removed from the Green Belt, and the conclusion has been that they should not be so removed.
- 3.35 **It is recommended that a Master Plan be prepared that seeks to accommodate the future needs of the Royal Holloway University of London, and to explore the potential range of benefits to the wider community in Egham and Englefield Green. All MDS sites will remain in the Green Belt apart from the proposed approach for the DERA site.**

(5) What level of growth should there be in the main town centres?

- 3.36 There are two main alternatives for our town centres:
- Alternative 1: Maintain a policy of modest development in the town centres – ie. allow limited growth
  - Alternative 2: Identify key development opportunities in the town centres – i.e. develop a place-shaping agenda to revitalise and rejuvenate the town centres.
- 3.37 Evidence from the Retail Study suggests that all of the main town centres (Egham, Chertsey and Addlestone) are primarily convenience goods and service-driven centres. Their vitality and viability depends to a great extent upon the major food stores located in or adjacent to their main shopping areas.
- 3.38 These are major drivers of footfall which attract customers frequently and regularly to the town centres and create general shopper presence from which other retailers and service providers can benefit. Currently, none of the towns provide a significant comparison goods offer meaning that local residents tend to look to other, larger centres for this type of shopping.
- 3.39 This lack of a comparison goods offer in Runnymede causes a significant amount of spending leakage to other towns outside the Borough. By implication it also means that people need to travel to gain access to services. One of the aims of policy could be therefore to maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of the town centres, and where possible, address the spending gap by offering residents the opportunity for good quality convenience and comparison shopping within the town centres.
- 3.40 Achieving this will require the provision of further floorspace which would comply with the Coalition Government's growth and sustainability agenda. Any development needs to be properly integrated into the centres so that they support and enhance the retail and service offer in Egham, Chertsey and Addlestone.
- 3.41 **The recommended approach is to explore the opportunities to revitalise and rejuvenate Egham, Chertsey and Addlestone Town Centres in order to promote sustainable economic growth.**

(6) The preferred policy approach to meeting the needs of gypsies and travellers

- 3.42 There is currently no adopted development plan policy relating to Gypsies and Travellers. The Council's current policy approach for Gypsies and travellers was agreed by Planning Committee on 27 October 2010 as an interim strategy. The initial provision of gypsy pitches up to 2016 has been met from the figures derived from the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) and the evidence submitted by the Council in February 2010 to the Examination in Public of the partial review of the South East Plan.
- 3.43 There is still a need to provide an additional 23 pitches in the Borough between 2016 to 2026. This is likely to require the provision of new Gypsy/Traveller site(s) in the Borough.
- 3.44 In the current policy vacuum and until the Coalition Government replaces Circular 01/2006 with its new policy for Gypsy/Travellers, it is considered that the interim policy is fit for purpose. Even when the Circular is replaced, the Coalition Government is proposing new transitional arrangements to give local planning authorities time to prepare the documentation necessary to demonstrate the supply of deliverable sites for Gypsies and Travellers. This would involve a survey of the needs of Gypsies and Travellers in the Borough and a wider area.
- 3.45 **The recommended approach is to identify potential Gypsy/Traveller site(s) in the Borough in accordance with the GTAA assessment and pending the completion of a new survey on Gypsy and Traveller needs.**

4. Infrastructure Issues

4.1 The provision of the infrastructure required to support the new development envisaged in the Local Plan will be set within the context of an Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP). This will eventually form the basis of the charging regime envisaged by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

5. Legal Issues

5.1 In order to have a sound Local Plan the document needs to strike the balance between recognising the advice in the existing national and regional development plan and the new planning agenda emerging in the Localism Act and the Draft NPPF. It also needs to be founded on a sound evidence base having explored the various alternative strategies that could have been taken. This report is the starting point to ensure full compliance with all these requirements.

6. Resource Issues

6.1 The timetable for the Local Plan will be set by the Corporate Plan. Once a Corporate Plan has been agreed a timetable can be prepared for the Local Plan. The Local Plan will be undertaken primarily within identified budgets. It is likely that cross working within the planning division will take place. There will be occasions when specialist areas of work requiring external expertise will be required and there will be an associated cost.

7. Council Policy

7.1 The Local Plan will form part of the land use planning policy framework for the Council. It will guide the Corporate Plan and link with the Corporate Asset Management Plan.

8. Equality Issues

8.1 It is entirely possible that issues relevant to equality will materialise as work on the Local Plan progresses. These issues will be identified and addressed as appropriate.

9. Conclusion

9.1 The Coalition Government has made it clear that the proposed revocation of the SEP is not a signal for local planning authorities to stop preparing plans for their area. There is still a requirement for Local Authorities to develop a Local Plan that reflect local aspirations. Understanding how the new planning procedure will work is dependent on the Localism Act 2011 and the subsequent detailed guidance and the NPPF which will inform the process are still awaited.

9.2 On the basis of the work already undertaken, to take advantage of up to date evidence that has been gathered so far and to provide a structure for the Council to deliver its place shaping agenda, Officers recommend that decisions be made on the key Planning issues set out above, so that further initial work on the Local Plan can proceed. Once the issues have been considered and the approaches to them agreed by Members at Full Council (probably in May 2012), they will be capable of forming Council policy, to be used in decision-making on planning applications.

**OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that –**

- i) the Committee agree to restart the Local Plan process and Officers obtain further evidence, to explore and develop the following approaches for development in the Borough up to 2026:**
  - i) for further work to be carried out on exploring Option 2 (South East Plan approach) to provide 161 housing units per year until 2026;**
  - ii) to release the DERA site from the Green Belt for use as a large scale mixed use development;**

- iii) to accommodate the future expansion needs for Royal Holloway University of London a Master Plan be prepared within the existing main campus, and to investigate the possible associated benefits to the wider community in Egham and Englefield Green;
  - iv) to identify potential Gypsy/Traveller site(s) in the Borough in accordance with the GTAA assessment and pending the completion of a new survey on Gypsy and Traveller needs;
  - v) to review the Green Belt boundary in the Borough in order to facilitate the provision of housing target of 161 units per year (Option 2), the release of DERA and other possible sites for housing and Gypsy/Traveller site(s) in the Borough;
  - vi) to explore the implications of setting an affordable housing target of 25% on all qualifying sites in the Borough, and the setting of a threshold of 10 units or more (net) for qualifying sites; and
  - vii) to explore the opportunities to revitalise and rejuvenate Egham, Chertsey and Addlestone Town Centres in order to promote sustainable economic growth.
- ii) the Committee agree that the policy approaches set out in the report should become Council policy following their consideration and agreement at Full Council.

**(TO RECOMMEND)**

Background Papers

None

7. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

If the Committee is minded to consider any of the foregoing reports in private it is the

**OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that -**

**the press and public be excluded from the meeting during discussion of the following report under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the report in question would be likely to involve disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in appropriate paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Act.**

**(TO RESOLVE)**

**PART II**

Matters involving Exempt or Confidential information in respect of which reports have not been made available for public inspection.

a) Exempt Information

(No reports to be considered under this heading)

b) Confidential Information

(No reports to be considered under this heading)