

Scrutiny briefing note re. Consultation on the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan: Consultation Version

The Scrutiny Committee for Housing, Economy & Infrastructure have been involved in the Local Plan Consultation Process since 2013 feeding in at key stages to explore and advise on the Local Plan consultation methodology.

The Local Plan, once adopted in 2016 will set out the amount, type and location of development for the borough up to 2031. There are a number of key stages in the process of developing the Local Plan which include consultation to date on;

1. Strategy & Options in June / July 2013 which sought views on the broad scale and location of development and
2. Proposed Housing and Employment Sites document in May / June 2014 which sought views on the possible site allocations for new development.

Work is currently focussed on preparing the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan: Consultation Version which will address the findings of these earlier consultation stages and further technical work undertaken over the last 12 months. This will set out the spatial vision for the borough, a series of policies that underpin the delivery of that vision as well as detailed planning policies which will be used to determine planning applications across the borough. Subject to Cabinet approval of the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan: Consultation Version, consultation is anticipated in Summer 2015.

The Scrutiny committee has been consulted on and provided input to agree the methodology for public consultation at key stages – November 2013, February 2014 and most recently received feedback on outcome of the last consultation in a report of September 2014. On the basis of Scrutiny's feedback consultation has been strengthened and deepened at each stage e.g. to increase the focus on Town and Parish Council engagement and engaging young people.

The purpose of this note to update the new Customer, Community & Partnership Scrutiny Committee;

- Outline the Consultation process to date
- How the feedback is taken into account in preparing the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan
- The proposed consultation process for the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan: Consultation Version

Consultation process to date

As a Co-operative Council engagement in the plan making process has been on-going and not confined to the two formal periods before and after the production of the Local Plan: Consultation Version. Consultation has also included partners and statutory consultees as well as ¹Duty to Co-operate bodies. To date this has included:

¹ Duty to Co-operate is contained in the Localism Act and described in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) compelling LA's to co-operate on strategic matters with neighbouring authorities and specific bodies.



Fig 1: Overview of Local Plan engagement stages to-date

- 2012
 - Public engagement & targeted engagement with key stakeholders including; road shows, competition, on-line forum, press releases and questionnaires gathering views
 - Targeted engagement with key stakeholders Including; Telford & Wrekin Council Members, Town & Parish Council's, Local Strategic Partnership, Housing & Communities Agency, the development industry
- 2013
 - Pre-consultation targeted engagement with key stakeholders
 - Formal Consultation 10 June - 26 July 2013: Strategy & Options document
 - Presentation Q & A with Ward Members and Town & Parish Councils,
 - 2 public open sessions
 - one-to-one meetings with Parishes and Town Councils
 - email contact with all 450 members of Telford & Wrekin Councils Community Panel,
 - Young Persons Forum Workshop
 - direct contact with 1652 consultees registered on data-base including key stakeholders and statutory consultees
 - Twitter & Facebook campaigns
 - Radio Shropshire interview
 - Your Voice article
 - Advertising in public facing Council buildings
- 2014
 - Formal Consultation 6 May – 17 June 2014: Proposed Housing & Employment Sites document
 - Presentation Q & A with Ward Members and Town & Parish Councils
 - Invitation to all Town & Parish Councils to host drop-in sessions for their local community resulting in 14 Town & Parish Councils hosting public events in their area generating a number of large audiences, drawing over 500 attendees
 - Email contact with 425 members of Telford & Wrekin Councils Community Panel
 - Young Persons Forum workshop
 - direct contact with all consultees registered on data-base together with letters sent to Statutory
 - T&WC Services

- Twitter & Facebook campaigns
- Radio Shropshire interview
- Advertising in public facing Council buildings

The above resulted in 861 new consultees comments and are registered on the Local Plan database, and around 2500 comments relating to individual sites and the site selection process were received via the online portal, email and letter.

The local plan website www.telford.gov.uk/localplan is kept up-to-date to ensure people understand the process and opportunities to comment and continue to be involved. Comments received can be viewed via the portal at www.telford.gov.uk/localplan.

How the feedback is taken into account in preparing the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan: Consultation Version

The preparation of the Local Plan: Consultation Version is a statutory stage in plan making and must therefore consider the findings of evidence studies, the sustainability appraisal of sites and policies and the comments made during the consultation process. The Council also has to ensure the Plan is in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework and supported by evidence to ensure it is found ²'sound' at the Examination stage.

The proposed consultation process for the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan: Consultation Version

Work is currently underway to produce the Local Plan: Consultation Version including Policy Map with a Report due to go to Cabinet at the end of July seeking approval for the purposes of consultation.

Subject to Cabinet approval the consultation process will take place between August – September 2015 over an extended period to allow for school and bank holidays. The consultation programme will take account of Scrutiny's suggestions and accord with the adopted Statement of Community Involvement which sets out how the Council will engage at the various stages of the Plan making process.

The consultation will include:-

- Inviting all Parishes and Town Councils (including neighbourhood plan front runners) to attend a presentation by Council officers at the start of the consultation period to gain an understanding of the Local Plan process and the aims and objectives of the consultation
- Offering all Parish and Town Councils the opportunity for individual meetings
- Contacting all consultees registered on the Local Plan data-base

² National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 182 defines 'sound' as; · **Positively prepared** – the plan should be prepared based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements, including unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities where it is reasonable to do so and consistent with achieving sustainable development; · **Justified** – the plan should be the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence; · **Effective** – the plan should be deliverable over its period and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities; and · **Consistent with national policy** – the plan should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the Framework.

- Advertising the consultation through a range of media including Facebook, Twitter, local press releases, radio and notices in public facing Council buildings (leisure centres, community centres, First Points & libraries)
- Holding a workshop with the Young Persons Forum and writing to all schools to encourage comment via the online portal and inclusion of the consultation in subjects such as Geography.
- Keeping the Local Plan website www.telford.gov.uk/localplan up-to-date to ensure people understand the consultation process and how they can comment

To aid communications, a public leaflet will also be produced.

A Consultation Statement will accompany the examination version of Local Plan which will provide details of the consultation, comments received and how they have been taken into consideration in the plan.

Conclusion

As a Co-operative Council we are committed to continuous engagement in the plan making process. While response rates at previous stages have been positive, it is recognised that due to the nature of Local Plan material, it is not always accessible to a non-technical audience. Working with the Community Engagement Team and with the support of Scrutiny discussions, steps have and will continue to be made to improve the engagement process.