**Agenda Item No 5**

**Local Development Framework Sub Committee**

**20 February 2023**

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| **Report of the Chief Executive** | **The** **South Warwickshire Local Plan****,** **Issues and Options Consultation (2023)** |
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1 **Summary**

1.1 This report informs Members of the consultation on The South Warwickshire Local Plan, Issues and Options (2023) which incorporates issues identified in the South Warwickshire Local Plan 2021 Scoping and Call for Sites consultation. The Board report includes comments on the issues and options consultation and seeks any further comments by Members.

**Recommendation to Board**

**a That Members note The South Warwickshire Local Plan, Issues and Options Consultation (2023); and**

**b To support the suggested responses in Appendix 1 to this report and to raise any further comments regarding the Issues and Options identified to be included in the formal response to the consultation.**

2 **Consultation**

2.1 Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwick District Council are working together to prepare a new Local Plan for South Warwickshire. The Plan is expected to replace the strategic policies of the existing Stratford-on-Avon Core Strategy which runs until 2031 and Warwick Local Plan until 2029. The Issues and Options consultation is the second stage in preparing the South Warwickshire Local Plan – a new Plan for Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick Districts. The South Warwickshire Local Plan will set out a long-term spatial strategy for housing, jobs, infrastructure and climate change for both Districts to 2050. Following the consultation held in May 2021 on the Scoping and Call for Sites document the two councils have now issued an Issues and Options document for consultation.

2.2 The South Warwickshire Local Plan, Issues and Options Consultation (2023) runs from Monday 9 January to 6 March 2023. Although North Warwickshire does not immediately border either Warwick District or Stratford on Avon District the Borough Council have previously supported the two authorities, in relation to the legal Duty to Co-operate requirements, as part of the Coventry and Warwickshire sub-region involved in undertaking joint planning and evidence base work. Members may recall the Borough’s response to the Scoping and Call for Sites consultation was considered at Executive Board on the 21 July 2021, where the Borough Council made comments on whether there were strategic cross boundary issues that need to be addressed.

2.3 The feedback from the earlier Scoping and Call for Sites consultation feedback has been used to inform the content of this consultation. This second stage consultation seeks views on the Issues identified and the Options proposed as possible solutions to plan for the future of South Warwickshire to 2050. Chapters 1 and 2 deal primarily with local plan process and the current National and Local policy context so no comments or views are noted/proposed. The main chapters relevant to joint planning and the Duty to Cooperate are:

* Chapter 3 sets out the vision and strategic objectives centred around five overarching principles that will underpin the Plan and sit at its heart: These include:
	+ - A climate resilient and net zero carbon South Warwickshire
		- A well-designed and beautiful South Warwickshire
		- A healthy, safe and inclusive South Warwickshire
		- A well-connected South Warwickshire
		- A biodiverse and environmentally resilient South Warwickshire
* Chapter 4 provides the options for how South Warwickshire’s development needs can be met sustainably including a range of potential spatial growth options and identified locations for possible new settlements.
* Chapters 5 and chapter 6 set out the policy options for delivering the area’s economic and housing needs, followed by chapters 7-11 which set out the remaining policy options under the 5 overarching principles.

2.4 Alongside the consultation on the Issues and Options document, a second Call for Sites is also underway, which will provide landowners with the opportunity to submit land/sites for consideration in the plan-making process.

3 **Observations**

3.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 places a legal duty on public bodies to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis with each other to maximise the effectiveness of local plan preparation relating to strategic cross-boundary matters. Its aim is to encourage positive and continual partnership on planning matters that go beyond the boundaries of a single local planning authority’s (LPA) administrative area. As part of the two Councils legal responsibilities towards the local planning Duty to Cooperate requirements the Borough Council’s views are sought in the Issues raised and the Options proposed as possible solutions for inclusion in the South Warwickshire Local Plan (SWLP).

3.2 The consultation seeks responses and views to a series of questions raised throughout the various Chapters noted above. These are provided online and not all questions are considered relevant to, or require a response from, the Borough Council. The full list of questions is attached as Appendix 1 to this report and includes ‘no comment’ responses were considered appropriate or not necessary.

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3.3 The recent local plan examination and work leading up to the adoption of the North Warwickshire Local Plan has informed officers initial response to the issues and options consultation questions. Members views and comments on these responses are sought and any additional comments or amendments to the responses listed in Appendix 1 will be added to the Borough Council’s response to the joint South Warwickshire Local Plan consultation.

3.4 In broad terms the responses are focussed on issues relating to the relevant and appropriate cross-boundary matters previously noted in the earlier 2021 consultation. There is broad support and agreement around the various issues and options highlighted within the document and/or raised in the questions. Nevertheless, there is one issue the Council considers should be highlighted and raised in relation to addressing the need/demand for strategic employment sites, including potential logistics.

3.5 In Chapter 5 the supporting text to Issue E1 highlights the HEDNA’s consideration of employment land requirements across Coventry and Warwickshire to 2050, noting that “*In addition, a proportion of the 709 hectares of strategic B8 employment land (i.e. warehousing and distribution) identified for the wider Coventry and Warwickshire sub-region will also be required*”. It however goes on to say, “*Whilst new employment land allocations along the strategic road network do lend themselves well to logistics - and no doubt there would be interest from occupiers – such activities would fail to maximise the economic potential of South Warwickshire and fail to capitalise on the strengths of the existing sectors and skills of the workforce.*” The approach taken to the following Issue E7: Core Opportunity Area and Major Investment Sites and the proposed approach to the Plan’s identified Core Opportunity Area and Major Investment Sites, with specific reference to the Gaydon M40 J12 area’s constraint on potential Logistics/B8 uses continues this theme of not supporting logistic uses, , as highlighted in E1 supporting text.. Will the South Warwickshire Local Plan address this issue directly, either through consideration/accommodation of the potential for B8 on appropriate Core Opportunity Area and Major Investment Sites or consider the potential for including a criteria-based policy to address potential general strategic site needs, for both logistics, single site uses (e.g. large scale battery manufacturing) or major employment needs.

3.6 It is noted that the Issues and Options document question E7.2 seeks views on the need for a policy relating to additional economic growth at the major investment sites. This approach is broadly supported, however the supporting text for the Gaydon Area / M40 Junction 12 Major Investment Site seeks to exclude or avoid the site from accommodating strategic logistic uses (i.e. Use Class B8). The reasons for this constraining approach on this site are not clearly defined, the use simply being considered inappropriate for the site.

3.7 In light of the North Warwickshire Local Plan’s Inspector’s requirement to provide for a local plan policy that addressed regional employment needs including logistics, the current pressures and demands for strategic employment and logistics sites (as evidenced by both recent appeals and applications in or adjoining the North Warwickshire Borough area, including Junctions 10, 11 of M42 and junctions 1 and 2 of M69, the recommendations noted recent West Midlands Strategic Employment Sites Study and further related studies underway across the region and in adjoining regions) the need for a general plan policy to address this issue would appear appropriate/necessary.

3.8 The Borough Council’s response to question Q-E7.2 options also includes a note relating to this issue and the Gaydon M40 J12 Major Investment Site, stating “The site also has clear cross linkage and economic supply relationships between logistic uses and the adjoining automotive hub manufacturing and development activities at this location. Such uses should not be seen as ‘mutually exclusive’ in policy or locational terms in these strategic locations”. The interrelated nature strategic logistics are likely to have with the automotive industries located there, the locations suitability for logistics sited on a major motorway junction with central location accessible to the wider motorway network, would appear to indicate that the site could be appropriate and potentially suitable location for logistics uses. In light of experience from the North Warwickshire Local Plan Examination, relevant planning appeals, recommendations from regional employment sites studies and further ongoing work around this issue, the site should at least be considered and assessed in terms of its potential for strategic logistics.

3.9 Nevertheless, beyond this main issue of concern the Borough Council is generally supportive of the Joint Plan approach taken by the two District Councils and hope the responses and option preferences indicated in Appendix 1 are considered helpful and informative.

4 **In Summary**

4.1 This Council is in general support of:

1. the Joint Plan approach taken by the two District Councils;

2. the issues and options identified in the South Warwickshire Local Plan, Issues and Options (2023) consultation are generally supported except where specific concerns relating to logistics are raised; and,

3. the continued wider cross-boundary work on the issues identified, for the progress towards wider joint planning opportunities for the sub-region.

4.2 To note the concerns raised in relation to the exclusion of strategic logistic needs and potential across the districts and, in particular, at the Gaydon M40 J12 Major Investment Site.

4.3 To note any further comments and observations Members may make on the issues and options raised in the South Warwickshire Local Plan, Issues and Options (2023) consultation.

5 **Report Implications**

5.1 **Environment and** **Sustainability Implications**

5.1.1 The South Warwickshire Local Plan, Issues and Options (2023) consultation has a separate sustainability appraisal, climate change, health and equalities impacts assessment and technical reports included as part of the consultation process.

5.2 **Legal Implications**

5.2.1 As indicated above, the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 imposes a duty to consult in relation to certain strategic cross-boundary matters. As also indicated, whilst their areas do not border the Borough Council’s area, Warwick and Stratford are consulting the Borough Council due to the wider potential sub-regional impact of their plans. Any responses from the Board will contribute to this Council’s duty to respond to such consultation.

The Contact Officer for this report is Mike Dittman (719499).

Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D, as substituted by the Local Government Act, 2000 Section 97

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| **Background Paper No** | **Author** | **Nature of Background Paper** | **Date** |
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