

Committee: Scrutiny Committee

Date: 4 December
2024

Title: Local Plan: Project Plan

Report Author: Dean Hermitage – Strategic Director of
Planning

Summary

1. This report provides an update on local plan progress up to mid-November 2024, including risks, mitigations and resourcing. The revised Local Plan timetable (LDS), first established at this Committee in March 2023, is on course and the required actions have been met. New risks have been identified and the risk register updated accordingly.
2. The Local Plan is to be submitted to Government / Planning Inspectorate on or before 20 December 2024.

Recommendations

3. That the Committee notes the conclusions of the report on risk and project management and provides its views on the matters covered in the report.

Financial Implications

4. Within existing local plan budget.

Background Papers

5. The Regulation 19 Local Plan can be found at [Local Plan \(Regulation 19\) consultation - Uttlesford District Council](#)

Impact

Communication / Consultation	The Reg19 Local Plan was subject to a 10 week consultation August to October.
Community safety	None
Equalities	None
Health & Safety	None
Human Rights / Legal	None
Sustainability	None
Ward-specific Impacts	All wards

Workforce / Workplace	None
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Situation

General Update

6. Since the committee last reviewed progress, the Regulation 19 Plan has been to public consultation in accordance with relevant regulations. The consultation was extended by two weeks to allow for additional evidence base data to be added to the consultation portal. The extension ensured that all data was available for public inspection for at least six weeks. This reduced the overall window for processing of representations however, this time has been absorbed within the programme and the project remains on track.
7. Some of the additional material published caused confusion among some residents and was picked up by the local press. This was quickly corrected with the team liaising with the council's Communications Team and lead Councillors. The team has discussed 'lessons learned' following this however, it highlights the complexity of the plan-making process and difficulties in communicating some elements of the process to interested parties.
8. During the consultation officers and lead Councillors held two briefing evenings for Parish and Town Councils and four public exhibitions. Approximately 350 residents attended the exhibitions. This was carried out in accordance with the Local Plan Communications Plan and the project plan.
9. 506 persons / organisations responded to the consultation. This was slightly less than planned for and the processing of representations is therefore manageable. Sufficient personnel (including some pre-planned consultant support) were appointed to review, provide commentary and contribute to a schedule of proposed modifications to the plan (the schedule is sent to the Inspector for consideration as the council cannot now make modifications itself). Officers were each assigned a topic area and their progress reviewed at weekly team meetings and one-to-ones. This aspect of the project is being completed to programme.
10. A Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) has been entered into. It sets out the steps each party will take to help deliver an efficient examination and reporting process and the costs involved in running the hearings that will make up the Examination in Public (EIP). These costs were anticipated and allowed for in the 2024/5 local plan budget.
11. A Programme Officer has also been appointed. The Programme Officer is an independent person who will coordinate and manage the EIP process, overseeing the logistics of hearings and ensuring that all relevant documents are available to the inspector and interested parties. The cost for this was allowed for in the 2024/5 local plan budget.

Project Plan

12. An extract from the overarching project plan is appended as **Appendix 1**. While the extended consultation period resulted in a shorter window for consultation response processing and preparation of final post-consultation reports for the Inspector(s), this time has effectively been made up. Submission remains on schedule by the end of the calendar year and has been agreed with PINS and communicated to MHCLG.
13. The specific programme beyond submission will be governed by PINS, although it is anticipated the EIP will commence in Q2 of 2025, with adoption of the plan in Q2 2026, as set out in the published LDS.

Risk Update

14. The risk register has been updated to reflect the latest position (November 2024) and is attached at **Appendix 2**.
15. Risk ID REF04 (political consensus) is now closed owing to the majority vote on the Regulation 19 plan at full council in July. Risk ID REF08 and 08b (changes to national policy and legislation, and sanctions from incoming government) are now rated 'green'. Officers have provided information on the progress of our plan to MHCLG officials and established that our plan can be submitted under the government's transitional arrangements under the current NPPF (the new version of the NPPF is expected to be published in December).
16. A new risk REF12 (insurmountable issues or issues requiring major modifications to the plan between Reg19 and EIP) has been opened. No insurmountable issues have been raised. There are a handful of comments on the Reg19 plan that will require working with external parties to narrow off the issues or prompt minor modifications to the plan. This is fairly common in the plan-making process but must be addressed. It becomes the team's key focus.
17. Finally, new risk REF13 concerns the potential for slippage in the examination programme. This is largely in the hands of PINS. However, by having appointed an experienced Programme Officer, ensuring the plan is submitted by the end 2024, and by having agreed an SLA with PINS, it is likely UDC will be ahead of various other councils who have indicated that they too will seek to submit a plan ahead of the government's transitional arrangements (a key period as after the transitional arrangements come to an end councils must plan for the new, increased, housing figures).

Conclusions

18. A draft Regulation19 Plan has been produced and will be submitted to government in accordance with the timetable published in March 2023. The period of turbulence that came with the changing of government and proposed changes to legislation and national policy has been successfully navigated.

Focus now turns to finalising submission documents and reviewing and negotiating on key points raised during the Reg19 consultation.

19. It is considered that the council is well placed to be able to deliver an up-to-date local plan by 2026, as planned.

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Failure to successfully Project Manage the Local Plan will result in an unsound Plan or inability to submit the plan within government deadlines.	1 – various elements of risk involved (see appendix 2)	4 - Lack of an adopted (or advanced local plan) leading to potentially unacceptable development and government intervention.	Various mitigations in place. Project management system in place. No risks rated RED.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Overarching Officer Project Plan

Appendix 2 – Local Plan Risk Register