

Full Council

31st October 2023



Report of: Mayor of Bristol

Title: Bristol Local Plan

Ward: Citywide

Member Presenting Report: Councillor Nicola Beech – Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Resilience and Floods

Recommendation

That the Full Council considers the new Bristol Local Plan (Appendix A) and agrees that it should be:

- i). Formally published in order for representations to be made; and
- ii). Submitted to the Secretary of State for examination.

Summary

The new Bristol Local Plan will become part of the statutory development plan for the city. It will be used to guide decisions on planning applications in the city to promote and ensure sustainable and inclusive development. This report proposes that the new Bristol Local Plan is formally published so that representations can be made and that it is then submitted for examination by a planning inspector.

The significant issues in the report are:

The significant issues in the report are set out in the 'Context' section below (from paragraph 5)



Policy

1. The new local plan is intended to replace the Council's existing local plan for Bristol which currently comprises:
 - Bristol Core Strategy 2011;
 - Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Local Plan 2014; and
 - Bristol Central Area Plan 2015.

Upon adoption the new local plan will replace these documents. It will become part of the statutory development plan for Bristol and it will be used in making decisions on planning applications as set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Section 38 of that act requires that if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

2. The new local plan includes references to its relationship with the One City Plan and the Council's Corporate Strategy.

Consultation

3. Internal

The local plan has been in preparation since 2018 and has been prepared in collaboration with relevant council services.

A cross party group of eleven elected members has been consulted throughout plan preparation since 2018. The Local Plan Working Group has considered, discussed and advised on draft documents of the local plan review. The meetings of the group were informal and not held in public in accordance with its terms of reference.

4. External

The preparation of the local plan has been subject to extensive public engagement and consultation in accordance with legislation and the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement. A statement of consultation will form one of the documents submitted for examination. The statement provides information on who was consulted. It also shows how the issues raised during consultation have been addressed in the local plan. It is available on the council's website at www.bristol.gov.uk/localplanreview

Context

5. The new Bristol Local Plan will become part of the statutory development plan for the city. It will be used to guide decisions on planning applications in the city to promote and ensure sustainable and inclusive development. This report proposes that the new Bristol Local Plan is formally published so that representations can be made and that it is then submitted to the Secretary of State for examination by a planning inspector.
6. The new local plan has passed through various stages of preparation and community involvement: an initial call for sites; a consultation on issues with stakeholders (February 2018);

consultation on draft policies and proposals (March 2019) and then further consultation on additional matters (November 2022). Stakeholder comments have helped shaped the plan throughout its preparation.

Strategic planning

7. When the review of the local plan commenced it was in the context of an intended strategic level plan with which the local plan would have been in ‘general conformity’. The West of England Joint Spatial Plan was withdrawn in April 2020. The strategic planning framework was then to have been provided by the West of England Combined Authority Spatial Development Strategy with which the local plan would have been in general conformity. Work on the Spatial Development Strategy was halted in May 2022.
8. In the absence of a strategic level plan, preparation of the local plan has reverted to the ‘duty to cooperate’ to address cross boundary strategic matters. The duty requires that local authorities and others cooperate on strategic matters in the preparation of local plans. As a continuation of processes for the Joint Spatial Plan and the Spatial Development Strategy, Bristol City Council has liaised with the surrounding authorities to consider and address cross boundary matters. The assessed housing need for the city are not able to be met in full and so neighbouring authorities are being asked if they would be in position to accommodate any of the local housing needs which would otherwise go unmet. The councils will continue to actively consider this request. One or more statements of common ground will be published setting out how the duty to cooperate has been addressed.

Content of the new local plan

9. The new local plan provides a positive vision for the future of the city. It contains strategic policies to address the council’s priorities for the development and use of land in the city. It sets out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places, and makes provision for housing (including affordable housing), employment, retail, leisure and other commercial development; infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, flood risk; community facilities; and conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Sustainable development

10. The plan has been prepared in the context of the United Nations 17 Global Goals for Sustainable Development. These address social progress, economic well-being and environmental protection and are referred to in the National Planning Policy Framework. The local plan has been prepared to secure sustainable development in a manner consistent with the Framework and the Goals.
11. The new local plan has a particular focus on:
 - delivering new homes through regeneration of previously developed land;
 - addressing the climate emergency through measures to secure net zero; and
 - approaches to tackle the ecological emergency.

Housing

12. The local plan proposes that 1,925 new homes should be delivered on average each year from 2023 to 2040 (34,650 homes) including the delivery of at least 12,000 new affordable homes. It includes a policy framework to ensure that this is delivered and proposes specific development

locations and sites where this will be achieved. Whilst the focus is on brownfield development and efficient use of urban land, some areas of the existing Green Belt at Brislington, Bishopsworth and Ashton Vale ('Longmoor Village') are proposed to be released to enable new homes to be delivered to meet the needs of the city.

Climate

13. The plan as a whole proposes a development pattern which makes the best use of urban land, reduces the need to travel and locates new development where it can be served by infrastructure and facilities. There are policies to ensure new development is net zero and which give positive encouragement to the use of renewables and the development of the heat network.

Biodiversity and green infrastructure

14. The new local plan sets out how the city's important green spaces will be protected by designation as Local Green Space or Reserved Open Green Space. The majority of the Green Belt at the edge of the city would be unchanged apart from the limited releases to address housing need. Policies address how green infrastructure should be incorporated into development and retained, and how biodiversity gain will be enabled.

Other policies

15. The local plan also sets out the planning approach to the economy; the city's centres and its evening economy; community facilities; infrastructure and social value; development and transport; health and well-being; the design of development and conservation of heritage; and the approach to telecommunications and utilities.

Policies Map

16. The policies in the new local plan are expressed geographically, where relevant, on the proposed submission Policies Map which is based on an Ordnance Survey map. Appendix A3.

Sustainability Appraisal

17. A sustainability appraisal process has been undertaken throughout the preparation of the new local plan. A sustainability appraisal report, including a non-technical summary, will accompany the published plan. The sustainability appraisal report is available on the council's web site at [Local plan review \(bristol.gov.uk\)](http://bristol.gov.uk).

Habitats Regulations Assessment

18. An assessment under the relevant regulations will accompany the publication version of the local plan. This addresses significant effects arising from the proposals in the local plan and how any effects on relevant habitats can be mitigated.

Health impacts

19. A health impact assessment is not required by legislation but implications for health have been systematically considered in discussion with the council's public health service. This consideration has helped shape the content of the plan and ensure health matters relevant to land use planning are addressed. Health related objectives also form part of the sustainability appraisal process referred to above.

Next stages of plan preparation

20. Subject to the approval of Full Council, it is proposed that the new local plan is published for representations in November. There will be a period for representations which will last for a minimum of six weeks. It is proposed that the local plan is then formally submitted for examination in Spring 2024.
21. The examination process for local plans commences at submission. The Planning Inspectorate advises that examinations generally take at least one year to complete. On that basis the inspector's report could be received from Spring 2025 onwards and, if the plan is found to be sound, the Full Council would be recommended to adopt the new local plan shortly afterwards.

Proposal

22. As set out in the recommendation and paragraph 5 above. The recommendation requests that Full Council agrees that the new Bristol Local Plan should be published for representations in accordance with regulation 19 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and that upon receipt of representations that it is submitted for examination in accordance with regulation 22 of those regulations.

Other Options Considered

23. The National Planning Policy Framework states that the planning system should be genuinely plan led and the Government expects local planning authorities to prepare local plans. In 2022 the Council published a revised 'local development scheme' which described the local plan to be prepared and set out a timetable for preparation.
24. The process of preparation of the local plan considers options for the policies and proposals it contains, based on published evidence. Reasonable options are specifically considered as part of the sustainability appraisal which accompanies the new plan. The consultation stages of the plan preparation have also enabled stakeholders to respond to proposals and to suggest alternative approaches. As the plan has emerged through its consultation stages it has evolved in response to the feedback received from consultees.

Risk Assessment

25. There are no direct risks associated with publication and submission of the new local plan. Should the publication of the plan either not proceed or be delayed, there would be risks associated with not having up to date development plan policies in place.
26. There is a risk that elements of the plan submitted to the Secretary of State may be considered unsound by the inspector or that there have been failures of legal compliance. These are risks common to all development plan documents and have been mitigated by attention to the processes of plan preparation, by ensuring the document is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework and that the processes are in accordance with legislation. Should any aspects be considered unsound, there are mechanisms in the examination process to make modifications to resolve matters.

Summary of Equalities Impact of the Proposed Decision

Before making a decision, section 149 Equality Act 2010 requires that each decision-maker considers the need to promote equality for persons with the following “protected characteristics”: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. The Act requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act; advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

An equality impact assessment of the new plan has been prepared – Appendix B. The equality assessment impact finds that the policies and proposals of the local plan are positive or neutral in their impacts.

Legal and Resource Implications

Legal

The Local Plan process is governed by the Town and County Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The draft local plan has now progressed to regulation 19 stage for the publication of the report for representations. The representation period must remain open for a minimum period of six weeks, and following completion of the representation process the documents required by the regulations can then be submitted to the Secretary of State for examination to determine if the plan is sound and otherwise meets all the requirements outlined in the regulations and national planning guidance.

As part of the process under s33A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 local planning authorities are under a duty to cooperate with each other on strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries. To demonstrate effective and on-going joint working strategic policy making authorities should prepare and maintain one or more statements of common ground documenting the cross-boundary matters being addressed and progress in cooperating to address these.

(Legal advice provided by: Joanne Mansfield Team Manager)

Financial

(a) Revenue

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires local authorities to prepare development plan documents for the use and development of land in their areas. The preparation of the Local Plan has been from agreed budgets.

(b) Capital

No capital implications arising from this report.

(Financial advice provided by: George Grant Principal Accountant)

Land

The new local plan has implications for the use of the council’s land as it will become a statutory planning document. It will allocate and designate specific sites and areas of land for

development or protection. Many of the site allocations and parts of areas of regeneration are on council owned land.

Personnel

Not applicable.

Appendices:

- A. Proposed Bristol Local Plan comprising: 1. Bristol Local Plan Publication Version November 2023; 2. Annex – Development Allocations; and 3. Policies Map.**
- B. Equality impact assessment.**

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers:

None