

Report Portfolio Holder for Growth and Regeneration

Subject: Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan: Consultation Strategy

Date: 23rd June 2020

Author: Service Manager Planning Policy

Wards Affected:

All

Purpose

To seek approval for the consultation strategy for the Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan as it relates to Gedling Borough Council.

Key Decision

No

Recommendation(s)

THAT the Portfolio Holder:

- 1) Approve the consultation strategy at Appendix A**
- 2) Agree that the Service Manager for Planning Policy uses the Council's website to advise of any changes to the consultation strategy arising from the lifting of current restrictions relating to the coronavirus pandemic.**

1 Background

- 1.1 Gedling Borough Council is required to consult in accordance with the measures set out in its adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The SCI adopted in September 2019 requires that a consultation strategy be prepared for local plans or supplementary planning documents. Work on preparing the Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan has commenced with Gedling Borough Council working in partnership with

other Greater Nottingham Councils to produce an aligned plan. The first public consultation on this new plan is to commence in July 2020. The consultation strategy has been prepared for all the partner Councils and will be implemented throughout the preparation of this new plan until its adoption.

- 1.2 The consultation strategy, as far as it relates to Gedling Borough, must conform to Gedling Borough Council's SCI and supplements this through providing more detail on the consultation methods to be used.
- 1.3 The first public consultation (Growth Options/Issues and Options stage) on the Strategic Plan will commence in July 2020 at a time that public social distancing measures are required. Consequently, traditional forms of planning consultation such as physical consultation events, public availability of paper copies of documents and public meetings are not possible until the public health situation is rectified. These health guidelines impose some restrictions on the way the Council can operate during the pandemic. However, an assessment of the impact of social distancing measures on the SCI has been prepared and is attached as the first appendix to the consultation strategy (attached as **Appendix A**). This analysis indicates that under the current public health restrictions, Gedling Borough Council can comply with the SCI.

2 Proposal

- 2.1 This consultation strategy has been prepared by officers from the partner Councils and is set out in **Appendix A**. The Portfolio Holder is asked to approve its contents as it relates to Gedling Borough Council. The consultation strategy sets out the stages relating to the preparation of the plan and the proposed methods of consultation to be undertaken. The consultation strategy proposes mitigation measures to address the impact of social distancing measures on the consultation. At the time of writing, there has been some easing of lockdown restrictions in England and the Council is reviewing if it can restore certain services in a way that is safe. In order to ensure that the consultation strategy is flexible to changes, it is proposed that restored or new services that assist with the traditional forms of consultation that are currently restricted will be advertised on the Planning Policy pages of the Council's website.
- 2.2 It may be that later consultations on the Strategic Plan will allow for physical consultation methods to take place, pending Government advice at that time, and subject to the Portfolio Holder's approval the consultation strategy will be updated at that point should this be necessary.

- 2.3 Mitigation measures are proposed including extending the consultation from the normal six weeks to ten weeks commencing on July 6th and ending on September 14th. It is also proposed that good use is made of social media including Gedling Borough Council's own social media platforms and the internet in order to publicise the consultation document and to reach out to as many people as possible. To this end a new joint website has been set up by the partner Councils with a new logo and a "twitter" account has been created using the same logo. The new website gnplan can be viewed here:

www.gnplan.org.uk

- 2.4 As traditional face to face meetings and staffed exhibitions cannot take place at present, a video presentation has been prepared that is to be sent to organisations such as the Gedling Borough Developers Forum and Parish Councils. It is also proposed that the Service Manager Planning Policy has the discretion to hold virtual meetings with relevant bodies or community groups where it is necessary and in the public interest.

- 2.5 In summary, Gedling Borough Council is required under the terms of the SCI to produce a consultation strategy to provide supplementary detail. It is considered that Gedling Borough Council can conform to the SCI with the current public health restrictions in place. The proposed consultation strategy prepared within the policy parameters set by the SCI conforms to the SCI and includes some mitigation measures to address limitations imposed by the current public health restrictions. Any easing of restrictions that allow the Council's services to resume in a more normal way which would impact positively on the consultation are to be advertised on the website.

3 Alternative Options

- 3.1 An alternative would be not to prepare a consultation strategy but rely on the broad principles for consultation on plans set out in the adopted SCI. In this case, Gedling Borough Council would not be complying with the letter of the SCI, which could open up the possibility of a legal challenge. The SCI by its nature sets out general principles and its supplementary consultation strategy is to allow for innovation and flexibility to meet challenges such as the implications of COVID 19.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 None - the costs of consultation would be met from existing budgets.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 It is a legal requirement of local planning authorities that they exercise their plan making functions (under s.39(2) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004). Consultation forms an essential part of the local plan process. It is a legal requirement for local authorities to carry out consultation in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement.

6 Equalities Implications

- 6.1 Consultation on the Growth Options document will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. The proposed consultation strategy sets out in more detail how the Council will carry out consultation in partnership with other Greater Nottingham councils on the Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan in the light of the current Government guidance on social distancing due to the public health crisis. A key factor is ensuring that the consultation is accessible to all and that equalities implications are given full consideration.

7 Carbon Reduction/Environmental Sustainability Implications

- 7.1 Consultation forms an essential part of the plan making process and in this case supports preparation of the Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan which is proceeding to the first stage of public engagement through publication of the Growth Options Document.
- 7.2 The Growth Options document looks to identify the key issues facing the plan area and the main options open to us for tackling those issues. It is not a draft plan at this stage. However, the document states that the draft plan will need to, amongst other objectives, address the causes of climate change and the mitigation of its effects; and ensure new development contributes to carbon neutrality.

8 Appendices

- 8.1 **Appendix A: Consultation Strategy**

Background Papers

9

- 9.1 None

10 Reasons for Recommendations

10.1 To approve the consultation strategy set out at **Appendix A**.

Statutory Officer approval

Approved by:

Date:

On behalf of the Chief Financial Officer

Approved by:

Date:

On behalf of the Monitoring Officer