

<b>Local Plan Panel Meeting</b>		<b>Agenda Item:</b>
<b>Meeting Date</b>	14 March 2019	
<b>Report Title</b>	Considering the role of new garden communities within the Local Plan Review	
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Cllr Gerry Lewin, Cabinet Member for Planning	
<b>SMT Lead</b>	Emma Wiggins	
<b>Head of Service</b>	James Freeman	
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Gill Harris	
<b>Key Decision</b>	Yes	
<b>Classification</b>	Open	
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p>That the Panel is requested to:</p> <p>(a) Note the draft technical assessment material in Appendix I and II and agree its finalisation and publication;</p> <p>(b) Recommend to Cabinet that work on new garden communities continue in order that their position be considered as a potential option(s) for the Local Plan Review process; and</p> <p>(c) Consider whether to recommend to Cabinet a resolution on new garden communities for decision making purposes.</p>	

## 1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council has been considering the role that new garden communities, in particular, 'garden' communities, should play in the Local Plan review. It has tested the appetite from landowners and developers via its own Prospectus and this has led to the submission of four proposals. At the same time, early community views were sought, via the document '*Looking Ahead*' (reported to Panel in September 2018), on the general role that new garden communities might play in meeting Swale's future development needs. The submitted schemes have been subjected to on-going enquiry and technical assessment and this report presents the current state of this work undertaken by officers and consultants PBA and LUC (included as Appendix I and II). The report seeks, in effect, a steer on whether work on new garden communities should continue.

- 1.2 The early steer sought by this report is necessary because:
- This work stream is a significant resource, both for planning policy and, potentially, corporately and thus it is prudent to check progress and to avoid unnecessary work;
  - There are considerable lead in times involved and work needs to be progressed early; and
  - There is a need to send appropriate signals to landowners and developers to give them confidence to make further potential investment.
- 1.3 The report considers the risks and opportunities associated with pursuing new garden communities in Swale. Whilst the technical assessments (Appendix I and II) highlight some risks, opportunities and uncertainties, there are no concerns at this point that are of such severity as to cast sufficient doubt on the concept of new garden communities in Swale as a reasonable alternative. Instead, the matters identified, some of which are important, are for further evaluation and future management.
- 1.4 Although the technical assessments are fairly site specific, Members are not being asked to consider and resolve the future of any specific scheme at this stage; rather they are asked to draw upon the draft assessment to consider in a broader, more conceptual fashion, their overall capabilities in terms of their likely suitability, implementation and delivery.
- 1.5 In view of the technical assessments, the report asks the Panel to recommend to Cabinet that work on new garden communities continue and that in due course their progress would be considered in the context of a potential alternatives/option(s) for the Local Plan Review, which would then be subject to wider consultation.
- 1.6 Members are also being asked to consider whether to recommend to Cabinet a specific resolution that would give the new garden communities the status of a 'material consideration' in decision making.
- 1.7 If the recommendations are agreed, officers will continue to undertake assessment work and present a further report to a Panel meeting in the summer, which will seek Members views in respect of all the possible spatial development options that should be considered by the Local Plan Review. These in turn will form part of a future document presented to Members that would, if agreed, be subject to public consultation in autumn/winter 2019.

## 2 Background

- 2.1 Since commencing their Local Plan review, Members have wished to ensure that all reasonable alternatives are being considered to meet the challenges ahead – most notably those associated with higher housing targets and difficult transport and air quality conditions, particularly on the A2. One of the matters that have been considered is the possibility that new communities, particularly those planned on '[garden principles lines](#)', could have a role to play. Government is particularly encouraging local authorities to explore their potential (NPPF para. 72c).
- 2.2 The Council's explorations of new garden communities have so far included:

- A Member workshop in November 2017.
- Consideration of the report prepared by consultants PBA '[Choices for Housing Growth](#)' February 2018.
- Publication of a [Swale New Garden Communities Prospectus April 2018](#), which set out the Council's expectations if new garden communities were to be considered. The Prospectus intended to establish whether landowners and developers had the appetite to propose new garden community proposals for consideration as part of the Local Plan process.
- Community consultation via '*Looking Ahead*' in April-June 2018 (See Section 5).
- Workshops with landowners/developers, infrastructure providers, environmental and heritage bodies, rural organisations in April-June 2018.
- A Member Q&A session with the Prospectus promoters, September 2018.
- Specific responses from key organisations.
- A Member coach tour to Cambridgeshire, to view new community examples, at the start of October 2018.

2.3 The Prospectus 'call for sites' produced four proposals (submissions available via these links):

1. [SE Sittingbourne](#): 618 ha, circa 11,500 homes (inc. 10% affordable housing), 120,000 sq. m commercial space, community uses (local retail space within 4 district centres), GP surgeries, education (up to 4 primary schools, secondary school, possible FE), sport and leisure, natural and semi-natural open space and amenity greenspace. New motorway junction and M2/A2 link road to be provided.
2. [Bobbing](#): 226 ha, circa 2,500 homes (up to 40% affordable housing), 100 ha of open space, community facilities including primary school, health centre, local centre, village hall and sports pitches, 3 ha of employment floorspace, stopping up/re-alignment of Sheppey Way. *NB it is understood that these proposals are currently being revised and will be subject to further assessment moving forward.*
3. [SE Faversham](#): 131 ha, circa 2,500 homes (inc. aim for 40% affordable housing), up to 20,000 sq. m of commercial space. Community uses (4 local centres, health centre), education (primary school), sport and leisure (inc. possible relocation of cricket club and football ground), network of habitats, spaces.
4. [North Street, Sheldwich, Faversham](#): 317 ha, circa 5,000 homes (a 'strong emphasis' on affordable housing). No precise details, but indicated as additionally included employment provision, a High Street for retail/mixed use and market hall, primary and secondary school, community uses, allotments, community orchard, playing fields and areas, together with open space and woodland. Re-alignment of the A251 through the site is indicated, together with improvements at J6.

2.4 The submissions made to the Prospectus have also been included in the Members Room for information.

- 2.5 In November 2018, a bid was submitted by the Council to join the Government's Garden Communities Programme. If successful, it will secure extra resources to support the assessment of schemes and, if appropriate, delivery of them. A decision is currently expected at the end of March 2019.
- 2.6 There have also been early explorations as to how such a major process would be managed and resourced in terms of the Council's various corporate, plan making and decision making roles. The decision made in respect of this report is important in determining whether this work will continue, but also because the lead in times for the delivery of schemes is significant and as a signal of confidence to landowners and developers about the investment needed to evidence their proposals.
- 2.7 Some canvassing on the role of new garden communities was gathered from the 2018 '*Looking Ahead*' consultation and its associated questionnaire (See Section 5). However, as at this point, the focus in this report is upon the reasonableness, realism and deliverability of new garden communities in Swale, as opposed to the views of existing local communities on possible locations. If the Council were to move further forward, then a number of such consultation opportunities will be available and will be an essential part of the process (See Section 5) before any final decisions are reached.
- 2.8 Of the submitted Prospectus schemes, officers and consultants have been engaged in a number of additional activities intended to inform the preparation of a draft assessment. These have included:
- Significant dialogue with the scheme promoters to obtain further information and clarification and to bring the schemes to a point where they can be assessed on a reasonably level playing field, whilst recognising that some schemes are more developed than others.
  - 'Challenge' questions to promoters about claims made within their submissions.
  - Formal interviews/meetings with scheme promoters.
  - Dialogue with environmental, utility and infrastructure providers, both about individual schemes, but also their potential cumulative impacts.
  - Broad landscape and visual analysis reports undertaken by consultants LUC (see Appendix II).
- 2.9 Members also took part in a presentation and Q+A session with the scheme promoters in November 2018.

### **The Technical Assessments (Appendix I and II)**

- 2.10 Consultants have been supporting the Council during this process. Appendix I includes a draft assessment and appendices, prepared by PBA and officers, which outlines the opportunities and risks associated with the pursuit of new garden communities in Swale. This has also been informed by interim landscape work undertaken by Land Use Consultants (included as Appendix II).

- 2.11 These assessments will be part of an iterative process. Members will no doubt have views upon the work as will scheme promoters, who will be encouraged to respond to the issues being raised.
- 2.12 The PBA work comprises a main report, which flags up the main common themes and big issues affecting the submitted schemes, before making a series of recommendations, whilst in an Appendix, PBA consider, via a matrix, the progress being made from the scheme promoter responses to each of the questions posed by the Council's Prospectus. PBA will be present at the meeting to outline their work and answer questions arising.
- 2.13 To support PBA and the Council, Land Use Consultants were asked to specifically consider landscape sensitivity around the four submitted schemes. Their site reports are included as Appendix II. All the schemes raise landscape issues which will need to be responded to by the scheme promoters. Two schemes – NS1 at SE Sittingbourne and NS5 at North Street, Faversham have issues that will need particular attention. These relate to their presence either within and/or within the setting to the Kent Downs AONB and because of other wider landscape (inc. biodiversity) impacts. These issues arise not only because of their location, but because of the unprecedented scale of them and the potentially challenging opportunities for mitigation.
- 2.14 The PBA work confirms that the process has successfully encouraged schemes which could, if promoted by the Council, make a significant contribution to meeting the future needs of Swale. The process has also had benefits both to the Council and promoters, both in terms of learning and because it has enabled issues to be explored which are not usually possible as part of the normal plan making process.
- 2.15 The PBA assessment identifies a number of cross-cutting themes as needing to be further developed across the schemes:
- Commitment to garden community principles and design principles with a need to embed them into schemes.
  - A need to provide more detail and realism on lead in times and overall timescales, alongside exploring how to speed up delivery, including in relation to boosting delivery beyond the volume housebuilder options including affordable housing provision, private rented, custom build and encouraging SME local housebuilders.
  - A need to respond to the LUC findings and conclusions and to specifically address the issues raised provisionally by the Kent Downs AONB Unit.
  - A need to address the long term stewardship of community assets, their maintenance and management.
  - More and continued engagement with local communities, all stakeholders and interested parties.
  - Clarification of site boundaries and how these may need to be adjusted.

- The need for a detailed formal response on transport issues and other infrastructure and utility issues, as well as needing to address any transport modelling conclusions.
- The submission of detailed viability information that can be then tested.

2.16 Considering the opportunities and risks for the schemes themselves, the PBA work identifies a number of matters, but to assist Members, Table 1 below presents officer's simplified summary of the more 'bigger ticket' items.

Table 1 SBC assessment of major scheme opportunities and risks

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Risks/uncertainties</b>
NS1 SE Sittingbourne	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transformational housing, employment and community facility offer.</li> <li>• Area wide transportation changes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenging delivery model for major infrastructure and build out trajectories.</li> <li>• Affordable housing offer.</li> <li>• Environmental challenges.</li> </ul>
NS3 Bobbing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant uplift of community and employment provision for existing community.</li> <li>• Some localised transport relief to village.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Junctions on the A249/M2J5.</li> <li>• Location of open space.</li> <li>• Integration with existing community.</li> </ul>
NS4 SE Faversham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong design and community engagement ethos.</li> <li>• Strong mixed use emphasis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Junction 7 of M2.</li> <li>• Viability yet to be demonstrated.</li> <li>• Possible pace of delivery.</li> </ul>
NS5 North Street, Sheldwich	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant uplift of community and employment provision for existing community.</li> <li>• Some localised transport relief to communities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Junction 6 of the M2 and A251.</li> <li>• Environmental challenges.</li> </ul>

- 2.17 In their conclusions, PBA consider that all the proposals carry opportunities as well as risks, some of which could present difficulties if not addressed, but all provide the prospect of delivering benefits to Swale and its residents, be it in the form of new market and affordable housing, improved transport access and air quality, employment opportunities and social and infrastructure needs. In other words, there are no 'showstoppers' at this stage. If the Council proceeds with the schemes into the Local Plan process, there will though inevitably be a future decision making balance to be struck between the benefits arising and any adverse environmental impacts which have not been adequately mitigated.
- 2.18 PBA further conclude that the assessment process has allowed the Council to identify the issues associated with each proposal which will need to be addressed going forward. This will allow the Council to commission further work and hold discussions with each of the promoters to address the key issues, opportunities and risks that have been identified.
- 2.19 PBA's recommendations to the Council include that:

- Work is progressed and discussions continue with the promoters to further clarify and remove the potential risks identified in this assessment.
- The use of a resolution recognising that the broad locations will be a material consideration in any development management decisions on surrounding land.
- Detailed viability assessment of each of the proposals to be undertaken.
- Scrutiny of trajectory and market capacity as well as exploration of what interventions can be used to increase the rate of delivery as well as the type of homes provided.
- Early masterplanning support to explore the most appropriate layout in relation to the landscape, sensitive locations and relationships with existing communities, which is then followed up with the use of SPD or masterplan in due course to direct design parameters of any preferred options.
- Further work is undertaken to understand the implications of proposed jobs numbers, employment land issues relating to cross boundary issues of commuting, labour supply and competition implications within the context of the overall job numbers and how the Local Plan should address this.
- Continued liaison with stakeholders and technical consultees, particularly relating to transport issues.
- Clarification about the delivery of Northern Relief Road as part of the NS1 proposal or how it is achieved separately, but before the completion of NS1.
- A Utility working group is established to address cumulative issues and timing.
- Dedicated engagement support to achieve sustained community involvement in the concepts and through to their development.

### **Members consideration of the Technical Assessments**

- 2.20 Despite the site specific nature of much of the PBA/LUC work, the decision requested by this report is not about the merits of individual schemes or locations. At this stage, Members need only draw on the submitted schemes and the technical assessment in so far as necessary to enable consideration of new garden communities in a broader, more conceptual fashion, having regard to their overall capabilities in terms of their likely suitability, implementation and delivery.
- 2.21 In due course, all of the Council's strategic alternatives for addressing development needs will be subject to environmental assessment regulations and guidance via its Sustainability Appraisal. For this process, any alternative being considered will need to be 'reasonable'. Even though Members are not formally considering a specific spatial alternative at this point, it is sensible to approach the decision required for this report on the same basis, i.e. whether new garden communities conceptually are an alternative that is reasonable for the Local Plan to consider? Reasonable alternatives are defined through regulations and guidance as the different realistic options considered by the plan-maker when developing the policies in its plan. Any alternative should be sufficiently distinct from possible others to highlight the different sustainability

implications of each so that meaningful comparisons can then be made. Any alternative must also be realistic and deliverable.

- 2.22 At this point Members are only considering the role of one possible alternative approach, but, in due course, the full range of Local Plan reasonable alternatives will be identified and assessed via the process of preparing a Sustainability appraisal (inc. a Strategic Environmental Assessment) of the Local Plan. It is intended that there will be a Panel meeting in the summer where Members will be asked to provide officers with a steer on the inclusion of the all the alternatives that they intend to consider, which, in turn, will be informed by an initial Sustainability Appraisal. These alternatives are likely to be more geographically specific.
- 2.23 So the question to firstly consider at this is point is whether new garden communities are a distinctive alternative? Drawing upon the draft assessment and principles long established by the [Town and Country Planning Association](#) (TCPA), new garden communities can be tested distinctly from other alternatives due to their principles. Their fundamental point of difference to other spatial development alternatives like urban extensions, brownfield regeneration or village dispersal, is their aim of curbing urban sprawl and avoiding the incremental extension of existing settlements. These are sometimes critiqued as eroding the quality of life for existing communities and placing strain by the accumulating demands of new residents on existing physical and community infrastructure.
- 2.24 Although other development alternatives can potentially replicate elements of new garden community principles, in general, new garden communities can be viewed as distinct by the way firstly that land is assembled and then in the way that they are then planned. Reference to the [TCPA principles](#) demonstrates this distinctiveness. Whilst individual schemes may challenge some of these distinct qualities, these are matters for consideration later, but at this point, it is sufficient to conclude that new garden communities are a distinct alternative.
- 2.25 The second question for Members to consider is whether new garden communities are reasonable? As part of this, Members should also consider whether they could potentially be realistic and deliverable in Swale. Planning Guidance advises that to do this, consideration should be given to their suitability, availability and achievability (inc. viability and deliverability). It will ultimately be the task of the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability to determine this for purposes of potentially allocating any given new settlement, but for this report, the paragraphs below provide some comment as to the suitability, availability and achievability of new settlements in the Swale context.
- 2.26 **Suitability:** Although this would need to be further tested, the work undertaken by PBA in its February 2018 'Choices for Housing Growth' report indicated that there was high level evidence to illustrate that there was sufficient land outside of the 'big hitting' national constraints (e.g. AONB/SPA/SAC/SSSI) that could physically accommodate options for new communities. This does not mean that there are no constraints within these areas that might be determined as problems at a future point, or that there may not be some issues affecting the national constraints, but they may equally be matters



which are capable of acceptable mitigation. Many such issues are not unique to new garden communities.

- 2.27 At this moment in time, the PBA technical assessment, whilst highlighting issues that might impact upon the detailed consideration of a location's suitability later in the process, does not indicate 'showstopper' suitability constraints of such significance as to stop the consideration of new garden communities now. Instead, they are matters for further assessment and for scheme promoters to action and respond to.
- 2.28 Given the landscape and visual evidence impacts associated with two of the schemes, officers have specifically considered whether they indicate a 'showstopper' at this point. However, these are matters not affecting Members decision at this point as they are site specific matters. However this is not to say that if left unattended by the scheme promoters, they may not have the potential to become significant matters at a later date. However, although these are matters for later further consideration, officers and PBA take the view that these are matters that the scheme promoter's should particularly note and give attention to as they move forward.
- 2.29 The findings of Local Plan transport modelling may also present challenges for any scheme (new community or not). However, this has yet to be determined. In addition, and as with other issues, it is too early to indicate the extent of the challenge for new garden communities as a spatial alternative, without first determining the degree to which public transport, junction and other interventions are able to address any issues that the model may throw up. Again, these will be strong markers for further work.
- 2.30 One site specific matter that will be further considered, should the Council agree the recommendations in this report, are the suitability of the boundaries to the submitted sites (the 'red lines'), i.e. whether boundaries properly reflect the relationship with nearby settlements and/or whether they appropriately respond to constraints and any potential need for mitigation. There are specific risks associated with the fact that scheme promoters have no control over adjacent land that could otherwise be subject to their own development pressures and also whether there is sufficiently adaptability within proposals that can enable their site boundaries to flex in response to changes that might be required. It is clear from the technical assessment that these issues will require further discussions in the coming months.
- 2.31 **Availability:** The Council's Prospectus has established that sites are available, with willing landowners and developers.
- 2.32 **Achievability:** This will ultimately be dependent upon individual schemes, although it is clear that nationally new garden communities are delivering, albeit some are having difficult starts. The key issues in Swale (and elsewhere) is whether they can deliver at the point in time and at the rate that they originally envisaged, or whether they would be affected by delays in infrastructure and utility provision. The technical assessment has raised a number of infrastructure delivery challenges facing all of the schemes, although these are matters for scheme promoters to now address; rather than as 'showstoppers' at this stage to the principle of new garden communities. A related matter that will also require further work will be on the timing of their delivery and the rate at which housing can be delivered each year. An over-optimistic forecast of delivery will leave the schemes (and the Council) vulnerable to challenge from other developers, whilst

schemes that might not deliver until much later in the plan period might leave gaps in the early years of the land supply.

- 2.33 To demonstrate achievability, viability also needs to be considered. Currently it is known from the assessment process that schemes have come forward in the more viable parts of the Borough. As a result, all scheme promoters are currently claiming positive viability and at this stage there is no evidence to suggest that new garden communities will be unviable in Swale. However, viability is an evolving process likely to involve assessments at each key stage and as such the evidence so far can only be regarded as a high level snapshot, which will need further analysis before any decisions about the allocation of a given location is made (as will in fact be the case for all such allocations).

### **Conclusions**

- 2.34 Officers agree with the broad assessment and recommendations made by both PBA and LUC. Whilst overall the technical evidence and the above assessments shows a need for much further work, there is no overwhelming reason revealed at this stage as to why work on this alternative (or any of the schemes themselves) should end now in principle; furthermore, the PBA assessment has sufficiently shown that new garden communities are a reasonable alternative that is both distinct and potentially suitable, available and achievable.
- 2.35 The risks identified are those that could materialise further down the line – both generic, as outlined in para. 2.15 and site specifically set out in Table 1. Progress will be needed in a number of areas before final decisions can be made.

## **3 Proposals**

- 3.1 The Prospectus process has shown that new garden communities in Swale have the potential to be a distinct alternative from others that might be identified and that the risks identified, both conceptually and within the schemes themselves, do not amount to being potential showstoppers to the process in principle at this point. As a result, new garden communities conceptually are potentially suitable, available and achievable. Members are therefore asked to agree the recommendation that will enable work by both the Council and scheme promoters to continue.
- 3.2 Members are also requested to note and agree the finalisation and publication of the assessments in Appendix I and II.

### **Next steps**

- 3.3 There will be further opportunities to consider the specifics of the locations in question, potentially, firstly at the Panel meeting in the summer and again in the autumn. As yet, no account has been taken of the views of local communities, some of whom, as revealed by the '*Looking Ahead*' consultation, are very unreceptive to the idea of new garden communities (see Section 5).

- 3.4 In the meantime, officers will continue to work with scheme promoters and also explore the corporate issues that could arise should one or more new garden communities ultimately be allocated by the Local Plan.
- 3.5 Promoters of the schemes will be expected to respond to the Council's technical assessments and will be invited to amend their submissions before consideration by the Council in the summer.
- 3.6 So what might Members reasonably expect new garden community promoters (and officers) to have achieved at key points in the Local Plan process (subject to the recommendations in this report and others at later stages)?
- 3.7 Table 2 below tentatively sets out some broad indicative milestones that Members might expect to be in place at key points, assuming any scheme in question is still 'in the frame' at the point in question. Hopefully this will help Members visualise the process and give the promoters a guide as to what might be expected by a given point.

Table 2 Milestones and expectations for new garden community schemes in the Local Plan process

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Summer 2019 steer on spatial alternatives</b>	<b>Autumn 2019 agreement to spatial alternatives consultation</b>	<b>Pre-submission stage of Local Plan winter 2020</b>
<b>Master Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outline timetable for master planning in place.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Master Planning work commenced, with supporting evidence and strategies (see below).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Draft master plan in place informed by published strategies (see below).</li> </ul>
<b>Transport (inc. air quality)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoters in dialogue with transport and air quality bodies.</li> <li>Outline timetable for preparation of evidence in place leading to ultimate preparation of relevant strategies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Modelling shows 'no showstoppers'.</li> <li>Transport and air quality interventions identified.</li> <li>Transport and air quality strategies commenced to inform master plan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Draft bespoke new garden community transport and air quality strategies in place.</li> <li>Statements of common ground with transport authorities and Council and other local authorities if necessary.</li> </ul>
<b>Site boundaries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Boundary issues identified and discussions with promoters ongoing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indicative site boundaries drafted.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final boundaries to allocations addressed.</li> </ul>
<b>Environmental mitigation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoters in dialogue with main environmental bodies.</li> <li>Outline timetable for preparation of evidence in place leading to ultimate preparation of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mitigation proposals that responds to constraints.</li> <li>Commencement of biodiversity strategy to inform master plan.</li> <li>Commencement of landscape strategy to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statements of common ground with environmental bodies.</li> <li>Bespoke new garden community biodiversity strategies in place to achieve net gains in</li> </ul>

Topic	Summer 2019 steer on spatial alternatives	Autumn 2019 agreement to spatial alternatives consultation	Pre-submission stage of Local Plan winter 2020
	relevant strategies.	inform master plan.	biodiversity supporting overall master plan. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bespoke new garden community landscape strategies in place supporting overall master plan.</li> </ul>
<b>Housing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial delivery trajectories emerging.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivery trajectories confirm meaningful housing contribution within plan period and contribution to overall spatial alternative and housing target.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bespoke garden community housing trajectories in place.</li> <li>Mix and type of housing agreed.</li> <li>Strategy to manage risks to delivery and housing type in place supporting overall master plan.</li> </ul>
<b>Economic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoters in discussion with economic stakeholders.</li> <li>Outline timetable for preparation of evidence in place leading to ultimate preparation of relevant strategies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic studies demonstrate deliverability and scope of Duty to Co-operate discussions (if necessary).</li> <li>Employment quanta agreed.</li> <li>Supporting economic strategy being prepared.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mix of employment agreed.</li> <li>Statement of common ground if necessary.</li> <li>Bespoke new garden community economic strategies in place supporting overall master plan.</li> </ul>
<b>Community infrastructure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial discussions with providers taken place.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social community infrastructure identified.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bespoke community infrastructure delivery plans in place supporting overall master plan.</li> </ul>
<b>Utilities (inc. water)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial discussions with providers taken place.</li> <li>Outline timetable for preparation of evidence in place leading to ultimate preparation of relevant strategies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No utility showstoppers.</li> <li>Commencement of utilities strategy (inc. water cycle strategy) to inform master plan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bespoke new garden community utility delivery plans in place supporting overall master plan.</li> </ul>
<b>Green</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial discussions with</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Green infrastructure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bespoke new garden</li> </ul>

Topic	Summer 2019 steer on spatial alternatives	Autumn 2019 agreement to spatial alternatives consultation	Pre-submission stage of Local Plan winter 2020
<b>Infrastructure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>key stakeholders.</li> <li>Outline timetable for preparation of evidence in place leading to ultimate preparation of relevant strategies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>strategy preparation in progress to inform master plan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>community green infrastructure strategies in place supporting overall master plan.</li> </ul>
<b>Heritage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial discussions with key stakeholders.</li> <li>Outline timetable for preparation of evidence in place leading to ultimate preparation of relevant strategies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No heritage 'showstoppers' identified.</li> <li>Heritage strategy in preparation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bespoke new garden community heritage strategies in place supporting overall master plan.</li> </ul>
<b>Design</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agree approach to securing design standards and their control.</li> <li>Scope design codes/housing manual.</li> <li>Initial discussions with key stakeholders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design codes or similar under preparation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bespoke design codes or similar in place supporting developer agreements and overall master plan.</li> </ul>
<b>Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial discussions with key stakeholders.</li> <li>Outline timetable for preparation of evidence in place leading to ultimate preparation of relevant strategies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health strategy preparation in progress to inform master plan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bespoke new garden community health strategies in place supporting overall master plan.</li> </ul>
<b>Community Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outline table for programme of community engagement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community engagement strategies in place.</li> <li>Meaningful community engagement commenced.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bespoke new garden community statements of community involvement in place supporting overall master plan.</li> </ul>
<b>Delivery model</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appropriate delivery vehicle identified.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivery vehicle structure and terms of reference agreed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivery vehicles in operation.</li> </ul>
<b>Stewardship model</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appropriate stewardship vehicle identified.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stewardship vehicle structure and terms of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stewardship bodies in place with draft</li> </ul>

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Summer 2019 steer on spatial alternatives</b>	<b>Autumn 2019 agreement to spatial alternatives consultation</b>	<b>Pre-submission stage of Local Plan winter 2020</b>
		reference agreed.	business plan in place.
<b>Viability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timetable for viability checks determined.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent review of viability under-way.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Viability of schemes confirmed.</li> </ul>
<b>Development standards (inc. sustainability)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timetable established to determine deliverability of Prospectus standards.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirmation of standards to be adopted by scheme promoters.</li> <li>• Energy strategy under preparation and informing master plan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council agrees standards to be applied as part of Master Plan (inc. resources (inc. energy) strategy).</li> </ul>
<b>Prospectus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submissions refreshed in the light of 2018-19 assessment process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any final Prospectus submissions made.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council satisfied as to whether schemes meet garden community principles as far as practically possible.</li> </ul>
<b>Sustainability Appraisal decision making (undertaken by SBC)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interim draft SA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SA of spatial alternatives for consultation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SA of preferred option.</li> </ul>
<b>Overall decision required by Council</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steer on whether new garden communities should be part of spatial alternatives process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreement to locations and new community headlines as spatial alternatives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council agrees its preferred option on the basis that the adverse impacts of proceeding would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.</li> <li>• Council agrees to new garden community policy wording and boundary to allocation(s).</li> </ul>

3.8 Before the Local Plan is submitted for Examination (in whatever form it emerges), there may be issues that arise in respect of planning applications being submitted in the areas within or close to the proposed new garden community sites which may prejudice the Council's consideration of the new community and/or the proper planning of the area. There may therefore be merit in the Council considering a resolution to guide decision making. Such a resolution would:

- a) Reinforce the importance of the Local Plan process as the means to lead the new community process;

- b) Set out the position to those who may seek to pre-empt the process or the ability of the Council to identify the most appropriate site;
- c) Ensure that the most appropriate boundaries for new garden communities is properly considered and not prejudiced by other landowners and developers; and
- d) Send a clear message to landowners and the development industry about expectations both within and beyond the submission areas.

3.9 The Panel could therefore consider recommending to Cabinet a resolution as follows:

*“The Council is assessing the potential of new garden communities in Swale via its Local Plan review. Although the review is at an early stage, the ability to bring forward new garden communities in a comprehensive way may be an important feature. Both the Council and those promoting new garden communities are investing considerable effort in assembling evidence and positively engaging to demonstrate whether proposals could form part of the Local Plan strategy. To this end, until the next Local Plan is adopted or the Council has dismissed a new community in the relevant location, the Council will consider the schemes submitted to and accepted as part of the Council’s New Garden Communities Prospectus as material considerations (but in the clear context of a Local Plan led process) when considering planning applications on or around these sites.”*

3.10 Members are asked to consider whether to recommend to Cabinet that the above resolution (or other wording as agreed) is made.

## **4 Alternative Options**

- 4.1 Members could agree at this point not to progress new garden communities in principle in the Local Plan review. Clear reasons would need to be given as to why such an approach was not reasonable. This is not recommended, as explained in the report; the case for their continued inclusion and assessment is clear and would not support this alternative view. Such a decision would also be premature without the full picture that would be offered by the completion of the entire evidence base, including the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal.
- 4.2 Members could determine to reduce the number of schemes. This would be premature as it would potentially rule out sites before the Council has determined the full extent of the development challenges and the key evidence (see above) that will need to be in place before it decides on which sites that it will need to allocate. In any event, there would be insufficient evidence to rule any scheme out at this stage and such a decision would risk challenges further down the line to the Council’s approach.
- 4.3 Members could also decide to defer their decision. However, not providing even a high level steer at this point risks losing valuable time in terms of further assessment work and in giving scheme promoters the necessary confidence to also progress their work. Given that there are several points remaining in the process where Members will be able to review their decision, deferral is not considered necessary and would only serve to make the Council less well prepared should it subsequently agree to take specific new garden communities forward for consultation.

4.4 Finally, Members could decide not to recommend adoption of the resolution from paragraph 3.9 above. A resolution would be no guarantee of securing a decision in the way the Council wished, however, it could help mitigate against the views that the possibility of new garden communities in Swale should be given no weight in decision making due to the early stage of the Local Plan process, or the possibility that scheme promoters themselves may choose to prematurely submit their planning applications. Even if the Council does not proceed with new garden communities at all (or some and not others), it is highly likely that some of the scheme promoters will continue to pursue their proposals via the Local Plan process, or failing this planning applications.

## 5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 Other than via the 'Looking Ahead' consultation, there has to date been no Council led community consultation on new garden communities. Some consultations have taken place with landowners, developers, infrastructure and utility providers, environmental and rural bodies.
- 5.2 Some scheme promoters have already, or intend to, undertake their own community consultations.
- 5.3 Should in due course the Council proceed with this spatial alternative, then it is likely that bespoke consultation events will be necessary to support the general Local Plan consultation that would be otherwise done. Such events would be required from autumn/winter 2019 onwards.
- 5.4 It is envisaged that individual community engagement strategies for the proposals would be prepared, with statements of community involvement prepared by the time the Local Plan is submitted.

## 6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Supports the Council's corporate priorities for delivering regeneration and delivering improved quality of life.
Financial, Resource and Property	<p>New community work related to the Local Plan is funded from within the Local Plan budget. However, if work progresses this may place additional demands upon the budget. Although the Council has made a bid for support to the Government's Garden Communities Programme, the Council may need to consider further resources to support both its plan making and corporate responsibilities on this issue.</p> <p>Planning Performance Agreements are being sought from the submitters to support the Council's costs towards considering their schemes through the Local Plan process.</p>
Legal and Statutory	The Local Plan is prepared under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended); and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England)



	Regulations 2012 (Statutory Instrument 2012 No.767) (as amended by SI 1244, Dec 2017).
Crime and Disorder	None anticipated at this time.
Sustainability	The Local Plan process will be subject to Sustainability Appraisal at key stages.
Health and Wellbeing	None at this time.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	None anticipated at this time.
Equality and Diversity	The Local Plan process will be subject to a Community Impact Assessments at appropriate points.

## 7 Appendices

- 7.1 Appendix I: Draft Peter Brett Associates Initial Assessment of New Community Proposals.  
Appendix II: Land Use Consultants Landscape assessment and recommendations.

## 8 Background Papers

- 8.1 [Choices for Housing Growth](#), PBA February 2018, [New Garden Communities Prospectus](#) SBC April 2018.
- 8.2 New Garden Community Submissions (in Members Room).