1. SUMMARY

1.1 The Local Plan sets out the long-term development strategy for the Borough and is one of the Council’s most important corporate strategies. It makes provision for new housing, employment and other development needs including infrastructure. It has a key role in implementing the spatial aspects of the Council’s corporate strategies.

1.2 A new local plan is being prepared to respond to local requirements and to reflect national and London Plan policy changes that have emerged in recent years. This report seeks Cabinet approval to publish the draft plan for consultation during summer 2019.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Cabinet is recommended to:

2.1.1 Approve the draft plan for publication and consultation attached as Appendix A,

2.1.2 Delegate authority to make final changes to the draft plan ahead of consultation, to the Director of Planning in consultation with the Portfolio Lead for Economic Growth and Housing Delivery.

2.1.3 Note the next steps of the plan preparation process and the timetable changes.
3. PROPOSALS

3.1 In planning for homes, jobs and other development needs, local planning authorities are required to have up-to-date plans in place to guide development within their local areas. Recent changes to planning legislation set a period of 5 years within which Councils must review their local plans. The Council’s lead development plan document, the Core Strategy, was adopted in March 2012 and is therefore considered to becoming increasingly out of date.

3.2 A new local plan is being prepared to respond to shifting local pressures and requirements and to reflect national and London Plan policy changes that have emerged in recent years, such as the borough’s housing target, which has significantly increased through the emerging London Plan. In accordance with the Local Development Scheme approved by Cabinet in March 2017, officers have been working to produce a single consolidated local plan document rather than a suite of separate Development Plan Documents.

3.3 Work on the new Local Plan has reached the “Draft Plan” stage and requires consultation. The process of preparing a local plan involves different statutory stages. As members will recall, consultation took place on the Direction of Travel document in November/December 2017. This was at the Issues and Options stage, which signalled the commencement of the new Local Plan engagement process and provided opportunity for the community and stakeholders to comment on the challenges, opportunities and the key issues for the new Plan.

3.4 The proposed public consultation on the draft plan represents the next round of engagement in the development of the Plan. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2019) states that local plans should “be shaped by early, proportionate and effective engagement between plan makers and communities, local organisations, businesses, infrastructure providers and statutory consultees”. The outcome of the earlier consultation has informed the preparation of the draft plan.

3.5 The draft Plan (attached as Appendix A) has also been informed by a number of evidence-based documents, in particular, Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Growth Capacity Study and the Characterisation and Intensification Study. Other ongoing studies relate to Employment Land, Town Centres & Retailing, Climate Change Gypsy and Travellers and Green Infrastructure.

3.6 Key components of the draft local plan include the following:

- Vision and Strategic Objectives – the overarching spatial growth directions
- Spatial Strategy – setting out Waltham Forest Places and the broad spatial locations for growth. It seeks to ensure that growth takes place in the most suitable and sustainable locations and opportunities for good growth are optimised across the entire borough.
• Thematic policies – covering housing, employment, town centres, infrastructure, design, environment and climate change.
• Implementation and Delivery - including infrastructure delivery
• Policies Map showing the areas of the Borough where the different policies will apply.

3.7 The draft Plan seeks to fully accommodate proportional growth and additional needs for housing, employment, other development needs and infrastructure within the borough on existing underused or re-provided land. The London Plan sets the Council a housing target at 1794 per year over the next 10 years. In accommodating the significantly higher growth targets, the draft Plan seeks to ensure that all growth is achieved and that the “right forms” of intensification occur at the “right locations”. The focus for the majority of growth is in and around identified strategic locations in the North, Central area and South of the borough, particularly around transport nodes, town centres and brownfield locations.

3.8 To guide development in these areas, the draft plan includes strategic and local policies covering housing, employment, town centre uses, design/place shaping, social, community and physical infrastructure needs. Policies within the draft plan also cover the built and natural environment, protection of heritage assets and climate change.

3.9 In publishing the draft Plan for consultation, it is important to draw attention to the fact that the proposed consultation (in Summer 2019) presents an early opportunity for residents, stakeholders and community groups to comment on the draft plan. The outcome of this consultation will be used to inform the Proposed Submission version of the plan. Accordingly, there will be a final round of consultation by Spring 2020 on the Proposed Submission version. The Plan will then be submitted for independent examination (EIP).

3.10 In preparing the new Local Plan, officers have involved internal stakeholders including council teams/departments. Members’ involvement is being undertaken specifically through work with the dedicated Local Plan Members Advisory Group (LPMAG), chaired by the Portfolio Lead Member for Economic Growth and Housing Delivery. Consultation with neighbouring boroughs (and the GLA/TfL) will be undertaken at the consultation stage in accordance with ‘duty to co-operate’ requirements.

3.11 Subject to Cabinet approval, it is proposed to carry out public consultation on the draft Plan during an extended period beginning mid July 2019 until 30 September 2019. Further information about consultation arrangements is provided in section 6 of this report. Following this, the subsequent stages of the plan making process will be as follows:

• Consideration of the outcome of the consultation and preparation of the Proposed Submission version of the Plan (September - December 2019)
• Proposed Submission consultation, subject to Cabinet approval (February/March 2020)
• Independent examination period (summer to autumn 2020) followed by receipt of the Inspector’s Report.
• Adoption (Spring/Summer 2021, subject to receipt of the Inspector’s Report by Winter 2020/21).

3.12 It is a legal requirement that the Council’s Local Plan be in general conformity with the London Plan. Accordingly, the above programme tracks progress on the delivery of the new London Plan, which is currently at examination stage. Final adoption of the London Plan is expected during Winter 2019/2020. The above indicative programme will require changes to the project plan timetable as included in the currently adopted Local Development Scheme 2017-2020. Officers intend to update this document to reflect the above changes.

3.13 Prior to final publication of the draft plan for consultation, it may be necessary to make other changes to the document to reflect new information arising from the ongoing evidence base projects. Accordingly, the recommendation makes provision for subsequent final amendments (as may be necessary) to be made to the document. This includes any recommendations arising from the work of the Local Plan Members Advisory Group (LPMAG). It is therefore proposed to delegate such changes to the Director of Planning in consultation with the Portfolio Lead for Economic Growth and Housing Delivery (as set out in the recommendations).

4. OPTIONS & ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

4.1 It is a statutory requirement for all Councils to prepare a Local Plan and ensure that it is up to date. There are no alternatives.

4.2 The absence of an up to date Local Plan would leave the Council in a weaker position in promoting investment and defending planning decisions. It would also leave the Council at risk of Government intervention in decision making and undesirable ad-hoc applications for development would be more difficult to refuse.

5. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY PRIORITIES (AND OTHER NATIONAL OR LOCAL POLICIES OR STRATEGIES)

5.1 The preparation of the draft plan is important in implementing the spatial aspects of the Council’s priorities and commitments, in particular, the Creative Futures Strategy and the requirement to ensure continuous engagement and involvement of communities. The draft plan also seeks to deliver the aspirations set out in a suite of corporate documents including the Economic Growth Strategy and the Housing Strategy 2019-24.

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 The Council has adopted and published a new Statement of Community Involvement (SCI, 2018) which sets out commitments
regarding the involvement of local communities, businesses and other organisations in all planning decisions, including local plan preparation.

6.2 It is intended to publicise the draft plan through Waltham Forest News, the Council’s website and notices to registered consultees on the Local Plan consultation database. The document will be made available online, together with the evidence base studies undertaken and the supporting sustainability appraisal document. Copies of the document will be made available for inspection at all Waltham Forest Branch Libraries. In addition, consultation events will be undertaken during the consultation period.

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Finance, Value for Money and Risk

7.1.1 Work carried out on preparation of the evidence-based studies currently amount to approximately £200k. This will be funded directly from the Planning Local Development Framework budget and this is included in the spending plan. Additional funding is expected to cover the cost of final publication, cost of the examination (including Inspector costs and the appointment of a Programme Officer). These additional costs will be funded from the existing service budgets.

7.2 Legal

7.2.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase 2004 (as amended) (“the 2004 Act”) and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) (“the 2012 Regulations”) set out the requirements and the statutory procedure for the preparation of a Local Plan.

7.2.2 Regulation 18 of the 2012 Regulations requires the local planning authority to notify and invite representations on the content of the draft plan to: (i) such specific consultation bodies as the local planning authority consider may have an interest in the subject of the proposed local plan; (ii) such of the general consultation bodies as the local planning authority consider appropriate; and (iii) such residents or other persons carrying on business in the local planning authority’s area as the local planning authority consider appropriate.

7.2.3 The next stage, after this consultation, is for the local planning authority to prepare a submission draft of the local plan. All representations received during this consultation stage must be taken into account when preparing this submission draft. The submission draft will then return to Cabinet for further consideration.

7.3 Equalities and Diversity

7.3.1 An initial screening exercise of the equality impact of this decision has been undertaken (Appendix B). At this stage, it is considered that there are no negative impacts on the protected equality groups.

7.3.2 Building a prosperous economy through job creation, extending housing choice through the provision of additional homes including affordable housing will benefit all residents. Policies to create liveable
environments are designed to promote equality and foster better social cohesion. Publishing the draft plan at this stage will allow stakeholder/resident views on the content of the document and any likely adverse impacts of policies and proposals on equality groups to be identified and carefully considered prior to the preparation of the final plan document. The proposed submission version of the plan (at Regulation 19 stage) will be supported by a full Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA), which will test at a detailed level all policies and proposals of the plan for equality impacts.

7.4 **Sustainability (including climate change, health, crime and disorder)**

7.4.1 For the purposes of this report, a climate impact matrix has been undertaken and is attached as Appendix C. In accordance with legal requirements on plan making, the draft local plan must be supported by a sustainability appraisal. Work is currently in progress to test all policies and proposals for compliance with this requirement. This supporting document will also be published with the draft Plan.

7.4.2 The draft Local Plan seeks to promote sustainable development. This is reflected in the vision statement and is carried through the key policies of the plan. The proposed spatial strategy seeks to direct growth to the more sustainable locations such as the borough’s town centres. The range of supporting policies also reflect sustainable development objectives e.g. making efficient use of land, creating liveable places, enhancing and preserving the environment, ensuring the provision of social and physical infrastructure, reducing the borough’s carbon footprint and creating resilient and adaptive environments.

7.4.3 Climate change is separately covered as a key theme in the draft plan. This is embedded in the plan through several policies. Examples include policies seeking to reduce emissions by promoting sustainable transport, encourage sustainable design and construction, address the risk of flooding and overheating and to protect the natural and open environment. The draft plan also includes policies to promote health and well-being, also addressing issues regarding crime, community safety and social cohesion.

7.5 **Brexit Implications**

7.5.1 The main influence of EU law on plan making in the UK relates to the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the ‘SEA Regulations’) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (the ‘Habitats Regulations’), which is also covered in UK law. How the EU Directives and the Regulations may be affected by Brexit depends to some extent on the terms reached with the EU as part of Brexit negotiations.

7.5.2 In the longer term, it is likely that reductions in net migration and changes in employment growth could impact population projections and objectively assessed housing need, which could lead to a review of housing targets. At the present time however, no appropriate long-term assumptions around these issues exist, but it is likely that they will start
to emerge once the relationship with the EU following Brexit and the impacts on employment and migration become clearer.

7.6 Council Infrastructure

7.6.1 This decision has no impact on Council infrastructure. The draft plan has been prepared by the Planning Policy Team.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION (as defined by Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985)

None.