

	<p align="center">Cabinet 8 September 2025</p>
	<p align="center">Report from the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Regeneration</p>
	<p align="center">Lead Member – Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning & Property (Councillor Teo Benea)</p>
<p>Brent Development Plan Documents Review</p>	

Wards Affected:	All except parts of Alperton, Harlesden and Kensal Green, Stonebridge and Tokyngton, where OPDC is the Local Planning Authority.
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open.
List of Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	Brent Local Development Scheme April 2025
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1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1. To consider a request for additional budget to support the review of the Brent Local Plan and suggested delegation to address the stages prior to submission of development plans for examination.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That Cabinet approves a budget of £880,000 to be added to the Local Plan budget reserve to be used for the processes to support delivery of a review of the development plan documents.
- 2.2 That Cabinet delegate authority to the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member Regeneration, Planning and Property to approve Development Plan consultation material to be issued in the stages prior to any final draft plan proposed to be submitted for examination.

3.0 Detail

Cabinet Member Foreword

- 3.1 Having an up-to-date development plan and associated planning documents is a critical part of shaping the future of Brent. It is key to setting out how Brent will embrace the challenge of its anticipated continued population growth in a manner that is as sustainable as possible. This will support Brent's identity as a place, positively embracing change by meeting the population's needs for housing and necessary social and cultural infrastructure, providing the places for Brent's businesses and economy to grow, retaining its green infrastructure and areas of historical significance, whilst working towards being carbon neutral and addressing the challenge's posed by climate change.
- 3.2 The development plan and associated planning documents provide a positive framework for managing development to meet the borough plan priorities as follows:
1. **Prosperity and Stability in Brent** – The Plan seeks to address housing needs of the population and necessary social and cultural infrastructure. By supporting extensive regeneration of parts of Brent, especially in its growth areas, its town centres and commercial areas and supporting business it provides increased opportunities for wealth generation and prosperity of Brent residents through providing access to local jobs. This will sustain its desirability and prosperity, whilst providing clear guidelines for development and helps ensure stability in an area.
 2. **Thriving Communities** – Addressing the wide range of needs of residents and businesses will better equip Brent communities in meeting the challenges and opportunities ahead. A strengthened sense of place provided through a clear vision for the development of Brent helps to improve development outcomes and create a sense of belonging which contributes towards community cohesion.
 3. **A Healthier Brent** – Providing more and better homes, jobs, social infrastructure and improving the quality and amount of green infrastructure in Brent, encouraging walking and cycling, whilst reducing unnecessary vehicle movements will improve mental and physical well-being.
 4. **A Cleaner, Greener Future** – New developments will deliver higher environmental standards, better addressing the threat posed by climate change and working towards the Council's goal to be carbon neutral by 2030.
 5. **The Best Start in Life** – A principal determinant of future life chances for younger people is having a stable accommodation, including a home that is affordable, has sufficient space to live and growth in and internally provides a healthy environment. Brent's current development plan supports the delivery of as many homes as are realistically considered to be feasible in the period to 2041, a significant number of which will be higher quality affordable homes, with higher levels of outdoor amenity space than standards set in the London Plan.

Background

- 3.3 On [7th April 2025 Cabinet resolved to approve the Council's Local Development Scheme](#) (LDS). The LDS sets out the Council's work programme for reviewing its development plan and associated planning documents in the period ending in 2029. It also highlights prospective neighbourhood plan activities. In addition, the Cabinet report sets out what was known at the time about proposed changes to the development plan system to streamline it from start to finish to be a period of 30 months. No additional information, or regulations have yet been published to clarify the new development/ local plan adoption process. The Cabinet report set out the challenges for Brent associated with changes to national policy, particularly the significant uplift in housing delivery targets.
- 3.4 Notwithstanding the statutory requirement to review a local plan every five years, the plan is needed to be kept up to date. This fulfils the Council's role in proactively shaping Brent's development to increase the prosperity and meet the needs of its growing population and its businesses whilst improving its environmental quality and addressing the challenges of climate change.

Development Plan Review Budget

- 3.5 The annual planning policy revenue budget currently comprises of predominately staff salaries plus on-costs. There is no dedicated budget available to support the activities of evidence base gathering, or other activities requiring either external support or purchasing services or materials to support the development of planning policies, guidance or their publicity/ engagement as part of necessary consultation processes or the public examination of development plans.
- 3.6 To enable its delivery, the last Brent Local Plan review was subject to a dedicated budget reserve. This reserve, apart from £59,000 that has been set aside to pay the Council's share of the West London Waste Plan review for the financial years 25/26 and 26/27, has £60,000 remaining. To be able to progress the next Brent development plan review, including the Local Plan, plus other associated work to support the delivery of guidance, delivering local plan outcomes, such as masterplanning of growth areas (for example as has previously happened for [Staples Corner Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document \(SPD\) 2024](#)) an addition to the dedicated reserve budget will be required.

Uncertainties associated with budget preparation

- 3.7 As the April 2025 Cabinet paper set out, there is on-going uncertainty about the proposed development plan new system and what will be expected of local plans in terms of their content. This is further complicated by a move towards new national development plan policies, which may remove some policies that the local plan might have addressed (albeit Brent Local Plan has very few non-Brent specific policies that such changes will bring). The draft national policies have not yet been issued for consultation.

- 3.8 Similarly, it is unclear what the level of detail of the new London Plan policies will be. The London Plan currently has several planning application specific policies, which there is a lot of pressure to remove due to what many consider to be the unnecessary length and detail in what should be a strategic document. 'Towards a New London Plan' a consultation document representing the start of the review of the London Plan has been issued. It however is a very high-level document that provides no great certainty on what the London Plan content will be.
- 3.9 Compared to several years ago, there is also currently a lot less financial support from MHCLG for general plan making purposes, due to the removal of the dedicated planning delivery grant. West London Authorities benefitted from circa £500K in 2018-2020 from this source to support joint evidence bases. This effectively saved the Council around £100K for separate Housing and Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessments, Employment Land Review, Affordable Workspace Review, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 1 and Small Housing Sites Capacity Assessments.
- 3.10 A significant other consideration is whether the Council can address its need for additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches through site acquisition and provision prior to the local plan review starting. If not, it is likely that the Local Plan will have to positively address meeting this need through site allocations, which is likely to make adoption more complicated and expensive.
- 3.11 Against this background of uncertainty, a range of cost estimates of undertaking the local plan review have been shared with finance for scrutiny. They include evidence base costs and associated necessary processes to adopt a plan. This is based on Brent's recent experience, plus other boroughs/ councils who have recently done reviews. These range from an optimistic scenario, which would exclude the need for gypsy and traveller work if already completed, of £450K, up to £1.56 million in the most pessimistic scenario. That scenario also includes a gypsy and traveller plan and assumes that the Council's evidence base and processes are subject to significant challenge.
- 3.12 A central scenario indicates a cost of approximately £940,000, and Cabinet is recommended to approve £880,000 to support the Plan's review to add to the remaining £60,000 reserve. This amount requested is broadly consistent with the £1million identified in the April 2025 Cabinet paper. It should be noted that this is a proportionate request, reflective of the experience of the team in undertaking local plan reviews. Much of the necessary work is being done by officers rather than automatically deferring to consultants like some councils do. This does, however, assume current posts within the policy team and across planning and other parts of the Council are maintained in the establishment with capacity to do such work.
- 3.13 It is also important to note that some costs associated with the local plan review might be deferred to processes associated with delivery of the plan's policies after its adoption. So, some costs might need to be retained in the reserve until they are required. For example, in relation to objections from National Highways to be satisfactorily resolved at the last local plan examination, the Council had

to agree to more detailed traffic modelling to be undertaken in association with the Neasden Growth Area and Staples Corner Masterplan SPDs' adoption. This brought a significant additional later expense but was necessary to allow the plan to pass the examination. Similar commitments may be necessary as part of the review where decisions to potentially limit unnecessary expenditure prior to examination, on the basis that an issue might not be raised or be given much weight as an objection by the Inspectors examining the Plan, are made. In addition, the Government still appears to be looking to exclude SPDs as part of the new planning system. Instead, Councils will be expected to do area plans that will be subject to examination, although it is not clear if the adoption processes are expected to be the same as local plans.

Streamlining of decision making for early stages of Plan making

- 3.14 The statutory plan making process is subject to several stages, most of which include consultation. If each stage prior to the submission of the plan for examination had to be subject to a decision of the Council's Cabinet, this would have the potential to lengthen significantly the adoption process. The Council's constitution does not specifically refer to early processes for development plan adoption.
- 3.15 To address this, for the last local plan review, on 13th April 2017 [Cabinet agreed](#) to a Local Plan Liaison Group comprising a range of councillors being set up to meet regularly to consider draft local plan issues at each stage. In addition, it agreed that prior to publishing the draft local plan for examination (Regulation 19 stage) decision making on each stage and what to issue for public consultation was subject to delegation to the then Strategic Director Regeneration and Environment in consultation with the portfolio holder Regeneration, Growth, Employment and Skills. The Liaison Group worked well for the last local plan review and was involved in all stages prior to submission of the plan for examination. Similarly, the level of delegation also worked well and prior to examination the process of taking the draft plan through its stages was comparatively short.
- 3.16 Cabinet on 7th April 2025 in approving the Council's LDS, identified that the replacement West London Waste Plan, which also forms part of Brent's development plan, would be subject to the existing 2012 Town and Country (Local Planning) (England) Regulations (as amended) following the current plan making processes. These can continue to be used for development plans submitted before 31st December 2026. To assist with the timelines of this process to meet the deadline, it is recommended that Cabinet's previously approved approach to delegation for the Brent Local Plan is taken forward for this development plan too. This would now be delegated to the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Regeneration in association with the Cabinet Member Regeneration, Planning and Property to reflect changes in names of the two positions.
- 3.17 For the Brent Local Plan review, the Council will have to follow the regulations associated with the new development planning system as required in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023. Although there is no clarity yet on the

requirements, it is considered that due to the need to meet the 30-month timeline from start to finish, that a suitable level of delegation is also required in relation to these plan making processes. As for the previous Brent Local Plan, the Local Plan Liaison Group will continue to review the relevant stages of the plan's consultation material and approach to policy making.

- 3.18 The new local plan process would appear to be subject to three stages prior to submission of a plan for examination: Scoping and Early Participation; First Formal Consultation, and Second Formal Consultation. Given that Second Formal Consultation would appear to be the equivalent stage of publication (regulation 19 stage) of the current local plan adoption process as set out in the regulations (as amended), it is recommended that Cabinet approve the same delegation route for the new plan process as exists for the current plan process.

Options

- 3.19 There are potentially two options open to the Council following consultation:
- a) Approve the allocation of the reserve budget for the local plan review and delegated decision-making processes
 - b) Do not approve the allocation of the reserve budget for the local plan review and delegated decision-making processes

Approve the allocation of the reserve budget for the local plan review and delegated decision-making processes

- 3.20 The allocation of a dedicated reserve budget will enable the policy team to start to plan with certainty the local plan review timetable. This would be more difficult without certainty of where funding will come from, as the plan must be based on evidence. For the adoption process to be credible, much of this work should be commissioned/ available to inform the consultation documents and a preferred content of the draft Plan. The reserve could be drawn upon across the Local Plan adoption timescale to support the necessary processes.
- 3.21 The delegation of the decision making in relation to consultation on the earlier stages of plan preparation will streamline the process and is considered expedient to reduce time between stages and reduce Cabinet business. It has served the Council well and represents the right balance between democratic oversight and moving the Plan forward in a timely fashion. Cabinet will ultimately still approve any draft plan submitted for examination. The delegation put in place for the current regulations associated with local plan adoption, should also logically apply to the new local plan adoption processes once regulations are in place.
- 3.22 Due to the need to progress the new local plan in a timely manner an appropriate budget is necessary for the whole process to be completed and for the review to be expeditious appropriate delegation needs to be in place, as such this is the option recommended for Cabinet.

Do not approve the allocation of the reserve budget for the local plan review and delegated decision-making processes

- 3.23 No allocation of a dedicated reserve budget will remove the ability of the policy team to start to plan with certainty the local plan review timetable. Not being able to commission the evidence base will mean limited ability to issue a draft Plan that is credible, and certainly it would not be able to progress to submission for examination.
- 3.24 Not undertaking a local plan review will mean that the Council will fall foul of its statutory duty. Ultimately there is the potential for the Secretary of State to directly intervene and write a Local Plan for the Council and recover their costs in doing so. Delaying the review would mean that the Council will have to rely on national and London Plan policies. Without a clear locally derived vision and plan for how Brent will grow, planning in Brent will become increasingly reactive. This may lead to development that the Council considers inappropriate. It also is likely to undermine the attractiveness of Brent to investors, many of whom currently feedback that the Council's positive approach to planning and growth is a key determinant in them prioritising development in the borough compared to other places. This will have knock on implications for significant revenue sources for the Council and infrastructure delivery in Brent, e.g. Council tax receipts, New Homes Bonus and Community Infrastructure Levy.
- 3.25 The Government has also signalled that it aims to have universal up to date Local Plan coverage across the country by the end of the current parliament. The current 2022 Local Plan is up to date. However, if the review does not take place, it will be very out-of-date by the anticipated end of the current parliament. Brent therefore would be one of the councils who is not contributing to the Government's universal Local Plan target.
- 3.26 Not allowing delegation of the decision making in relation to consultation on the earlier stages of local plan preparation associated with existing and future regulations will extend time from start to finish, potentially result in more expense as circumstances might change, resulting in additional changes to the Plan with associated supporting evidence, and will increase Cabinet business.
- 3.27 On this basis, option b) is not the recommended option.

Next steps

- 3.28 On confirmation of the budget reserve the Council will work up a more detailed delivery timetable for the local plan review. The West London Waste Plan is currently being drafted and is likely to be subject to consultation in late Autumn 2025. This early-stage consultation material will be subject to the delegated decision process set out in the recommendation of this report.

4 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

- 4.1 The appropriate levels of consultation and engagement as set out in regulations and the Council's Statement of Community Involvement will be undertaken in

association with local plan, or any supplementary planning document adoption processes.

5 Financial Considerations

- 5.1 The provision of a reserve will allow draw down of funds when necessary to support specific parts of the local plan as and when necessary. Without the agreement of reserves the Local Plan work will not be able to be carried out in line with our statutory requirements.
- 5.2 Other funding options have been explored, including CIL funding, however, the Local Plan work is not in line with the agreed use of CIL income and cannot be used to support this work.

6 Legal Considerations

- 6.1 The processes will be consistent with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) for documents relying on progression using the current system, whilst those related to the proposed new system will follow the necessary regulations.

7 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

- 7.1 The Equality Act 2010 introduced a new public sector equality duty under section 149. It covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The Council must, in exercising its functions, have 'due regard' to the need to:
 - a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
 - b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 7.2 The three parts of the duty applies to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, sex and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership status applies to the first part of the duty.
- 7.3 All local plans and supplementary planning documents will be subject to Equalities Impact Assessment screening and, if necessary, full assessments.

8 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

- 8.1 Local plans and supplementary planning documents are an integral part of supporting the delivery of positive outcomes towards addressing the Council's declaration of the Brent climate and ecological emergency.

9 Human Resources/Property Considerations

- 9.1 There are none other than outlined in the report. In developing Plans any opportunities identified in relation to Brent owned assets will be detailed in the reports seeking to take these forward for adoption by the council.

10 Communication Considerations

- 10.1 Local plans and supplementary planning documents are subject to appropriate levels of communication's team support to raise awareness and complement the engagement measures set out in the Councils' Statement of Community Involvement.

Report sign off:

Alice Lester

Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods and
Regeneration