

Council Report

Ward(s) affected: n/a

Report of Director of Finance

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Notice of Motion: Environmental Audit

Executive Summary

Following the deferral of consideration of this matter at the last Council meeting on 8 October, Councillor Susan Parker to propose, and Councillor Dennis Booth to second, the following motion for consideration at this meeting:

“This Council resolves:

- (1) That an environmental audit of the impact of building on green fields be conducted by independent environmental experts.
- (2) That the objectives of that environmental audit should be to consider our carbon footprint in the context of new housing, and to determine the impact of reviewing site allocations to reallocate to the urban area.
- (3) That the terms of appointment be drafted by an all-party task group, in consultation with the CPRE and Surrey Wildlife Trust, and presented to full Council for approval.
- (4) That, pending that environmental audit, the Council will approach the Secretary of State, following the General Election, to request a temporary moratorium on approving planning applications for developments of more than 4 homes on green fields, or undeveloped land within Guildford borough.”

Background

At the last Council meeting, councillors who spoke in debate on the proposed deferral of the motion, referred to the need to take into account the revised Brownfield Land Register, which is due to be published by December this year at the latest, and the updated Land Availability Assessment (LAA) 2019.

On 1 November 2019, all councillors were informed that the Council had published its updated LAA and five-year housing land supply. The full LAA may be accessed via the following link: www.guildford.gov.uk/localplan/housing.

A five-year housing land supply statement may be viewed via the following link: www.guildford.gov.uk/localplan/monitoring.

The LAA has been prepared in accordance with the new National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance.

In response to paragraphs (1) and (2) of the motion, officers would like to inform councillors that a revenue growth bid has been prepared for the purpose of setting up a Climate Change Fund to deliver projects involving baseline analysis, scoping, feasibility studies, strategy development, action planning and technical implementation (see **Appendix 1** attached). One of these projects would comprise the following:

- 1) Carbon emissions baseline – this would establish the current carbon footprint of the borough from all sources.
- 2) Carbon trajectory – this would identify the future trajectory of carbon emissions setting a timeframe for achieving zero carbon. This would look at the pressures that have both an upward and downward impact on carbon emissions, including the growth contained within the adopted Local Plan.
- 3) Potential projects – this would identify projects that could be implemented in order to reduce the timescales for achieving reductions in carbon emissions.

It should be clarified that additional sites identified through either the annual review of the Land Availability Assessment (LAA) or Brownfield Register would not in itself enable the removal of any site allocations within the adopted Local Plan. The only mechanism for the removal of greenfield site allocations within the Local Plan is a review of the Local Plan, culminating in an independent examination. Whilst climate change would form part of the consideration of a reviewed plan, this would need to be assessed against other policy requirements such as seeking to meet the borough's development needs.

There is a significant amount of funding available for the study from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). As a result, BEIS are likely to want a role in the procurement process. The formal procurement of consultants will need to be undertaken in accordance with the Council's procurement procedures.

The general remit of the proposed study is already set out in the growth bid referred to above. As a growth item, the project would be contained within the Council's draft budget that would come before full Council for approval in February 2020.

Is the report (or part of it) exempt from publication? No

