

Blaby District Council
Council

Date of Meeting	25 February 2025
Title of Report	Local Development Scheme This is not a Key Decision and is on the Forward Plan
Lead Member	Cllr. Ben Taylor - Planning, Transformation and ICT
Report Author	Development Strategy Manager
Strategic Themes	All Themes: Enabling communities and supporting vulnerable residents; Enhancing and maintaining our natural and built environment; Growing and supporting our economy; Keeping you safe and healthy; Ambitious and well managed Council, valuing our people

1. What is this report about?

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for the revised Blaby District Local Development Scheme (LDS), which sets out the timescales for producing the emerging Local Plan.

2. Recommendation(s) to Council

- 2.1 That the revised Blaby District Local Development Scheme at Appendix A be approved, to become effective immediately.

3. Reason for Decisions Recommended

- 3.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as amended, requires a Local Planning Authority to prepare and maintain a Local Development Scheme.
- 3.2 The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has requested that all local planning authorities produce an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) and submit a copy to MHCLG no later than 6 March 2025.

4. Matters to consider

4.1 Background

The Local Development Scheme (LDS) sets out the Council's programme for producing the Local Plan.

To keep local communities and other stakeholders informed of local planning activity, the Council is required to prepare a Local Development Scheme (LDS) under Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). In relation to the emerging Local Plan, the LDS must specify:

- what will be included in each document to be prepared, and the geographical extent to which it relates;
- whether the document will be prepared jointly with one or more other local authority; and
- the timetable for the preparation of document.

In December 2024, the Government published an updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to support its target of delivering 370,000 new homes a year during the life of this Parliament. This new NPPF took effect immediately for decision making but there is a transition period to 12 March 2025 for plan making to proceed under the former NPPF (2023) if a plan is at either Regulation 19 stage or is being submitted for examination. Blaby's new Local Plan will be produced in line with the new NPPF.

The publication of the new NPPF was also accompanied by a requirement for local planning authorities to produce an up-to-date LDS by 6 March 2025. Blaby's LDS is therefore being updated to meet this requirement.

The revised LDS, attached at Appendix A, contains the timetable with estimated timescales and milestones associated with preparing the new Local Plan and covers the period up to 2026. It supersedes the LDS agreed by Council on 25 July 2023.

While the preparation of evidence and engagement with stakeholders for the emerging Local Plan is ongoing, in particular in response to the new NPPF, and delayed HNRFI decision, it is considered that the revised LDS timetable at Appendix A showing consultation on the Publication Version (the document that the Council considers ready for examination) in Summer 2025 and submission in December 2025.

4.2 Proposal(s)

That the Revised Blaby District Local Development Scheme (Appendix A to this Report) be approved and shall take effect from 25 February 2025.

4.3 Relevant Consultations

Internal consultations have been undertaken as appropriate. Legislation does not require public consultation on this matter. The details of proposed public consultations on development plan documents are set out in the revised LDS. The LDS will be published on the council website.

4.4 Significant Issues

Legal Implications

The Council has to comply with the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended), which requires local planning authorities to prepare and maintain an LDS. Failing to respond to the Secretary of State's request to produce and submit an updated LDS by 6 March 2025 could breach the legal requirement to prepare and maintain an LDS.

Human Resource Implications

The Development Strategy Team remains fully staffed at present, having previously operated with significantly reduced capacity for a considerable period. However, to progress the Local Plan on schedule, contributions will be required from other teams within the Council at the appropriate stages of Plan preparation.

In preparing this report, the author has considered issues related to Human Rights, Equalities, and Public Health Inequalities and there are no areas of concern. As the amendments to the LDS relate to the timetable rather than policies and proposals within the Local Plan, there are no Equality or Human Rights implications identified. However, the Local Plan that is produced in accordance with the LDS will require an impact assessment, which will be completed at the time of production.

5. Environmental impact

No Net Zero and Climate Impact Assessment (NZCIA) is required for this report because this report is for a timetable for producing documents that will be subject to their own environmental impact assessments.

- 5.1 The Local Plan sets out the blueprint for growth and change for the District. It is accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulation Assessment Screening. The Local Development Scheme sets the timetable for producing the Local Plan and therefore has indirect environmental consequences on the built and natural environment. The LDS informs the rate at which new policies and potential allocations are brought forward. This has indirect environmental impacts because it is the policies in the Local Plan that will seek to protect the built, historic and natural environment, and the proposed allocations can also have direct impacts on the environment.

6. What will it cost and are there opportunities for savings?

- 6.1 The costs for Local Plan preparation, including staffing, are already allowed for in the budget for 2024/25 and forecasted for 2025/26 budget. Beyond this the Council has an allocated Reserves budget for the Local Plan process which will take account of the need for any further expenses should these be incurred in relation to preparing the new Local Plan.

Opportunities to save money will continue to be considered throughout the preparation of the new Local Plan, including pursuing joint working with neighbouring authorities on suitable evidence base work, where possible.

7. What are the risks and how can they be reduced?

7.1

Current Risk	Actions to reduce the risks
Staff turnover / loss / long term absence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide appropriate training to encourage staff retention. 2. Provide a varied workload to keep staff engaged and motivated. 3. Recruitment to commence as soon as the current post holder submits their notice (subject to available funding). 4. Employ agency staff/ consultants to cover periods of absence (subject to available funding). 5. Re-deploy suitable staff from the Development Services Team should opportunities arise.
Evidence gathering delays	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. The Local Plan relies on substantial evidence on a range of issues. 7. Provide resources and funding to complete evidence gathering. 8. Encourage early engagement to secure evidence.
Web accessibility / GIS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Implementing service plan and transformation programme and working with support services to remove blockages
Ongoing changes to the national planning guidance and transition period.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Monitor Government statements to pre-empt legislation and policy changes. 11. Take a flexible policy approach where appropriate. 12. Transitional arrangements in emerging statute and legislation
Competing work priorities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. Recognise importance of Local Plan. 14. Monitor progress and give priority to milestones in the Local Development Scheme. 15. Bring in additional resources if needed.
Cross boundary strategic issues in the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 16. Officers will continue to remain engaged in discussions with colleagues from across the authorities in Leicester and Leicestershire to understand any implications there may be for Blaby District, and take action as appropriate in a timely manner. The

	new Local Plan will take account of and plan for any emerging cross boundary strategic issues in Leicester and Leicestershire
Examination Process – Soundness of DPDs.	17. Work closely with Ministry for Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG) and the Planning Inspectorate (PINS). 18. Follow procedures set out in the Planning Acts, Regulations, NPPF and the Planning Practice Guidance.
Duty to Co-operate failure	19. Continue to work with local authorities within the Housing Market Area and other partners on strategic, cross boundary matters and prepare Statements of Common Grounds, as appropriate.
NPPF revisions (including increased housing numbers)	20. Continuing to update evidential studies to take into account the changing circumstances.
Local Government Reorganisation	21. Recognise the potential of LGR in various workstreams and the impact on the emerging plan, but to continue to progress in line with national guidance.

8. Other options considered

- 8.1 Not bringing the revised LDS into effect at this time would leave the Council without an up-to-date programme to produce Development Plan Documents. This option has been considered and rejected by Officers because the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended), requires a Local Planning Authority to prepare and maintain a Local Development Scheme. In addition, a specific request was made by the Secretary of State for local planning authorities to produce and submit an up-to-date LDS by 6 March 2025.

9. Appendix

- 9.1 Appendix A – Revised Local Development Scheme (February 2025)

10. Background paper(s)

- 10.1 Not applicable.

11. Report author's contact details

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