

Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group	
Meeting Date	9 th June 2026
Report Title	Whole Plan Viability Assessment Update Note 2026
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
SMT Lead	Joanne Johnson, Head of Place
Lead Officer	Stuart Watson, Project Manager, Planning Policy
Classification	Open
Recommendations	To note the Whole Plan Viability Assessment Update Note 2026 and to provide any comments members have on the document and its findings.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the findings of the Whole Plan Viability Assessment Update Note 2026 (Appendix I). The assessment is in draft and is being presented to members for their information and for the opportunity to provide comments early in the process.
- 1.2 The findings of this assessment set out that whilst viability within the borough has become more challenging due to increased build costs (including Government building standards and stagnated house sales values) the policy objectives of the Local Plan including affordable housing remain achievable.

2. Background

- 2.1 A [Whole Plan Viability Assessment \(WPVA\)](#) was prepared in 2024 to inform the financial achievability of the draft policy objectives of the Local Plan and to inform the deliverability of sites within the Council's Housing & Economic Land Availability Assessment. As part of ensuring that the Local Plan's policy objectives and allocated sites remain deliverable a Whole Plan Viability Assessment (WPVA) Update Note 2026 has been produced (Appendix I).
- 2.2 This WPVA 2026 update note has considered:
 - recent changes in national policy and guidance
 - policy changes in the Council's emerging Local Plan; and,
 - changes to the main inputs to the Viability Assessment (costs and values) and how that may impact viability.

- 2.3 The impacts of these changes are reflected through updated sets of viability appraisals that can be found within the assessments appendices. The Regulation 18 development management policies consulted upon in January of this year and their implications on viability are set out in chapter 6 of the assessment and relevant responses to the consultation and viability considerations for this assessment are set out in chapter 7.
- 2.4 Chapter 9 provides a concise summary including the findings and conclusions for the assessment. The adjustments made to policy costs as a result of the fresh appraisal are set out in paragraph 9.6 of the assessment. In summary the assessment states that viability has worsened since 2024, with the Residual Values being less. In terms of costs, the main changes are the BCIS¹ based build cost increase, the increase in circulation space assumptions for flatted development, and the application of the Building Safety Levy².
- 2.5 Whilst viability has worsened, given the overall context of changes in the market, the changes in national policy and the updating of the draft Local Plan, the results of the assessment are broadly similar to those presented in the WPVA 2024. This means the Council can continue to rely on the viability evidence from the WPVA 2024 and can continue with the Local Plan's policy objectives unchanged as recommended in that assessment. This includes seeking 30% affordable homes on greenfield sites and 10% affordable homes on brownfield sites. In addition, the affordable housing mix has been amended through this assessment to reflect changes in national policy with the removal of the First Homes³ requirement and to align with the findings of the Housing Market Assessment (HMA) Update 2026.
- 2.6 The Local Plan policy objectives with the amended affordable housing mix is:
- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| A. Affordable Housing: Greenfield Sites | 30%. |
| Brownfield Sites | 10% (threshold 10 units) |
| Potential Strategic Sites | 25% |
- Affordable housing mix in line with the requirements for:
- 30% Affordable Home Ownership (as Shared Ownership),
- 30% Social Rent, and

¹ Building Cost Information Service (BCIS) is a leading provider of independent cost data to the UK built environment for construction, insurance and life cycle costing.

² The Building Safety Levy applies to new residential buildings and purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) in England, as part of the regulatory framework established by the Building Safety Act 2022. Its primary goal is to fund remediation of safety defects, including cladding issues, across residential buildings. The levy is not limited to high-risk buildings; it applies broadly to qualifying developments

³ First homes offered discount rates for market homes to first time buyers as part of the overall affordable housing contribution.

40% Affordable Rent.

B. Design: 95% Part M4(2) Accessible and Adaptable and 5% Part M4(3) Wheelchair Accessible. Zero Carbon, Water Efficiency, 20% Biodiversity Net Gain.

C. Developer Contributions: Birdwise payments on all sites and open space payments on brownfield sites, plus allowance of £10,000 per unit on typologies and £25,000 per unit on the potential Strategic Sites.

3. Recommendations

3.1 To note the Whole Plan Viability Assessment Update Note 2026 and to provide any comments members have on the document and its findings.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

4.1 The matters in this report concern informing members on the development of the Local Plan evidence base.

4.2 Members could choose not to note the Whole Plan Viability Assessment Update Note 2026. However, choosing this option should be rejected as the evidence will provide a robust and updated position for policy drafting and the Local Plan examination in public.

5. Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

5.1 No formal consultation has been undertaken on the Whole Plan Viability Assessment Update Note 2026 as it forms part of the evidence base of the Local Plan Review. The Regulation 19 Local Plan will be subject to a period of formal consultation at which point comments will be invited on the Plan, its policies and the supporting evidence base.

6. Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	The proposals in the report align with the following Corporate Plan action: • A Local Plan with local needs and capacity at its heart.

Financial, Resource and Property	The Local Plan work program is fully funded across a combination of base budget, committed reserves and a contribution from the Government's Local Plans Delivery Fund.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	No implications identified at this stage
Crime and Disorder	No implications identified at this stage.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	The Whole Plan Viability Assessment update note 2026 sets out that the Local Plans innovate policies on climate change are achievable. The policies include: • Sustainable design and adaptation principles, • Net zero operational carbon in new build residential development, • Net zero operational carbon in new build non-domestic development, • Embodied carbon and waste and • Renewable energy development and infrastructure.
Health and Wellbeing	No implications identified at this stage.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	No implications identified at this stage.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	No implications identified at this stage.
Equality and Diversity	No implications identified at this stage.
Privacy and Data Protection	No implications identified at this stage.
Local Government Reorganisation	The current Local Plan timetable expects the Local Plan to be submitted for its Examination in Public and to be adopted before local government reorganisation is expected to be complete.

7. Appendices

Appendix I: Whole Plan Viability Assessment Update Note 2026

8. Background Documents

8.1 Whole Plan Viability Assessment 2024

[2024 Whole Plan Viability Assessment.pdf](#)