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Members of Peterborough City Council's Planning and Environmental Protection Committee have agreed to recommend to Cabinet a deferral of the process to agree a new Local Plan to allow time to consider a government announcement which could impact on how the city measures its housing need.

The city council published the Proposed Submission Local Plan, which sets out the future development of Peterborough and surrounding areas, on 11 September 2017. It was the culmination of a process which began in July 2015 and has seen dozens of sites assessed and hundreds of residents commenting on proposals.

However, at the meeting of the Planning and Environmental Protection Committee today (Tuesday 19 September) at Peterborough Town Hall, members were asked to consider a recommendation from the Corporate Director for Growth and Regeneration, Simon Machen, to put on hold the process to agree a new Local Plan. This is to allow officers to consider the new government consultation document entitled 'Planning for the right homes in the right places' and the impact this could have on calculating the city's future housing need.

Speaking at the meeting, Richard Kay, the city council's head of sustainable growth and delivery, explained: "In that consultation is a proposed new standard method for calculating the housing need of a district, a method which would replace the costly and varying methods currently applied by different councils, Peterborough included.

"On initial analysis, this appears to demonstrate that the housing need for Peterborough is less than that currently identified in the Local Plan. The precise difference needs calculating, but we believe it to result in between 1,000 and 2,000 less dwellings, and likely at the upper end of that range.

"Subject to detailed consideration, officers believe the new method appears, in principle, sensible and practical. Using the new method, with its lower housing numbers, will likely mean one or more sites as recommended being removed."

The recommendation put before Planning Committee asked members to recommend to Cabinet that the Proposed Submission ('Publication Draft') Local Plan be deferred for a period of two to three months, to enable officers to (a) fully appraise the new method for calculating housing need, and (b) bring back to members a revised housing target and a subsequent revised set of proposed allocations.

Members supported the recommendation unanimously.

The council's Scrutiny Committee for Growth, Environment and Resources will be asked to consider the same recommendation at its meeting tomorrow (Wednesday 20 September). Cabinet will then consider the recommendations at its meeting on Monday 25 September.