

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK EXECUTIVE PANEL – 29  
MARCH 2012

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR PLANNING POLICY AND  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGIC LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT (SLAA) NEXT  
STEPS PROGRESS REPORT

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

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**Purpose/Summary of Report**

- This report sets out progress on the Next Steps in the ongoing Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) technical work that will inform the East Herts Local Development Framework (District Plan) and housing trajectory.

<b><u>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PANEL:</u> to commend to Council (via Executive: that</b>	
<b>(A)</b>	<b>the SLAA sites being assessed under the initial officer assessment, attached at Essential Reference Paper B, be noted; and</b>
<b>(B)</b>	<b>the SLAA Next Steps, be amended to omit ‘Stage 2: LDF Executive Panel Ratification’, attached at Essential Reference Paper C, and stakeholders be engaged directly following completion of the initial officer assessment.</b>

1.0 Background

1.1 The Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) identifies potential sites for development in the district and gives a technical assessment as to whether they are developable and when they could be developed. The SLAA does not make any decisions as to whether a site should be developed: that is the role of the planning system itself.

- 1.2 It is part of the proactive plan-making process and will help ensure that the Council meets its requirement to maintain a continuous five year supply of housing across the district.
- 1.3 The main output of the SLAA will be a list or database of sites that could be developed in East Herts, from which the Council can select the most sustainable and appropriate sites to be developed through the LDF and planning process.
- 1.4 At the LDF Executive Panel on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2011 Members endorsed the SLAA Next Steps, which set out the overall approach to the completion of the SLAA. Because the SLAA is an ongoing piece of work it is being undertaken in rounds:
- Round 1 (Autumn 2011) - *strategic context and site specific information gathering* [Completed - September 2011]
  - Round 2 (Winter 2011/12) - *assessment of sites within settlement boundaries*
  - Round 3 (Spring 2012) - *assessment of sites outside settlement boundaries*
  - Round 4 (Ongoing) - *annual review of SLAA*
- 1.5 Round 2 considers those sites where there is currently no in-principle objection to their development i.e. they are located within the development boundaries of the Six Main Settlements and Category 1 Villages.
- 1.6 Within each round, it was proposed that the following approach would be followed. The new approach is set out in Part 2 of this report.
- *Stage 1: Initial Assessment* - Undertaken by officers, sites will be assessed against the SLAA criteria. Each criterion will be assessed to determine whether, based on the information available, it is reasonable to assume it is deliverable.
  - *Stage 2: LDF Executive Panel Ratification* - The initial officer assessment of the SLAA sites will then be considered by the LDF Executive Panel in order to seek authorisation to engage stakeholders and seek comments on the officers' initial assessment.
  - *Stage 3: Stakeholder Engagement* - stakeholders including town and parish councils, East Herts District Councillors, and members of the SLAA Partnership will be asked to comment over a specified four-week period on the officers' initial

assessment, bearing in mind the assessment criteria.

- *Stage 4: Publication of Final Report* - Comments received will be taken on board and amendments made, as appropriate, before a final SLAA report is published. This report will be subject to endorsement by East Herts District Council.

## 2.0 Report

2.1 East Herts Council has given priority to the preparation of its LDF (District Plan) and is committed to a challenging timescale to achieving this, having the Preferred Strategy in place in July 2012, ready for public consultation in September (see Agenda Items 5 and 6 on the panel Agenda dated 29<sup>th</sup> March 2012 on the Local Development Scheme, and LDF Core Strategy Approach, Technical Work and Next Steps, respectively).

2.2 The SLAA is a key piece of technical work that will inform the preparation of the LDF (District Plan). As such, Round 2 (the assessment of sites within settlement boundaries) needs to be complete before July 2012.

2.3 To achieve this challenging deadline, it is proposed that the approach set out in the SLAA Next Steps be amended to omit Stage 2: LDF Panel ratification. This is considered appropriate since *all* East Herts Council Members will be consulted in Round 3: Stakeholder Engagement, along with town and parish councils (with sites within their area) and the remaining Members of the SLAA Partnership.

2.4 The new approach is as follows:

- Stage 1: Initial Assessment
- Stage 2: Stakeholder Engagement
- Stage 3: Publication of Final Report

2.5 In terms of timescales, the approach for Round 2 is set out below:

- Stage 1: Completion of Initial Officer Assessment - Early April 2012
- Stage 2: 4 weeks Stakeholder Engagement - Late April / Early May 2012
- Stage 3: Agreement of Final Report - Mid June 2012

- 2.6 Stakeholders will of course be notified prior to the commencement of the 4 week engagement period. As previously agreed, hard copies of the assessments will not be sent to stakeholders directly. Instead, all information will be made available on the Council website, as well as being available at the Council offices in Hertford and Bishop's Stortford. It should also be noted that the purpose of the stakeholder engagement is not to make general comments about the sites but to comment on the assessment of the sites against the agreed SLAA Assessment criteria.
- 2.7 It is envisaged that an additional LDF Executive Panel will be held in Mid June to enable Members to consider Round 2 of the SLAA and use its findings to inform the East Herts LDF (District Plan).
- 2.8 For information, the SLAA sites that are being assessed under Stage 1 are attached at **Essential Reference Paper B**. This includes additional sites listed in the Council's housing trajectory (i.e. those with planning permission) to check the likelihood of them coming forward for development. It should also be noted that the site areas of some SLAA sites have been amended, e.g. where Call for Sites and Housing Capacity Assessment sites overlapped.
- 2.9 The revised SLAA Next steps is attached at **Essential Reference Paper C**. This document has been updated including the revision to the stages set out above.
- 2.10 It should be reiterated that the SLAA is about providing a more realistic assessment as to whether a particular site **could** be developed. It is **not** about making a decision about whether a site **should** be developed.
- 3.0 Implications/Consultations
- 3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

### Background Papers

- Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3), CLG, June 2010
- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments Practice Guidance, CLG, July 2007

LDF Executive Panel Reports:

- Local Development Framework Executive Panel 7<sup>th</sup> July 2011 -  
Agenda Item 9: Strategic Land Availability assessment (SLAA)  
Project Plan and Establishment of SLAA Partnership  
[http://online.eastherts.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?  
CId=151&MId=1708&Ver=4](http://online.eastherts.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=151&MId=1708&Ver=4)

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## ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'A'

<p>Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives (delete as appropriate):</p>	<p><b>Promoting prosperity and well-being; providing access and opportunities</b> <i>Enhance the quality of life, health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, particularly those who are vulnerable.</i></p> <p><b>Pride in East Herts</b> <i>Improve standards of the built neighbourhood and environmental management in our towns and villages.</i></p> <p><b>Shaping now, shaping the future</b> <i>Safeguard and enhance our unique mix of rural and urban communities, ensuring sustainable, economic and social opportunities including the continuation of effective development control and other measures.</i></p> <p><b>Leading the way, working together</b> <i>Deliver responsible community leadership that engages with our partners and the public.</i></p>
<p>Consultation:</p>	<p>Engagement with appropriate stakeholders as required.</p>
<p>Legal:</p>	<p>N/a</p>
<p>Financial:</p>	<p>LDF technical work is being funded from the Planning Policy / LDF Upkeep Budgets.</p>
<p>Human Resource:</p>	<p>Existing Planning Policy staff resources will undertake this study.</p>
<p>Risk Management:</p>	<p>In order to be found sound at examination, it is essential that the Core Strategy should be based on a robust evidence base.</p>