

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

DISTRICT PLANNING EXECUTIVE PANEL - 26 JULY 2012

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING
AND TRANSPORT

DISTRICT PLAN PART 1 – STRATEGY SUPPORTING DOCUMENT –
MATERIAL CHANGES TO DRAFT TOPIC ASSESSMENTS

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- This report details proposed updates concerning material changes made to the Draft Topic Assessments, which will form part of the emerging Supporting Document to the draft District Plan: Part 1 - Strategy. These updates replace the iterations that were reported to the Local Development Framework Executive Panel on 29th March 2012.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISTRICT PLANNING EXECUTIVE
PANEL AND EXECUTIVE: That:**

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| (A) | the Material Changes to the Draft Topic Assessments attached at Essential Reference Paper 'B' be supported as replacements to those reported to the Local Development Framework Executive Panel on 29 March 2012; and |
| (B) | their use be supported as an element of the emerging Supporting Document to the draft District Plan: Part 1 – Strategy. |

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNCIL: That:

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|------------|---|
| (A) | the Material Changes to the Draft Topic Assessments attached at Essential Reference Paper 'B' be agreed as replacements to those reported to the Local Development Framework Executive Panel on 29 March 2012; and |
| (B) | these be used as an element of the emerging Supporting Document to the draft District Plan: Part 1 – Strategy. |

1.0 Background

- 1.1 A set of 22 Draft Topic Assessments were reported to the Local Development Framework Executive Panel (now the District Planning Executive Panel) on 29 March 2012 as part of the consideration of Agenda Item 6: Local Development Framework Core Strategy: Approach, Technical Work and Next Steps. The Topic Assessments are intended to form part of Chapter 3 of the final Supporting Document to the draft District Plan: Part 1 – Strategy and involve the application of specific criteria for each of the 22 (now 21 – see paragraph 2.7 below) subject areas. This results in ‘traffic lights’ being assigned to each Area of Search, or Sub-Area, as appropriate.
- 1.2 At the meeting, the Panel was asked to note that the traffic light assessments within Essential Reference Paper ‘D’ to that Agenda represented work in progress and that any factual inaccuracies or typographical errors should be notified to the Planning Policy Team by 16 April 2012. The Panel Chairman implored all Members to use their local knowledge and to advise Officers of any factual inaccuracies by e-mail.

2.0 Report

- 2.1 Since the Local Development Framework Executive Panel meeting on 29 March 2012, various comments have been received by the Planning Policy Team both from Members and other interested members of the public. In addition to these sources of information, the Planning Policy Team has also identified areas for revision in light of further information that has become available in the interim.
- 2.2 It was agreed at the Panel on 29 March that only material changes would be reported for endorsement and to this end several minor changes to the text that do not affect the ‘traffic light’ rating have also been made. These are generally insignificant alterations that do not require bringing before the Panel as these were agreed previously to be delegated to officers (but will be available to the Panel to assess in the final draft version of the document prior to public consultation taking place).
- 2.3 A schedule of the proposed material change revisions to the Draft Topic Assessments is included at **Essential Reference Paper ‘B’**. This includes details of those formerly proposed ‘traffic light’ assessments that have been subject to change and the revised

versions now proposed. In each case the reason for the change has been explained.

- 2.4 It should be noted that the assessment criteria for the 'Land Availability' Topic Assessment has been slightly amended. The traffic light assessment for this topic is based on a planning assumption regarding the scale and density of growth at each different type of area of search. Following further consideration of these assumptions, the assessment criteria for areas of search located on the edge of existing settlements (excluding Bishop's Stortford North), has been changed from assessing land availability for 500 dwellings at a density of 20 dwellings per hectare (dph) to 25dph. This density is considered to be a more realistic planning assumption for development of this scale. The amendment to the assessment criteria has resulted in a small number of changes to the traffic lights assigned and these are included in **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**.
- 2.5 However, in addition to these material changes, there have been a number of other revisions. In respect of Highways Infrastructure, the red traffic light criteria has been amended to reinforce the reasons behind the application of the criteria and to avoid potential ambiguity. This amendment has not resulted in any material changes within that Topic Assessment.
- 2.6 Additionally, a large revision to the supporting text of the 'Noise Impacts' Topic Assessment has also been necessitated which has significantly changed the form in which it previously appeared on the agenda. This is to avoid the ambiguity and imprecision around the concept of 'flight paths', which do not directly address the issue of noise. Instead, mapped noise contours have been used. These changes to the text have also involved some alterations to the previous assessment criteria, although not necessarily to the actual traffic lights assigned. Therefore, in this instance, the whole of the new version of the supporting text has been added at the foot of the material changes schedule.
- 2.7 Additionally, it should be noted that the Maintaining Tranquillity Topic Assessment (which assessed noise and light impacts) has been deleted in its entirety. The reasons for this are, firstly, that there was a potential that noise issue considerations could be duplicated, given that these matters are largely covered in the Noise Impacts Topic Assessment. Secondly, further consideration of the light implications revealed that, in addition to these issues not being particularly measurable (e.g. where sports

facilities operate flood-lighting sporadically), the County Council's decision to implement its policy of part-night operation of street-lights later this year could have the potential to significantly affect the ratings going forward in the assessment process. A note has been added to the end of the Noise Impact assessment to draw attention to tranquillity as a planning issue, which will be considered at a more appropriate stage later in the strategy selection process.

- 2.8 It should be noted that, in the event that further material changes are deemed necessary, these will be reported to the Panel in due course.

Conclusion

- 2.9 As agreed at the Local Development Framework Panel - 29 March 2012, proposed revisions to the Draft Topic Assessments have been undertaken, in order to reflect the application of appropriate information received and to present a better informed final document.

- 2.10 A schedule of material changes to the traffic light assessments is included at **Essential Reference Paper 'B'** to this report.

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

Report to Local Development Framework Executive Panel - 29th March 2012 Agenda Item 6: Local Development Framework Core Strategy: Approach, Technical Work and Next Steps

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