

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:  
UPDATE REPORT

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

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**Purpose/Summary of Report**

- This report reminds Members of the work already agreed on the District Plan strategy selection process, and provides an update on minor changes to the proposed methodology and document content. It also seeks comments on a proposed Appendix to the Strategy Supporting Document, focusing on suggested additions to the list of documents which will be considered as part of the evidence base.

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

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|------------|--|
| <b>(A)</b> | <b>Essential Reference Paper ‘B’, containing the latest version of the 1-page summary of the Stepped Approach to strategy selection for the District Plan, be supported; and</b> |
| <b>(B)</b> | <b>the approach to the Audit Trail, be supported, subject to a period for Member comment on proposed Appendix B: Documents and Feedback, until 31<sup>st</sup> August 2012.</b>  |

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## 1.0 Background

1.1 The Local Development Framework Executive Panel meeting on 29th March considered the recommendations at Agenda Item 26: Local Development Framework Core Strategy: Approach, Technical Work and Next Steps. These recommendations were subsequently agreed by the Executive and Full Council on 4th April.

1.2 The main items agreed by the Council in relation to this report were as follows:

- Stepped Approach to Strategy Selection
- District Plan Draft Supporting Document [Chapters 1, 2, and 3 only]
- Areas of Search
- Topic Assessments

### **Stepped Approach to Strategy Selection**

1.3 The report explained that, given the need for transparency in the strategy selection process, together with the need to simplify a complex set of considerations across a large number of areas, a stepped approach to project management is required. This approach means that work in progress will need to be considered by the Council, prior to full public consultation. A one-page summary of the stepped approach showed how the process of strategy selection was anticipated to unfold.

### **Draft Supporting Document**

1.4 Chapter 1 of the Draft Supporting Document explained the statutory framework for plan-making, including the scope of District Plans and Neighbourhood Plans, infrastructure planning, and sustainability appraisal. Chapter 2 set out the scope of strategic planning considerations under headings including housing, economy, education, and so on. It also explained the Areas of Search and Topic Assessments.

### **Areas of Search**

1.5 Chapter 3 explained that in order to ensure that all reasonable alternatives were properly considered, it was first necessary to define areas for assessment, and then to make some reasonable assumptions about the possible scale of development at each area. 69 areas of search were identified, covering 37 villages, areas at or adjacent to the towns, and considering options for new settlements.

## **Topic Assessments**

- 1.6 22 topic assessments were presented. These were split into two main parts:
- A first part including a justification of the topic based on the draft National Planning Policy Framework, an explanation of the proposed assessment criteria, comments on the sources of evidence, and general comments providing further explanation as required;
  - A second part consisting of assessment of each of the 69 areas of search against the criteria, resulting in a traffic-light rating for each area.

## 2.0 Report

- 2.1 As explained above, whilst the direction of travel in terms of the approach and strategy selection process is clear, the details are work in progress at this stage. A number of simplifications and clarifications are proposed to the process previously agreed, as shown in **Essential Reference Paper 'B': A Stepped Approach to Strategy Selection for the District**.

## **Audit Trail**

- 2.2 A large amount of information must be considered as part of the strategy selection process, because of the number of development options which must be considered, as well as the number and complexity of the issues. In order to maintain transparency in the strategy selection process without overwhelming the reader, it is proposed to summarise the evidence base in a series of appendices, which will also be made available as part of the public consultation.
- 2.3 At this stage, two appendices are proposed, although others may be added to support work on Chapters 5 and 6.
- **Appendix A: Topic Assessments** will present all 1,500 'traffic light' assessments, i.e. the second part of the assessment as explained in Section 1.6. The agreed topic assessment criteria (i.e. the first part) will form the content of Chapter 3.
  - **Appendix B: Documents and Feedback** will present summaries of the key documents and feedback received from the Issues and Options consultation in autumn 2010.

- 2.4 Members have already agreed the Topic Assessments, subject to agreement of the Material Changes (Agenda Item 9).
- 2.5 It is proposed that, for an agreed period following the meeting, Member comments can be submitted on proposed Appendix B. Comments should focus on suggested additions to the list of documents, for consideration as part of the evidence base, underpinning the strategy selection process. Comments should be emailed to [planningpolicy@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@eastherts.gov.uk)
- 2.6 Explanation of how to view Appendix B is contained in the 'Background Papers' section below.

### **Sieve Assessment – Chapters 4, 5, and 6**

- 2.7 For Chapters 4, 5, and 6 of the strategy selection process, an additional aspect to the methodology is proposed, in order to begin to narrow down the very large number of areas considered at the outset of the strategy selection process.
- 2.8 The starting point for this process is the degree of confidence with which development at a particular location is considered either suitable or not suitable. If there is a high level of confidence early on that a particular area is not suitable, then it is not necessary to conduct exhaustive further investigation of that area. If, on the other hand, there are no clear grounds for rejection based on a particular assessment technique, it will then be necessary to use further techniques.
- 2.9 Examples of techniques making up the successive rounds of assessment are as follows:
- Criteria-based assessment
  - Evaluation of key strategic issues
  - Landscape and settlement character assessment
  - Environmental assessment
  - Transport modelling
  - Jobs growth forecasting
  - Infrastructure assessment
  - Financial viability assessment
  - Risk assessment
  - Assessment of compliance with the National Planning Policy Framework
- 2.10 It is likely that each of these techniques will result in sufficient accumulated evidence to enable one or more of the areas to be

rejected. Akin to a sieving process, some areas will drop out with each assessment stage. Each shake of the sieve represents a round of assessment. In strategic planning this process is therefore commonly known as 'sieve assessment', and is shown in **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**.

### 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

- Appendix B: Documents and Consultation Feedback:  
Available online at [www.eastherts.gov.uk/districtplan](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/districtplan). Paper copies will be available for inspection at the Council's receptions at both Hertford and Bishop's Stortford.
- Report to Local Development Framework Executive Panel - 29<sup>th</sup> March 2012 Agenda Item 26: Local Development Framework Core Strategy: Approach, Technical Work and Next Steps
- Report to Local Development Framework Executive Panel - 7<sup>th</sup> July 2011 Agenda Item 6: LDF Core Strategy: Responses to Issues and Options Public Consultation

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