

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

DISTRICT PLANNING EXECUTIVE PANEL – 25 FEBRUARY 2016

REPORT BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

STRATEGIC LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT UPDATE REPORT

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- This report presents an update on the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA)

RECOMMENDATION FOR DISTRICT PLANNING EXECUTIVE PANEL: That Council, via the Executive, be advised that:

(A)	the SLAA Round 3 site assessments, and the ongoing process for completing the SLAA, be noted.
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1.0 Background

1.1 National planning policy requires all Local Planning Authorities to produce a technical study known as the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) in order to identify sites with potential for future development. The results of the SLAA are intended to inform ongoing work on the District Plan and Neighbourhood Planning, along with the identification of future land supply.

1.2 This report seeks to present:

- The methodology for undertaking a SLAA as outlined by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG);
- An explanation of previous work undertaken including the Call for Sites and Rounds 1 and 2 of the SLAA;
- The final site assessments for Round 3;
- The process for undertaking Round 4 and completion of the final SLAA report.

2.0 Report

Methodology

- 2.1 Paragraphs 019 to 021 of the PPG identify that, when undertaking a SLAA, sites should be considered against three criteria, namely; suitability, availability and achievability. These terms are explained below.

Suitability

The assessment of suitability takes into account a range of policy constraints. These include environmental and heritage designations, impact on landscape and character, flooding and Green Belt / Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt.

Availability

A site is considered to be available if there are no legal or ownership issues which would prevent the site coming forward for development.

Achievability

Achievability is effectively a judgement about the economic viability of a site, and the capacity of the developer to complete the development over a certain period of time.

- 2.2 Having assessed each site against the three criteria, a conclusion can be reached. If a site is considered to be suitable, available and achievable, then it is regarded as being '**deliverable**'. This means that development could commence on site within five years.
- 2.3 A site is considered '**developable**' if development could commence at a later point in time (i.e. not within five years). The fact that a site is not immediately deliverable could be due to a range of factors including existing policy constraints and land ownership issues. Where this is the case, the Local Planning Authority should identify the issues that need to be overcome in order to facilitate development.
- 2.4 Finally, a site that is neither deliverable nor developable is not considered to be appropriate for development at any point in time.

- 2.5 It is important to note that the SLAA assesses whether a site **could** come forward for development, not whether it **should**. In formulating the development strategy for the District other factors should be considered, in particular the need to promote sustainable patterns of development.

The Call for Sites and SLAA Rounds 1 and 2

- 2.6 The Planning Policy team commenced a Call for Sites in 2009. Through this process, landowners, developers and site promoters were encouraged to submit sites to the Council that they felt could be suitable for future development. Since 2009 the Call for Sites has remained open, and sites have continued to be submitted on a regular basis. All sites received have been fed into the SLAA process.
- 2.7 In addition to the Call for Sites, a Housing Capacity Study was undertaken in 2007. Sites identified through this process have also been considered in the SLAA.
- 2.8 An initial SLAA report was produced in 2012. This report, which formed Rounds 1 and 2 of the process, presented the assessments for those sites located within existing settlement boundaries. The report was presented to this Panel on 28th November 2012 and is available to view using the link under 'Background Papers' at the end of this report.
- 2.9 Following the completion of Rounds 1 and 2, the Planning Policy team had to prioritise other key areas of work in order to progress the District Plan to the Preferred Options stage in 2014, and towards a Pre-Submission consultation later this year.

SLAA Round 3

- 2.10 Work on Round 3 of the SLAA took place in the second half of 2015. Primarily, this stage provides an assessment of sites in rural areas. An informal stakeholder consultation was undertaken between 15th December and 1st February 2016, during which Ward Members, site promoters, Parish Councils and Neighbourhood Planning Groups were invited to comment on the draft site assessments.
- 2.11 Comments received during this period have been analysed, and amendments to the site assessments have been made where considered appropriate. A schedule of comments and officer

responses can be found in **Essential Reference Paper B**. The amended assessments for all sites in Round 3 can be found in **Essential Reference Paper C**, while maps showing the locations of the sites are presented in **Essential Reference Paper D**.

- 2.12 While the District Plan does not seek to allocate sites for development in the villages, the site assessments have been used to inform the content of the emerging Village Hierarchy Study. It is also intended that the assessments will inform Neighbourhood Plans where these are being progressed.

SLAA Round 4 and Final Report

- 2.13 A number of sites still need to be assessed. In the main, these are sites on the edge of the main settlements. However in addition, the sites that formed Rounds 1 and 2 also need to be re-assessed in order to ensure that the information previously presented is still up to date and that the assessments reflect the requirements of updated national planning guidance.
- 2.14 This further work will take place in Round 4. It is currently envisaged that a stakeholder consultation will be undertaken on draft assessments in Spring 2016. Following that, a final comprehensive version of the SLAA containing all sites will be completed prior to undertaking a Pre-Submission consultation on the District Plan.

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

- Strategic Land Availability Assessment Rounds 1 and 2:
<http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/slaa>
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>)
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) (General)
(<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/>)

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