



**East Herts  
Local Development Framework**

# **Strategic Land Availability Assessment**

## **Project Plan**

**July 2011**

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## 1.0 Background and Purpose

### Purpose

- 1.1 This Project Plan sets out the Council's approach to preparing its Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA); a piece of ongoing technical research that will inform the East Herts Local Development Framework (LDF) in respect of land supply and assist, as appropriate, in determining planning applications. It is part of the proactive plan-making process that will shape the future of East Herts to 2031, by considering the future needs of the district in terms of the availability of land.
- 1.2 It should be noted that the 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. The main output will be a list or database of sites that could be developed in East Herts.
- 1.3 Broadly speaking, the SLAA is a survey and assessment of potential sites for development. It provides information from which decisions can be made on how much development to put where and helps reveal the extent to which greenfield and Green Belt land may be needed to meet the district's housing requirement. As such, the site search must be as wide ranging as possible and the Council cannot pick and choose which sites to include. It is expected that the SLAA will identify far more land than required. Thus, the SLAA provides a pool of sites from which the Council can select the most sustainable and appropriate sites to be developed through the LDF and planning process. As such, the SLAA does not automatically rule out sites currently designated as Green Belt. Such sites may however, be ruled out on these grounds during the LDF process.

### Relationship to LDF

- 1.4 The SLAA will inform two key Development Plan Documents (DPD) or policy documents in the East Herts LDF: the Core Strategy and Site Allocations. As the overarching strategic policy document which will shape the future of the district to 2031, the Core Strategy is being prepared first. Importantly however, the Core Strategy will not deal with specific sites: it will simply identify broad locations that are suitable for development. The SLAA is crucial, therefore, in demonstrating that there are sufficient sites within each broad location to deliver the objectives and development requirements in the Core Strategy.
- 1.5 Following preparation of the Core Strategy, the SLAA will then be used to identify which sites should actually be allocated for development in the Site Allocations DPD. Allocating sites for development is an intrinsic part of the plan-making process and enables to Council to effectively manage development and pro-actively shape how the district will change over the plan period. It gives certainty to both developers and communities in knowing which sites will be developed. It is important to understand however, that there will be a time-lag between the adoption of the Core Strategy and the adoption of the Site Allocations document, during which time the SLAA will be used to provide planning application advice in respect land availability.

## **SLAA or SHLAA**

- 1.6 There is no requirement for East Herts Council to produce a SLAA. There is only a requirement to ensure a continuous supply of housing land by preparing a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment or SHLAA. However, acknowledging the wider spatial objectives of the planning system, East Herts Council has opted to prepare a SLAA to look at land supply for all development including employment, retail, leisure and community uses, rather than just prepare a SHLAA in respect of housing.
- 1.7 Having said that, it is acknowledged that the SLAA will be housing orientated. There are three reasons for this. Firstly, it reflects the actual requirement to prepare a SHLAA and ensure continuous delivery of housing for at least 15 years<sup>1</sup>, as required by Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3)<sup>2</sup>. Secondly, it recognises that the majority of sites will be for residential development, reflecting the differing need and demand for various land uses. Finally, it appreciates that in many instances employment, retail, leisure and community uses will come forward on sites as part of a housing or housing-led mixed-use scheme.
- 1.8 The SHLAA Practice Guidance<sup>3</sup>, which sets out a standard methodology for assessing land availability which this Project Plan follows, does also refer to co-ordinating the SHLAA with other evidence gathering exercises such as the employment land review.<sup>4</sup> The intention, therefore, for non-housing uses is not necessarily to ensure a continuous supply of land but to ensure that there is sufficient land available in suitable locations to meet the needs of East Herts.
- 1.9 In respect of housing, the Government's objective is to ensure that the planning system delivers a flexible, responsive supply of land for housing.<sup>5</sup> The purpose of the SHLAA (SLAA) is to identify sites in and around settlements with potential for housing; assess their housing potential; and assess when they are likely to be developed. The overall aim of the SHLAA (SLAA) is to:
1. Produce a list of sites, cross referenced to maps showing locations and boundaries of specific sites or broad locations;
  2. Assess the deliverability/developability of each site (suitability; availability; and achievability) to determine when an identified site is realistically expected to be developed;
  3. Estimate the potential quantity of housing a site could accommodate;
  4. Identify the constraints on each site; and,
  5. Recommend on how these constraints could be overcome and when.

## **SLAA Benefits and 'Windfall Sites'**

- 1.10 The rationale for preparing a SLAA comes from the Government acknowledging that a common weakness of former local plans was that they did not address how existing residential areas will change as a consequence of infilling and redevelopment for housing, nor how the consequence of this change for social services, GP

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<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 53, Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (CLG, June 2010)

<sup>2</sup> Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (CLG, June 2010)

<sup>3</sup> Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments: Practice Guidance (CLG, 2007)

<sup>4</sup> Paragraph 19, Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments: Practice Guidance (CLG, 2007)

<sup>5</sup> Paragraph 52, Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (CLG, June 2010)

services, education or transport will be managed. This meant that there was often no planned approach to managing change in such areas. Rather, development control has had to try to cope on a purely responsive basis within overall national policy, often leading to serious delays in the provision of social infrastructure, or failure to make adequate provision for it at all, together with rising public opposition to growth<sup>6</sup>.

- 1.11 These developments that were granted permission on unidentified and therefore unallocated sites are known as ‘windfall sites’. Whilst the East Herts Local Plan 2007 includes an allowance for such sites to come forward (160 dwellings per annum), there was no certainty that this number of dwellings will actually come forward or how many would come forward in a particular location. Given this uncertainty, local planning authorities are no longer able to take a ‘windfall allowance’ into account in the LDF. But this does not matter because the SLAA will identify all sites in advance and should include what would have been known as ‘windfall sites’ (although such sites identified and assessed in a SLAA database are not windfalls, for the very reason that they have been identified).
- 1.12 It is also worth remembering that when a windfall site comes forward and planning permission is granted, it becomes a part of the housing supply and should be added to the SLAA database when it is next updated<sup>7</sup>. Thus, the SLAA is part of the pro-active plan-making process of the LDF inasmuch that because it will identify which areas will witness development it can more effectively plan for those areas.
- 1.13 A further benefit of the SLAA (as opposed to just a SHLAA) is that it will consider the availability of other land use and help ensure that sufficient land is made available to provide employment and leisure uses to support housing development.

#### **East Herts Housing Requirement**

- 1.14 It should be noted that the requirement to demonstrate a continuous five-year supply of housing originates from the original PPS3 published in November 2006, which was formulated in the context that Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) set the district housing target.
- 1.15 On 6<sup>th</sup> July 2010, the Government revoked regional strategies. However this revocation was the subject of a successful High Court challenge by a house builder in November 2010. The Government has signalled its intention to continue the process of abolishing Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) through the Localism Bill in due course but until this becomes law, the East of England Plan remains part of the statutory Development Plan for the district. Notwithstanding this, it is for local planning authorities to decide whether the Government’s intention to abolish regional strategies forms a material consideration.
- 1.16 The Localism Bill will also set out the Governments’ changes to the planning system. To date, the Government has indicated that local authorities should continue to demonstrate a continuous five year supply of housing through their SHLAAs. The Government has stated that “local planning authorities will be responsible for establishing the right level of local

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<sup>6</sup> Paragraphs 8 & 9, Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and Development Plan Document Preparation (PAS/POS, July 2008)

<sup>7</sup> Paragraph 56, Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and Development Plan Document Preparation (PAS/POS, July 2008)

housing provision in their area, and identifying a long term supply of housing land without the burden of regional housing targets.”<sup>8</sup>

- 1.17 To date, East Herts Council has not taken a decision as to the appropriate level of housing for the district. The Council consulted on its Core Strategy Issues and Options document between 2<sup>nd</sup> September and 25<sup>th</sup> November 2010. This document is based on the district wide housing figures set out in the East of England Plan 2008. It should be noted however, that the Review of the East of England Plan, published March 2010, set a lower district-wide housing figure for East Herts. Whatever figure is adopted as its housing target, it should be supported by robust up-to-date evidence.

**Disclaimer**

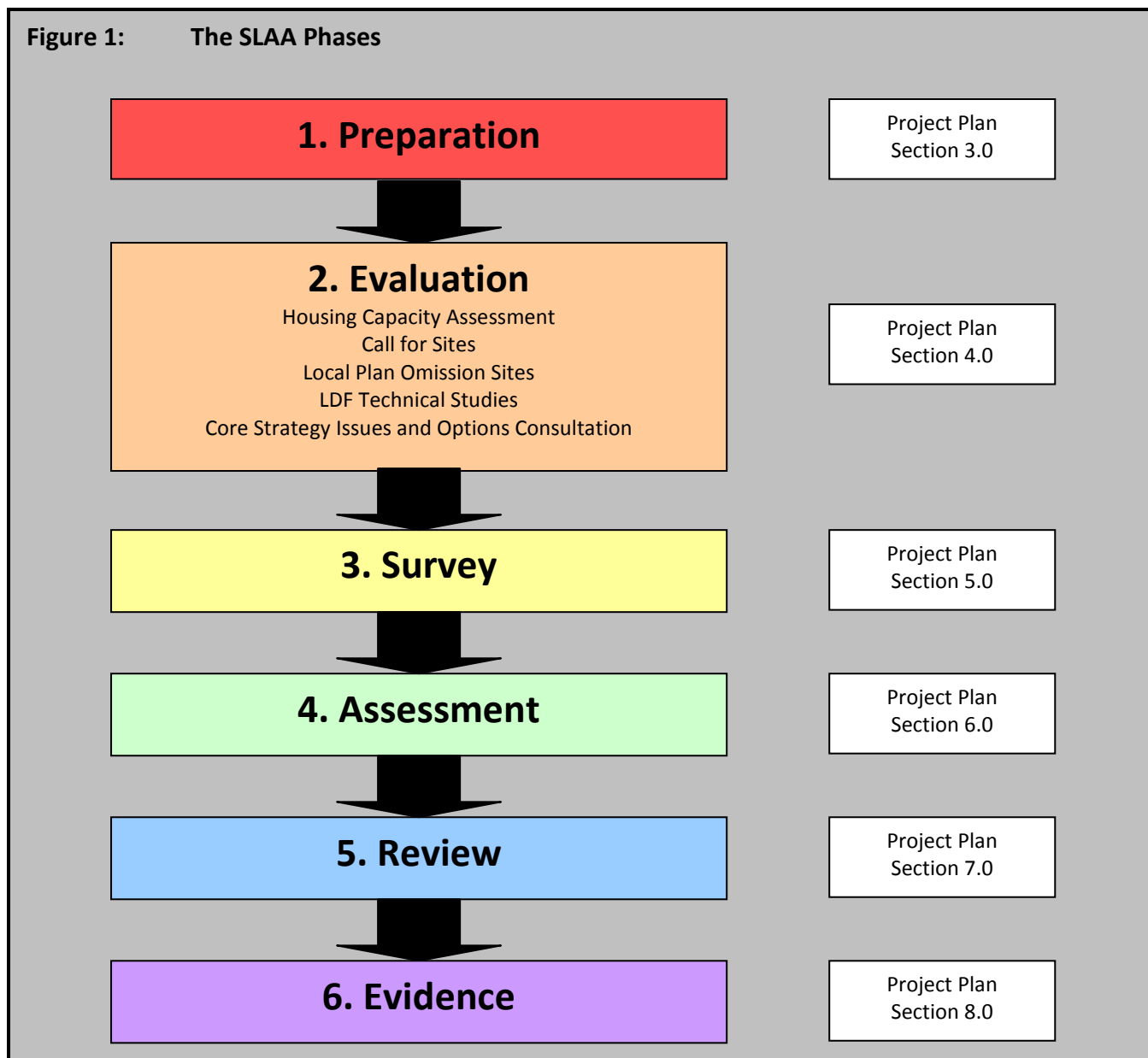
- 1.18 It is important to remember that the SLAA provides evidence to support decision making, it does not make decisions about which sites should be developed for housing through plan policy. Potential sites for new development which have been identified through the SLAA will be further tested through the plan making process for DPDs, including Sustainability Appraisal, stages of public participation and consultation, and independent examination. The completed SLAA will be an important technical document in the evidence base for the LDF, crucially in respect of demonstrating a continuous five-year supply of housing.

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<sup>8</sup> Letter to Chief Planning Officers and Accompanying Frequently Asked Questions (CLG, 6<sup>th</sup> July 2010)

## 2.0 Methodology

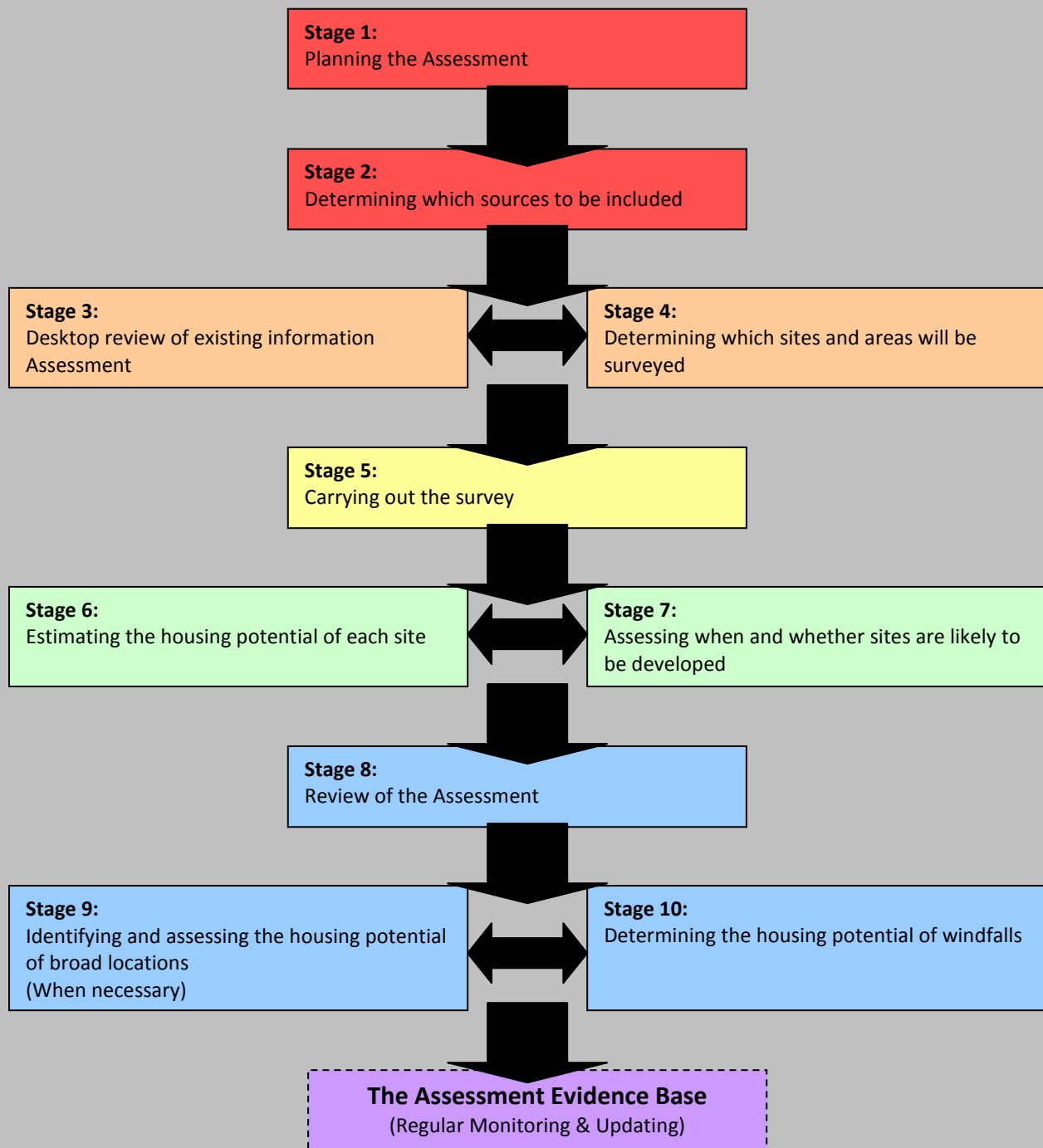
- 2.1 The process for undertaking the SLAA has been divided into six phases. These are shown in Figure 1 and explained in the subsequent sections of this Project Plan. The phases reflect the wider role and purpose of the SLAA and the fact that it is being tied into the preparation of the East Herts LDF.
- 2.2 A Summary of Tasks for each phase is set out at the end of Phases 2 - 6 (Sections 4.0 - 8.0) and in full in Appendix A. For those tasks still outstanding, anticipated dates of completion are also given. These are also shown in the Timeline in Appendix B.



- 2.3 The SLAA is concerned with the availability of *all* land uses, including housing. Because it is a requirement to assess *housing* land availability, the Government has published a standard methodology for doing so. This Project Plan, therefore, reflects that methodology as set out in Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments: Practice Guidance (July 2007). Use of

this standard methodology is strongly recommended “because it will ensure that the assessment findings are robust and transparently prepared. When followed, a local planning authority should not need to justify the methodology used in preparing its assessment, including at independent examination.”<sup>9</sup> Figure 2 shows how the standard ten-stage SHLAA methodology relates to the six phases of the SLAA.

**Figure 2: The Ten Stage Standard SHLAA Methodology**  
From SHLAA Practice Guidance (Colours relate to phases shown in Figure 1 above)



<sup>9</sup> Paragraph 15, Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments: Practice Guidance (CLG, 2007)



### **Timeline**

- 2.4 Whilst the SLAA is part of the technical evidence to inform the preparation of the East Herts LDF, it is unlike other technical studies in that there are a number of separate phases to the project that have been prepared over a number of years. The timeline for the SLAA, including the various tasks is set out in Appendix B.

### **Outputs and Monitoring**

- 2.5 The main output of the SLAA will be the SLAA database. Using Hertfordshire County Council's CDP monitoring system, the database will include a list of sites, site information such as address, characteristics and constraints, an estimation of development potential, an assessment of deliverability, and recommendations on how any identified constraints could be overcome. Each site will be accompanied by a 1:1250 or suitable scale Ordnance Survey map.
- 2.6 This information will be presented in a draft SLAA Report, which like all technical studies, will be endorsed by East Herts Council. The Council will then publish its final SLAA Report which will form part of the evidence base to inform the East Herts LDF.
- 2.7 The SLAA report will provide a robust assessment of available developable land in East Herts for the period to 2031 that will inform policy decisions in the East Herts LDF. It will also form the basis for calculating the Council's continuous five-year supply in respect of housing land as part of its housing trajectory. The intention is that the SLAA will be updated annually as part of the preparation of the Council's Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). Further information is set out in Phase 6 (Section 8.0 of this Plan).

### **SLAA and the LDF**

- 2.8 By tying the SLAA into the preparation of the Core Strategy, East Herts Council will have robust evidence as part of the formal plan-making process, as to the broad locations in East Herts that are suitable for development. Such an approach will ensure that East Herts Council is not pre-determining nor unduly constraining suitable broad locations: actions that would undermine the robustness of this piece of technical work. It will also enable co-ordination with technical work being undertaken in respect of reviewing the Green Belt across East Herts. This is important in order to ensure the robustness of any Green Belt review and the long-term endurance of Green Belt boundaries.
- 2.9 In respect of housing, the SLAA will inform the Development Strategy in the East Herts Core Strategy and help demonstrate that there are sufficient suitable sites available in the broad locations that have been identified, to meet the East Herts housing requirement. A robust supply of housing will put the Council in a strong position to reject housing in unsuitable locations.

### **Member Endorsement**

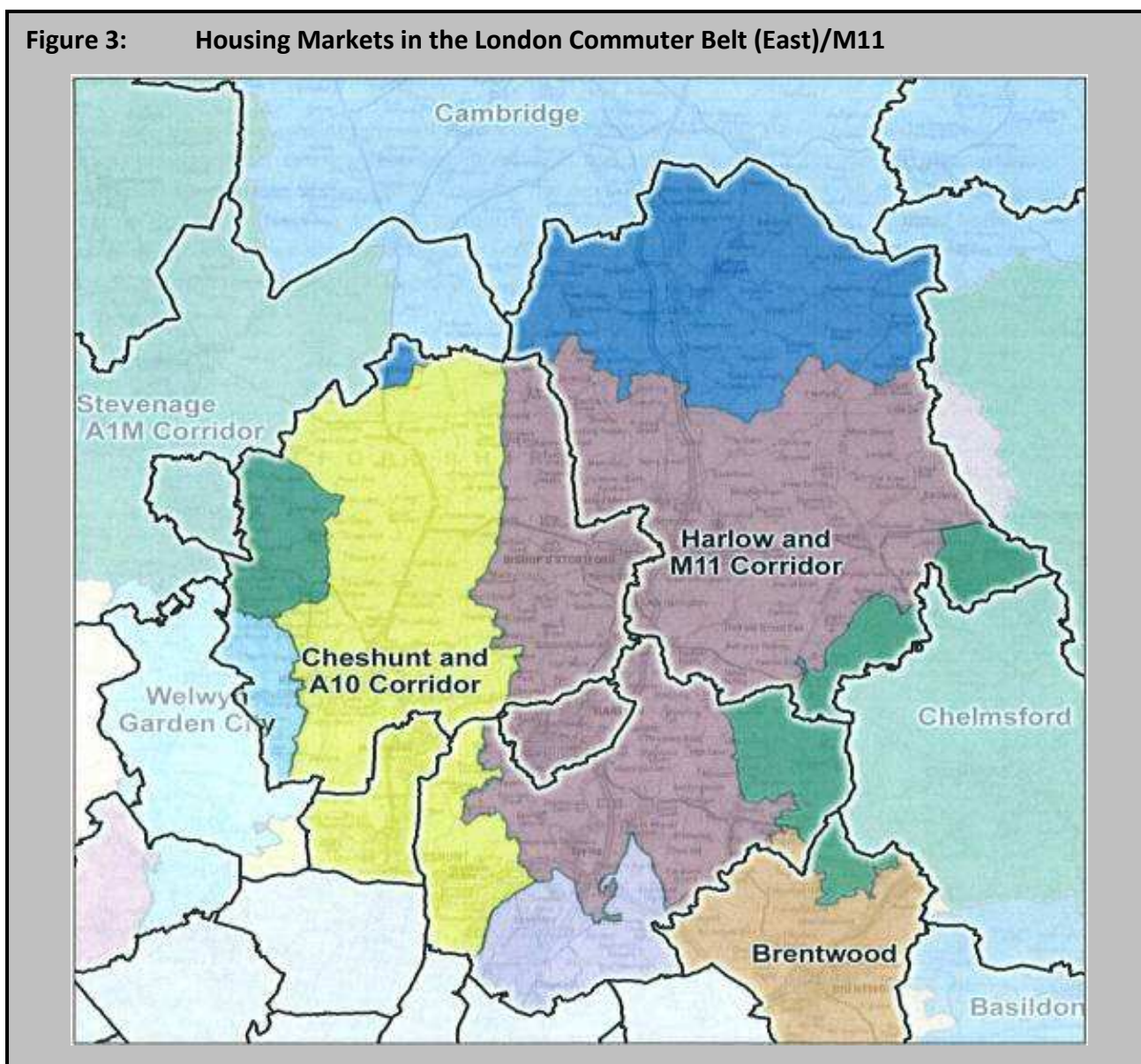
- 2.10 The ongoing preparation of the East Herts LDF is overseen by Members through the Council's LDF Executive Panel. Various elements of the SLAA process have been endorsed by the Council. A list of the Reports to the LDF Panel is included in the Appendix C and these, along with the agenda papers and minutes are available to view at [www.eastherts.gov.uk/ldfpanel](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/ldfpanel).

### 3.0 Phase 1 - Preparation

3.1 Phase 1 deals with the more detailed management issues of the SLAA such as the issue of joint working and the identification of sources of information. It differs from the methodology which simply outlines the broad approach for undertaking the SLAA.

#### Joint Working

3.2 East Herts is not an island and there are numerous cross-border issues, not least in the flow of commuters in and out of East Herts. It is also true that many towns, Bishop's Stortford for example, provide services (e.g. education) to residents in neighbouring districts.



3.3 In respect of housing, East Herts does not function as a single housing market area and the district sits within the much wider London Commuter Belt Housing Sub-region. Figure 3

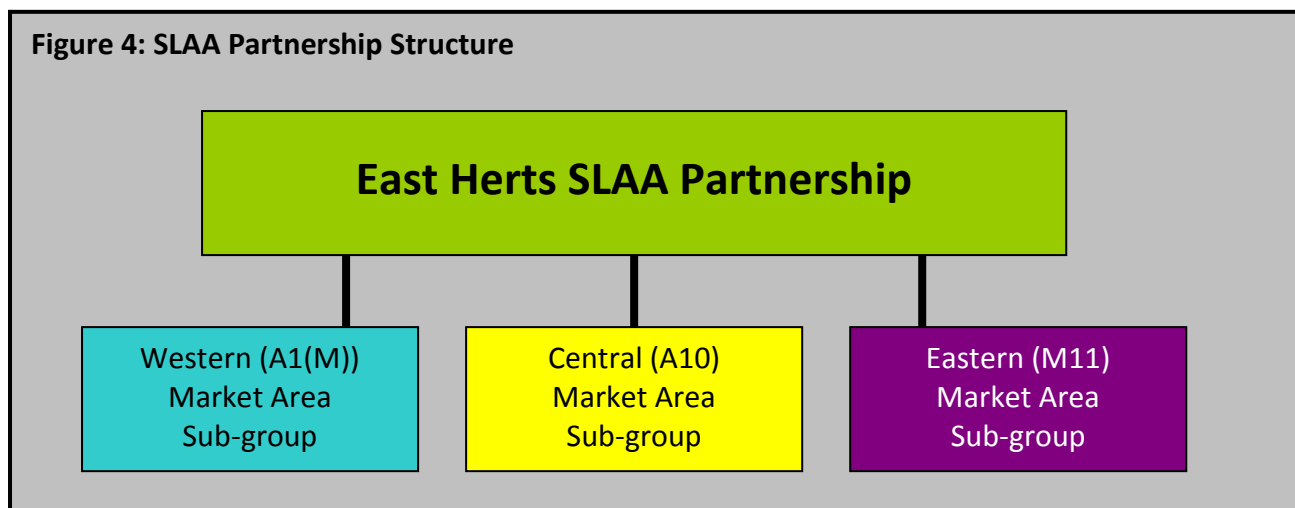
shows the housing markets within the Housing Sub-region<sup>10</sup>. Furthermore, within each housing market there are further variations in house prices at post-code level.

3.4 Whilst joint working was undertaken for Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) purposes, some neighbouring local authorities are further advanced in the preparation of their respective LDFs, and as such have already completed or are currently undertaking their SHLAAs. Whilst Harlow Council is at a similar stage to East Herts in both its Core Strategy and SHLAA, and there are cross-boundary issues stemming from the identification of Harlow as a Key Centre for Development and Change (KCDC)<sup>11</sup> in the East of England Plan, the housing challenge facing Harlow and the legacy of its New Town heritage mean that land supply issues are somewhat different. There is little merit, therefore, in undertaking joint SLAA (SHLAA) work.

### SLAA Partnership

3.5 The Practice Guidance recommends that a Partnership is established consisting of key stakeholders such as house builders, social landlords, local property agents, local communities and other agencies, where they have a recognised interest in an area<sup>12</sup>. The purpose of the Partnership is to provide advice and guidance on assessing the deliverability of sites.

3.6 Given the geographic nature of East Herts, and the variety of stakeholders involved, it is proposed that that three Sub-groups are established reflecting the three main housing market areas identified in Figure 3 (above). The benefit of this approach is that not only should it increase levels of engagement with the SLAA process, but that members of the Sub-groups will have greater expertise of the local property market and area.



3.7 The district-wide SLAA Partnership will include representatives of the different stakeholder groups. Its purpose will be to endorse the methodology and assumptions, prior to the assessment process, and then to quality check and risk assess the conclusions of the Sub-groups. Stakeholders will then be placed into the relevant Sub-grouping and it will be these

<sup>10</sup> Figure 15, London Commuter Belt (East)/M11 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), prepared by ORS on behalf of Brentwood, Broxbourne, East Herts, Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford Councils, January 2010

<sup>11</sup> Key Centre for Development and Change, Policies SS3 and HA1, East of England Plan (GO-East, 2008)

<sup>12</sup> Paragraph 11, SHLAA Practice Guidance (CLG, 2007)

area Sub-groups that will undertake the actual site assessments. As such, certain stakeholders or stakeholder representatives may sit on all three of the Sub-groups. The Partnership structure is set out in Figure 4.

- 3.8 Given the wider scope of the SLAA and the creation of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), including the Hertfordshire wide LEP, it may be that there are existing forums that can form the basis of the Partnership and contribute to the assessment of all sites, including those proposed for employment, retail, leisure and community uses. Although stakeholders were engaged in the preparation of both the SHMA and the SHMA Viability Assessment,<sup>13</sup> a formal housing market partnership was not established. It is proposed, however, that those stakeholders involved in the SHMA with an interest in East Herts, should be invited to sit on the SLAA Partnership.

#### **Figure 5: List of Key Stakeholders**

##### **All 3 Area Sub-group Stakeholders**

- Campaign to Protect Rural England
- East Herts Chambers of Commerce
- East Herts Council (e.g. Planning, Engineering, Environmental Health)
- East Herts Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Organisations
- English Heritage
- Environment Agency
- Hertfordshire County Council (e.g. Highways, Transport, Environment)
- Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Organisations
- Hertfordshire Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Organisations
- Homes and Communities Agency
- Home Builders Federation
- Natural England
- Thames Water

##### **Specific Area Sub-group Stakeholders (as appropriate)**

- Call for Sites Consultees
- East Herts Civic Societies
- East Herts Town Clerks / Town Council Officers
- East Herts Parish Clerks
- Housing Developers
- Neighbouring Local Planning Authorities
- Planning Consultants / Agents
- Registered Social Landlords (involved in new build projects)
- SHMA and SHMA Viability Stakeholders
- Small Scale House Builders
- Volume House Builders

- 3.9 Key stakeholders who will be invited to sit on the partnership are listed in Figure 5. Where there are numerous stakeholders (e.g. parish councils), a representative may be appointed.

<sup>13</sup> Undertaken by Level on behalf of Brentwood, Epping Forest, East Herts, Harlow and Uttlesford Councils, Aug 2010

Invitations will be sent to a number of agencies although it is recognised that not all of them will be able attend/participate.

- 3.10 Due to the technical nature of this work and in order to maintain a clear distinction from the policy-making process, it is proposed that county, district, and town and parish councillors are not invited to sit on the partnership. Councillors will however, be kept informed of progress on the SLAA. For the avoidance of doubt, Figure 6 identifies which parishes will be included within each area Sub-group. In addition, endorsement from East Herts Council Members through the LDF Executive Panel will be sought for both this Project Plan and the Draft SLAA Report. Appendix C lists SLAA related LDF Panel Reports.

**Figure 6: Parishes by Area Sub-group**

<b>Western (A1(M)) Market Area Sub-group</b>	<b>Central (A10) Market Area Sub-group</b>		<b>Eastern (M11) Market Area Sub-group</b>
Aston	Anstey	Hertford	Albury
Benington	Ardeley	Hertford Heath	Bishop's Stortford
Bramfield	Aspenden	Puckeridge	Brent Pelham
Datchworth	Bayford	Sacombe	Eastwick
Hertingfordbury	Bengeo Rural	Standon	Furneux Pelham
Little Berkhamstead	Braughing	Stanstead Abbots	Gilston
Tewin	Brickendon Liberty	Stanstead St Margarets	High Wych
Walkern	Buckland	Stapleford	Hunsdon
Watton-at-Stone	Buntingford	Thundridge	Little Hadham
	Cottered	Ware	Meesden
	Great Amwell	Wareside	Much Hadham
	Great Munden	Westmill	Sawbridgeworth
	Hormead	Wyddial	Stocking Pelham
	Little Munden		Thorley
			Widford

- 3.11 The Practice Guidance<sup>14</sup> recommends that key stakeholders are involved from the outset so that they can help shape the approach undertaken<sup>15</sup>. For practical reasons it has not been possible to engage with stakeholders in the preparation of this Project Plan nor in the work that has been and will be undertaken prior to the formal establishment of the Partnership. It is not considered that this affects the robustness of the approach since as part of the formal establishment of the Partnership, both the terms of reference and the detailed methodology for assessing the deliverability of sites will be consulted on with key stakeholders. Furthermore, the SLAA is being integrated into the preparation of the LDF Core Strategy itself, which is subject to extensive stakeholder engagement.

#### **SLAA Partnership Management**

- 3.12 Agreed Terms of Reference that set out the scope and role of the Partnership will ensure that it is effective. Draft Terms of Reference are attached at Appendix D. A representative of

<sup>14</sup> Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments: Practice Guidance (CLG, 2007)

<sup>15</sup> Paragraph 11, Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments: Practice Guidance (CLG, 2007)

East Herts Council will chair all meetings and will hold the casting vote in any decisions made. East Herts Council will aim for a consensus on the result amongst relevant Partnership members. Members of the Partnership will be expected to indicate where potential conflicts of interest might arise with regard to sites that are being considered and shall take no part in the deliberations concerning such sites.

- 3.13 Meetings will be held during normal office hours at East Herts Council offices. If a stakeholder is unable to attend, a nominated substitute will be accepted. Notes of meetings will be taken and minutes recorded which will be published and made available following publication of the SLAA Report itself. Membership of the SLAA Partnership will be on a voluntary/unpaid basis. East Herts Council will not be liable for any expenses incurred by Partnership Members during the SLAA process.
- 3.14 The SLAA report will be prepared on behalf of the partnership and East Herts Council. Copyright will rest with East Herts Council. The SLAA, including the site surveying and the initial assessment of whether the site is suitable for development, will be led by the Planning Policy Team using existing staffing resources. Quality Assurance will be ensured through the review mechanism (see Phase 5 - Section 7.0) provided by the district-wide Partnership.

#### **Risk Management**

- 3.15 The greatest risk associated with this project is in respect of public relations and the potential for members of the public to misunderstand the purpose of the SLAA, believing either that decisions about where development will go have already been made, circumventing the due planning process, or that the Council is proposing to develop a particular piece of land, without the landowners' consent. Notwithstanding this, splitting the project into a number of discrete stages and tying it into the plan-making process already appears to have been beneficial, especially in respect of Phase 2.
- 3.16 Any fieldwork and surveys will be undertaken from public land and public rights of way. The completion of the Call for Sites Pro-forma, gives consent for Council Officers to access the site in order to assess its suitability, although prior permission with the landowner would be preferable. Phase 3 of this study has the potential to pose a number of risks including contact with members of the public. However, these risks are not considered to be any greater than those risks usually associated with undertaking planning site visits or survey work. Undertaking survey work is also subject to weather conditions and should not be carried out if there is a risk of bad weather such as fog, snow or ice.

#### **Sources of Sites**

- 3.17 Except for more clear-cut designations such as Sites of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI), the scope of the SLAA should not be narrowed down by existing policies designed to constrain development<sup>16</sup>. On this basis, given the geographic nature of East Herts - a rural district made up of five market towns and some one hundred villages - potentially the whole district (477 square kilometres) would be subject to assessment. This would not be an efficient or effective use of resources.

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<sup>16</sup> Paragraph 21, Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments: Practice Guidance (CLG, 2007)

3.18 A key issue for the SLAA will be the decision as to which sites outside settlements will be assessed. It is anticipated that these will generally be peripheral greenfield sites and perhaps some non-urban brownfield sites. Sufficient sites outside existing settlement boundaries should be included to enable the authority to be as confident as possible that enough developable sites will be identified to meet the housing target, and to provide for the genuine consideration of alternatives as part of the plan-making process.<sup>17</sup> Figure 7 lists the sources of sites that will be considered.

### **Figure 7: Sources of Sites**

#### *Sites in the Planning Process*

- Planning permissions for housing development that are under-construction
- Unimplemented/outstanding planning permissions for housing
- Local Plan Housing Allocations
- Land allocated (or with permission) for employment or other land uses which are no longer required for those uses (such sites to be considered as part of the review of the Employment Land and Retail and Town Centre technical studies)

#### *Sites Not Currently in the Planning Process*

- Local Plan Inquiry 2005/06 Omission Sites
- Housing Capacity Assessment (HCA) 2007 Sites
- Call for Sites suggestions - 2009 Onwards
- Vacant and derelict land and buildings
- Surplus public sector land
- Land in non-residential use including utilities, leisure, employment and retail (the latter two categories to be considered as part of the review of the Employment Land and Retail and Town Centre technical studies)

3.19 East Herts Council has undertaken technical studies to inform policy decisions on employment,<sup>18</sup> retail<sup>19</sup> and open space.<sup>20</sup> The recommendations of these studies will inform decisions in respect of these land uses. The SLAA work will also feed into a review of these studies, as appropriate. It should also be noted that in many instances, employment, retail, leisure and community uses will come forward on sites as part of a housing or housing-led mixed-use scheme.

3.20 The Practice Guidance also lists a number of other sources of potential sites as shown in Figure 8. However, for the reasons given in italics in Figure 8, it is not considered that these sources require further exploration.

3.21 Greenfield sites are being considered because they may be suitable for development. We can not rule them out simply because they are currently undeveloped. However, this is not to say that they will be developed. Indeed, it may be that development on greenfield land is

<sup>17</sup> Paragraph 23, Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and Development Plan Document Preparation (PAS/POS, July 2008)

<sup>18</sup> Employment Land and Policy Review (Halcrow, 2009)

<sup>19</sup> Retail and Town Centres Study (Chase and Partners, 2009)

<sup>20</sup> Playing Pitch strategy and Outdoor Sports Audit (KKP, 2010)

preferable to re-development within the existing urban areas that may result in intensification and significant change to the character of an area. To reiterate, the purpose of the SLAA is to provide a pool of sites from which the Council can select the most sustainable and appropriate sites to be developed through the policy making and planning process.

**Figure 8: Discounted Sources of Sites**

- Additional housing opportunities in established residential areas, such as under used garage blocks - *These opportunities have been included within the HCA which identified garage blocks and vacant parcels of land*
- Large scale redevelopment and re-design of existing residential areas - *It is not considered that this source is applicable to East Herts give the nature of, and challenges facing, the district.*
- Sites in rural settlements and rural exception sites - *The HCA identifies sites in Category 1 and 2 Villages rather than just the urban areas. The identification of sites in other rural areas will be subject to whichever broad locations are identified as the Council's Preferred Option.*
- Urban Extensions - *The HCA included an Edge of Settlement Assessment that looked at the type of land that could come forward as urban extensions. The Call for Sites has also suggested sites for urban extensions. The further identification and assessment of such will be subject to whichever broad locations are identified as the Council's Preferred Option.*
- New Free Standing Settlements - *The further identification and assessment of such will be subject to whichever broad locations are identified as the Council's Preferred Option.*



## 4.0 Phase 2 - Evaluation

- 4.1 Phase 2 evaluates existing information in respect of identifying which sites and areas should be surveyed. Because the SLAA is being tied into the preparation of the LDF, it builds on existing work that has already been undertaken, both as part of the technical and plan-making process.
- 4.2 In 2006, consultants undertook a Housing Capacity Assessment (HCA) for East Herts district that sought to estimate the housing potential of existing urban areas including the Six Main Settlements, and Category 1 and 2 Villages as identified in the East Herts Local Plan 2007, reflecting the geographic and rural nature of East Herts. This technical work included a detailed street survey as well as a desk-top review to identify sites with housing potential, again reflecting the fact that in East Herts, a large number of smaller sites come forward for development.
- 4.3 In 2009, the Council initiated a Call for Sites: technical work that sought suggestions from landowners, developers and other interested parties for future development and change of use. This was a bottom-up approach to compliment the top-down survey of the HCA and specifically did not exclude any areas, size of sites or types of site from being suggested.
- 4.4 Finally, in 2010 the Council consulted on its Core Strategy Issues and Options document seeking views from residents and stakeholders as to the suitability of various broad locations for development. The feedback from the Issues and Options will assist with focusing the SLAA survey and assessment to those areas where development is more acceptable.
- 4.5 As such, it is considered that there is a comprehensive and robust basis for the SLAA. It is not considered that further survey work to identify significant numbers of additional sites will be required. Initial SLAA work will involve reviewing and updating this existing information. A summary of tasks is set out in Appendix A.

### **Housing Capacity Assessment**

- 4.6 Previous approaches to identifying land for housing development were based on the urban capacity methodology as advocated by PPG3<sup>21</sup>. The SLAA (SHLAA) approach is somewhat different.
- 4.7 Work on a Housing Capacity Assessment (HCA)<sup>22</sup> commenced in Autumn 2006 prior to the publication of PPS3 (2006) and the new approach of the SHLAA. As such the HCA was based on the then current guidance set out in PPG3 (2000) and Tapping the Potential,<sup>23</sup> as well as the emerging approach to housing supply proposed in the draft PPS3. However, the bulk of the work was complete before the publication of the Practice Guidance.

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<sup>21</sup> Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: Housing (DETR, 2000)

<sup>22</sup> Prepared by Entec Ltd (Nov 2007) on behalf of East Herts Council <http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/index.jsp?articleid=1962>

<sup>23</sup> Tapping the Potential, (DETR, 2000)

4.8 As such, a brief gap-analysis has been undertaken testing the HCA against the SHLAA requirements to identify areas of further work required to ensure that the HCA can be used as part of the SLAA.<sup>24</sup> This is shown in Figure 9.

**Figure 9: SHLAA Requirements**

SHLAA Core Requirements	Assessment / Analysis of Current Situation	Further Action Required
1. A list of sites, cross-referenced to maps showing locations and boundaries of specific sites (and showing broad locations, where necessary)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HCA includes list of sites</li> <li>• Specific sites &amp; boundaries are shown on maps</li> <li>• Lack of cross referencing</li> </ul>	Maps need to include site references
2. Assessment of the deliverability/developability of each identified site (i.e. in terms of its suitability, availability and achievability) to determine when an identified site is realistically expected to be developed	Does HCA include information on specific sites: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability – No</li> <li>• Suitability – Yes (all are in sustainable settlements)</li> <li>• Achievability – Yes? (timescales)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify availability of sites</li> <li>• Revisit achievability of sites</li> </ul>
3. Potential quantity of housing that could be delivered on each identified site or within each identified broad location (where necessary) or on windfall sites (where justified)	HCA includes estimated capacity on each site but are density assumptions accurate? (See paragraph 27 of PAS guidance)	Revisit density assumptions?
4. Constraints on the delivery of identified sites	HCA identifies area/% of <u>group</u> constraints on each site – does not identify what specific constraints for each site are	Identify specific constraints for each site as appropriate
5. Recommendations on how these constraints could be overcome and when	HCA identifies area/% of <u>group</u> constraints on each site – does not identify what specific constraints for each site are. Therefore, HCA does not advise how to overcome constraints on individual sites	Once individual constraints are identified, (see above), recommend how to overcome them

4.9 As previously stated, the HCA included the Six Main Settlements of Bishop’s Stortford, Buntingford, Hertford, Sawbridgeworth and Ware. Category 1 and 2 Villages are listed in Figure 10 below.

4.10 Following publication, East Herts Council made the HCA available for comment to stakeholders. This was an opportunity to get an independent check on the robustness of the HCA in light of the requirements of the SHLAA as well as an opportunity to suggest further sites. The feedback from this period for comment has informed this Project Plan and is available to view at [www.eastherts.gov.uk/technicalstudies](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/technicalstudies).

4.11 A key piece of further work will be to ensure that there is a consistent basis of site information for the SLAA. This means that a SLAA Pro-forma needs to be completed for each HCA site. As part of the updating of the HCA, Planning Policy Officers will survey HCA sites to obtain the additional information relating to site characteristics. This work will also

<sup>24</sup> Figure 1, SHLAA Practice Guidance (CLG July 2007)

provide a useful opportunity to obtain up-to-date information on Omission Sites outside settlement boundaries. Omission Sites are those sites submitted by objectors to the Local Plan Inquiry in 2005.

**Figure 10: Villages Covered by the HCA**

*Category 1 Villages*

- |                  |               |                   |
|------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| • Braughing      | • Hunsdon     | • Tewin           |
| • Hertford Heath | • Much Hadham | • Walkern         |
| • High Cross     | • Puckeridge  | • Watton-at-Stone |

*Category 2 Villages*

- |                               |                  |              |
|-------------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| • Aston (excluding Aston End) | • Datchworth     | • Standon    |
| • Bayford                     | • Furneux Pelham | • Stapleford |
| • Benington                   | • Great Amwell   | • Thundridge |
| • Brickendon                  | • Hadham Ford    | • Wadesmill  |
| • Dane End                    | • High Wych      | • Widford    |
|                               | • Little Hadham  |              |

**Call for Sites**

- 4.12 In 2009 East Herts Council initiated a Call for Sites as part of the wider SLAA. The Call for Sites sought suggestions from landowners, developers and other interested parties for development and land use, including housing, employment, retail, leisure, community and other uses. The rationale for undertaking a Call for Sites is that it is a ‘bottom-up’ approach and by default, identifies land that is available for development (in so far as the owner wants to bring it forward for development).
- 4.13 A consequence of Call for Sites is that they tend to identify greenfield sites as opposed to brownfield sites. However, given the fact that the Practice Guidance is clear that existing policy constraints should not fetter consideration of sites or broad locations for development, undertaking a Call for Sites is considered beneficial.
- 4.14 The Call for Sites requires landowners, developers and other interested parties to complete a standard Pro-forma including a 1:1250 or suitable scale site map, to ensure a consistent record of information. The Pro-forma Guidance Note and template are attached at Appendices E and F, respectively.
- 4.15 The results of the initial Call for Sites can be viewed at [www.eastherts.gov.uk/callforsites](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/callforsites). The Council has not verified any information submitted and inclusion in the Call for Sites is no indication of the suitability of a particular site for development. East Herts Council cannot, therefore, make any comment or commitment about any of the sites suggested at this stage for potential development.
- 4.16 Although there was an initial Call for Sites in 2009, the work is ongoing and the Council will continue to receive suggestions to feed into the SLAA. As part of Phase 3 - Survey, the Call

for Sites information will need to be verified and an assessment made as to the deliverability of the site.

#### **Local Plan Omission Sites**

- 4.17 In 2005 the Council consulted on 'Omission Sites' arising out of the formal public consultation on the Deposit and Re-Deposit stages of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review. Omission Sites included those sites suggested by an objector as an allocation, or where an alternative land use was proposed.
- 4.18 Where Omission Sites were located within the Six Main Settlements and Category 1 and 2 Villages, they would have been captured in the HCA. In addition, many Omission Sites may have been re-submitted through the Call for Sites. The remaining Omission Sites provide a further source of sites and as part of Phase 3 - Survey, Omission Sites information will need to be verified and an assessment made as to the deliverability of the site.

#### **LDF Technical Studies**

- 4.19 Other technical studies<sup>25</sup> prepared as part of the LDF evidence base can also identify potential sites and provide useful information as to site suitability. A list of technical studies that will help identify sites is included in Figure 11. All technical studies will be used as appropriate to inform site selection following the SLAA as part of the plan-making LDF process itself.

#### **Figure 11: List of Technical Studies**

- Employment Land Review (Halcrow, 2008)
- Gypsy and Traveller Site Scoping Study (Scott Wilson, 2007)
- Playing Pitch Strategy and Outdoor Sports Assessment (KKP, 2009)
- Retail and Town Centres Study (Chase and Partners, 2008)

- 4.20 These technical studies may provide a further source of sites and as part of Phase 3 - Survey, information will need to be verified and an assessment made as to the deliverability of the site.

#### **Core Strategy Issues and Options**

- 4.21 The Call for Sites suggestions have been taken at face value to inform the preparation of the Core Strategy Issues and Options consultation document. They have provided a useful 'reality check' to ensure that, theoretically at least, the options in the Core Strategy are feasible. The Issues and Options consultation documents are available to view at [www.eastherts.gov.uk/issuesandoptions](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/issuesandoptions). The Development Strategy is the key feature of the Issues and Options which presented six distinct options for development as listed in Figure 12.

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<sup>25</sup> All technical studies are available to view and download at [www.eastherts.gov.uk/technicalstudies](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/technicalstudies)

### Figure 12: Development Strategy Options

- Option A: Towns
- Option B: Towns and Larger Service Villages
- Option C: Towns, Larger Service Villages and Smaller Service Villages
- Option D: Towns, Larger Service Villages, Smaller Service Villages and Other Villages/Hamlets
- Option E: Towns, East of Stevenage and East of Welwyn Garden City
- Option F: Settlements within Transport Corridors

4.22 It was not considered appropriate to base the Issues and Options on sites identified through the HCA since the HCA was a top-down study and no assessment has yet been made regarding the availability of these sites. They will of course be fed into the plan-making process, as appropriate, via the SLAA.

4.23 The feedback from the Issues and Options consultation and other evidence will be used to inform the identification of suitable broad locations for development. In other words, narrow down the areas of the district within which sites need to be surveyed and assessed. Identifying suitable areas through the formal plan-making process ensures that this approach is robust. As the Council prepares the Core Strategy and its Preferred Option becomes known, the assessment of SLAA sites can begin in earnest.

#### Task Summary

4.24 A Summary of the Tasks necessary to complete Phase 2 is set out below:

Phase 2 - Task Summary			
Task		Date	Completed
2a	Publish Housing Capacity Assessment (HCA)	Autumn 07	✓
2b	Update HCA: HCA for 'Period For Comment'	Spring 08	✓
2c	Update HCA: Identify postal addresses for HCA sites	2010	✓
2d	Update HCA: Assess HCA sites against planning permissions	2010	✓
2e	Undertake Call For Sites	Spring 09	✓
2f	Issues and Options Consultation	Autumn 10	✓
2g	Issues and Options Feedback Analysis	Summer 11	Ongoing

## 5.0 Phase 3 - Survey

- 5.1 A detailed street by street survey will not be undertaken since this work was undertaken through the Housing Capacity Assessment (as explained in Section 4.0). It is also considered that along with the Call for Sites, Omission Sites and technical studies, comprehensive coverage of suitable sites across the district has been achieved.
- 5.2 Furthermore, the use of the standard Call for Sites Pro-forma has ensured a standard approach to data collection. For those sites that were not identified through the Call for Sites process (such as through the HCA, remaining Omission Sites and sites identified by technical studies), an edited Pro-forma will be completed for each site.
- 5.3 As much information as possible will be collated through a desk-top survey of sites using aerial photography and GIS information. Where information is not available, or information needs to be clarified, a field survey/site visit will be undertaken by members of the Planning Policy Team. A set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) will be available to members of the public should they enquire as to the purpose of the survey work. The FAQs are attached at Appendix G.
- 5.4 A Summary of the Tasks necessary to complete Phase 3 is set out below:

<b>Phase 3 - Task Summary</b>			
<b>Task</b>		<b>Date</b>	<b>Completed</b>
3a	Complete SLAA Pro-formas for HCA Sites	Spring 11	
3b	Complete SLAA Pro-formas for remaining Omission Sites	Spring 11	
3c	Complete SLAA Pro-formas for technical study sites	Spring 11	
3d	Site Survey (Clarification)	Spring 11	

## 6.0 Phase 4 - Assessment

- 6.1 There are two aspects to site assessment: the estimation of the development potential of each site and an assessment of the deliverability of each site. Whilst separate, they should be considered in parallel since potential can affect deliverability. Indeed, co-ordination will be needed to identify what the most suitable use on a site is, bearing in mind evidence and objectives to create sustainable mixed communities.
- 6.2 Owing to the value associated with housing development and the demand for housing, it is anticipated that there will be pressure to favour housing development or housing-led development on the majority of sites. Indeed, it is anticipated that the SLAA will include an estimation of housing potential on the majority of sites. In many instances however, employment, retail, leisure and community uses will come forward on sites as part of a housing or housing-led mixed-use scheme. Thus, it may be appropriate for the SLAA to include a presumption for the retention of the existing non-residential uses. This is especially crucial in maintaining the role and function of market towns.
- 6.3 Deliverability is an assessment of the suitability, availability and achievability of a site for development at some point in the future<sup>26</sup>. A site is considered to be deliverable if it is available now, offers a suitable location for development and there is a reasonable prospect of development being delivered within five years. A site is considered developable if it is in a suitable location and there is a reasonable prospect that it will be available and be developed at a specific point in time. In respect of housing, this information will be used to demonstrate that the Council can deliver a continuous five year supply of housing as part of its housing trajectory.
- A site is considered **suitable** for development if it offers a suitable location for development and would contribute to the creation of sustainable, mixed communities. In considering suitability, policy restrictions, physical constraints, potential impacts of developing the site and the environmental conditions which would be experienced by prospective residents should all be considered.
  - A site is considered **available** for development, when on the best information available there is confidence that there are no legal or ownership problems. This means that the site is controlled by a housing developer who has expressed an intention to develop or the land owner has expressed an intention to sell.
  - A site is considered **achievable** for development where there is a reasonable prospect that housing will be developed on the site at a particular point in time. Achievability is essentially a judgement about the economic viability of a site and the capacity of the developer to complete and sell the site.
- 6.4 The assessment of the deliverability of individual sites will be undertaken on behalf of the East Herts SLAA Partnership. It should be stressed that the assessment of the deliverability of individual sites is a technical assessment and not a policy decision. The SLAA will not make judgements about whether sites should be allocated through plan policy. Potential sites for new development which have been identified through the SLAA will be further tested through the plan making process for Development Plan Documents, including

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<sup>26</sup> Paragraph 54, PPS3 (CLG, 2010)

Sustainability Appraisal, stages of public participation and consultation, and independent examination.

### **Annual Monitoring and Assessment Prioritisation**

- 6.5 As explained in Section 2.0, the SLAA will form the basis for calculating the Council's housing trajectory as set out in the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). The AMR is prepared every autumn and published in December. For the next AMR, the intention will be to base the housing trajectory on actual SLAA sites and information.
- 6.6 However, because the SLAA is a technical piece of work and assesses the deliverability of all sites, by default it will include sites where development is inappropriate, such as those in the Green Belt or Rural Area beyond the Green Belt. Clearly, such sites could not be included in the housing trajectory as they are contrary to current planning policy and in general, should not be developed. Including them in the trajectory would also weaken the purpose of the SLAA itself, which is to provide a technical assessment of deliverability: not to take policy decisions, such as the re-designation of land. This is the role of the LDF plan-making process.
- 6.7 For these reasons, the assessment of sites will be prioritised starting with those sites where there is no in-principle objection to their development, such as those sites within town and Category 1 Village boundaries. As these sites could come forward for development at any time, Council endorsement of the SLAA is not required for their inclusion within the AMR and the housing trajectory. The remaining SLAA sites will then be assessed and all sites included in the draft SLAA Report.

### **Estimating Housing Potential**

- 6.8 The housing potential of each site should be guided by existing or emerging planning policy, and reflect a judgement on what can be accommodated reasonably on each particular site. An initial estimation will be undertaken by Planning Policy Officers in consultation with colleagues in Development Control. This will require some general assumptions about housing mix, housing density and scheme viability. To inform these decisions, East Herts Council has undertaken a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and SHMA Viability Assessment. These can be viewed online at [www.eastherts.gov.uk/technicalstudies](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/technicalstudies).
- 6.9 The SHMA considers housing need and demand and recommends housing type, size and tenure mix including the affordable housing percentage and threshold. The SHMA Viability Assessment is a strategic assessment that tests the findings of the SHMA on a range of notional sites. The SHMA Viability Assessment acknowledges that any assessment of viability should be undertaken on a site-by-site basis because viability is both site and scheme specific. However, it has been essential to undertake a strategic assessment of viability so as to be able to agree the policy parameters that will be tested on a site-by-site basis through the SLAA. Thus, in addition to providing information about the deliverability of land, the SLAA will also inform along with the SHMA studies and the Council's housing objectives, affordable housing policy.
- 6.10 Initial estimates will be based on the following density assumptions:
- Sites up to 1 hectare = 30 dwellings per hectare (gross)



- Sites over 1 hectare = 20 dwellings per hectare (gross) allowing for open space and other infrastructure provision

6.11 As part of the Housing Capacity Assessment, the housing potential of each site was estimated by consultants using the following density assumptions, based on accessibility by public transport to key services (i.e. retail land uses, employment land uses, GP Surgeries, Primary Schools, Hospitals). Undertaking Phase 4 will enable a timely update of this original work, especially following changes to PPS3<sup>27</sup> in respect of density in June 2010.

- 75 dph - 10min public transport accessibility
- 55 dph - 20min public transport accessibility
- 40 dph - 30min public transport accessibility

6.12 The housing potential of a site is a significant factor that affects economic viability. As such, the assessment of site deliverability should be considered in parallel with the estimation of development potential. Thus, the first role of the SLAA Partnership will be to verify the housing potential of each site.

#### **Assessing Deliverability: Suitability**

6.13 Assessing whether a particular site is suitable for a particular type of development forms the basis of the planning system. The SLAA provides a technical assessment to inform that decision-making process: it does not replace it. A co-ordinated approach to assessing site suitability and land-use is required, bearing in mind the aim of the planning system and wider planning objectives to create sustainable, mixed and viable communities. This approach dovetails neatly with the Government's emerging Localism agenda.

6.14 The following factors will be considered when assessing suitability. Where constraints exist, the assessment should consider what action would be needed to overcome them.

- *Policy Restrictions* - including planning designations as well as wider corporate objectives
- *Physical Restrictions* - e.g. access, infrastructure, flood risk, contamination, ground conditions
- *Potential Impacts* - effect upon landscape features and conservation
- *Environmental Conditions* - experienced by prospective residents

6.15 As already explained, the SLAA will assess the deliverability of all sites including those that are currently in the Green Belt. As with other constraints, this policy restriction will be noted, but its current policy designation will not automatically remove it from the SLAA. Instead, the SLAA will include an interim list of non-Green Belt sites. This interim list will then inform the plan-making process as to what extent the Council needs to consider sites that are currently in the Green Belt.

#### **Assessing Deliverability: Availability**

6.16 A site is considered available for development, when, on the best information available, there is confidence that there are no legal or ownership problems (e.g. multiple owners,

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<sup>27</sup> The national indicative minimum of 30dph was deleted from paragraph 47 of PPS3 following its revised publication in June 2010. However, the requirement to make the effective and efficient use of land (e.g. paragraph 10) remains.

ransom strips, tenancy or operational requirements of landowners) that would prevent the site from coming forward for development.

6.17 In other words, the site is controlled by a developer who has expressed an intention to develop or the landowner has expressed an interest to sell. It should be noted, however, that the existence of a planning application does not necessarily mean that the site is available. Where problems have been identified, an assessment should be made as to how and when they can realistically be overcome.

**Assessing Deliverability: Achievability**

6.18 A site is considered achievable for development where there is a reasonable prospect that development will come forward at a particular point in time. In essence, this is a judgement about the economic viability of a site as well as the capacity of the developer to complete and sell the site over a certain period. Achievability is affected by:

- *Market Factors* - e.g. adjacent and alternative on-site uses in relation to land value, level of potential market demand etc
- *Cost Factors* - e.g. build and development costs, S106 contributions etc
- *Delivery Factors* - e.g. phasing, build out rates, capacity of developer etc

6.19 The SHMA Viability Assessment<sup>28</sup> will be used to assist whether development is economically viable as well as the views and experience of the SLAA partnership. Again, where problems exist, the assessment should consider what action would be needed to overcome them.

**Task Summary**

6.20 A Summary of the Tasks necessary to complete Phase 4 is set out below:

Phase 4 - Task Summary			
Task		Date	Completed
4a	Estimate housing potential	Summer 11	
4b	LDF Executive Panel approve SLAA Methodology	7 July 11	
4c	Establish SLAA Partnership and Sub-groups	Summer 11	
4d	Partnership to agree methodology and key assumptions	Summer 11	
4e	Sub-groups to assess deliverability	Summer 11	
4f	Prepare Interim list of SLAA sites	Autumn 11	

<sup>28</sup> Available at [www.eastherts.gov.uk/technicalstudies](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/technicalstudies)

## 7.0 Phase 5 - Review

- 7.1 Once Phases 3 and 4 have been completed an initial SLAA report will be prepared. In respect of housing, this will include an indicative housing trajectory that sets out how much housing can be provided and at what point in the future.
- 7.2 An overall (risk) assessment will also be prepared as to whether sites will come forward as anticipated. Should it be concluded that insufficient sites have been identified and that further sites need to be sought, or that some of the assumptions made need to be revisited, then further work in respect of Phases 3 and 4 will be undertaken. In arriving at its conclusions, the risk assessment should consider the nature of the development market in East Herts including how quickly sites may be developed and whether a five year supply of identified sites can be maintained.
- 7.3 Phase 5 will also incorporate Stages 9 and 10 of the SHLAA methodology as shown in Figure 2 above, as appropriate. This includes identifying and assessing broad locations, such as urban extensions, where necessary and including an allowance for Windfall Sites if this can be justified. For example, if there is a steady supply of land from certain sources (e.g. back land development), but individual specific sites cannot be identified.
- 7.4 A Summary of the Tasks necessary to complete Phase 5 is set out below:

Phase 5 - Task Summary			
Task		Date	Completed
5a	Publish initial report for consideration by Partnership	Autumn 11	
5b	Partnership to provide risk assessment	Autumn 11	
5c	Further survey and assessment work (if required)	-	
5d	SHLAA Stages 9 and 10 (if required)	-	

## 8.0 Phase 6 - Evidence

- 8.1 On its publication, the SLAA Report will form part of the evidence base for the East Herts LDF. It will provide information to demonstrate that there is sufficient deliverable land to deliver the Council's Preferred Option in its Core Strategy
- 8.2 In parallel with the preparation of the Core Strategy Preferred Options, the Council will begin preliminary work on its Site Allocations DPD. It is through this document that decisions will be made as to the suitability of a particular site for development, based on the evidence and list of sites in the SLAA.
- 8.3 The Site Allocations DPD will also determine which sites should be allocated for development (whether housing, employment, retail, leisure or community uses) through the LDF. It will also determine which sites should be designated for a particular use, based on the strategic approach set out in the Core Strategy.
- 8.4 For some or all of the allocated sites, it may be appropriate to produce Concept Statements that set out the type of development the Council envisages for each site. These brief documents (e.g. two sides of A4 paper that set out the design and policy principles), give both certainty to the developer and assurance to the local community that high quality development will come forward on site. The Site Allocations process may also be informed by settlement wide design work in the Core Strategy.
- 8.5 The SLAA will be monitored through the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) process, including setting out the Council's housing trajectory, and demonstrating a continuous five year supply of housing, as required by PPS3. Through this process, the SLAA will be updated and new sites included. It is anticipated that new sites will be identified as an ongoing process although an annual Call for Sites may prove a useful medium. Following this, suggestions will be surveyed (Phase 3) and assessed (Phase 4), reconvening the SLAA partnership.
- 8.6 A Summary of the Tasks necessary to complete Phase 6 is set out below:

Phase 6 - Task Summary			
Task		Date	Completed
6a	Draft SLAA Report to LDF Executive Panel	24 Nov 11	
6b	Final SLAA Published Following Council Agreement	14 Dec 11	
6c	Publication of Core Strategy Preferred Options	2012	
6d	Preparation of Site Allocations DPD	2012	
6e	Annual Review and Monitoring	Autumn 2011 +	

## 9.0 Conclusion

- 9.1 The SLAA will provide East Herts Council with a robust assessment of available developable land in East Herts for the period to 2031 that will inform policy decisions in the East Herts LDF. It will also form the basis for calculating the Council's continuous five-year supply in respect of housing land as part of its housing trajectory.
- 9.2 It should be stressed that the SLAA is a piece of technical research work and does not make policy decisions. Thus, the inclusion of a particular site in the SLAA does not mean the site will definitely come forward for development. That decision can only be made through the LDF plan-making or planning application processes. The SLAA simply helps inform these processes.
- 9.3 Ultimately, the SLAA is a list of sites that includes a technical assessment of their deliverability, with information stored in a database format. In terms of outputs, the following will be produced:
- Interim list of non-Green Belt sites (Task 4f)
  - Initial list of sites to be reviewed by the SLAA Partnership (Task 5a)
  - Draft SLAA Report to be considered by the LDF Executive Panel (Task 6a)
  - Final SLAA Report published by East Herts Council (Task 6b)
- 9.4 The draft SLAA report will be prepared on behalf of the SLAA Partnership. This draft report will be subject to Council endorsement via the LDF Executive Panel. As with all planning policy technical studies, whilst Members will have the opportunity to comment on the findings of the study, it is not intended that changes to the technical assessment will result.
- 9.5 Following agreement by Council, the Final SLAA Report will be published and used to inform the preparation of the East Herts LDF and planning processes.
- 9.6 The intention is that the SLAA will be updated annually as part of the preparation of the Council's Annual Monitoring Report (AMR).



## **Appendix A: Summary of SLAA Tasks**

Task		Date	Completed
2a	Publish Housing Capacity Assessment (HCA)	Autumn 07	✓
2b	Update HCA: HCA for 'Period For Comment'	Spring 08	✓
2c	Update HCA: Identify postal addresses for HCA sites	2010	✓
2d	Update HCA: Assess HCA sites against planning permissions	2010	✓
2e	Undertake Call For Sites	Spring 09	✓
2f	Issues and Options Consultation	Autumn 10	✓
2g	Issues and Options Feedback Analysis	Summer 11	Ongoing
3a	Complete SLAA Pro-formas for HCA Sites	Spring 11	
3b	Complete SLAA Pro-formas for remaining Omission Sites	Spring 11	
3c	Complete SLAA Pro-formas for technical study sites	Spring 11	
3d	Site Survey (Clarification)	Spring 11	
4a	Estimate housing potential	Summer 11	
4b	LDF Executive Panel approve SLAA Methodology	7 July 11	
4c	Establish SLAA Partnership and Sub-groups	Summer 11	
4d	Partnership to agree methodology and key assumptions	Summer 11	
4e	Sub-groups to assess deliverability	Summer 11	
4f	Prepare Interim list of SLAA sites	Autumn 11	
5a	Publish initial report for consideration by Partnership	Autumn 11	
5b	Partnership to provide risk assessment	Autumn 11	
5c	Further survey and assessment work (if required)	-	
5d	SHLAA Stages 9 and 10 (if required)	-	
6a	Draft SLAA Report to LDF Executive Panel	24 Nov 11	
6b	Final SLAA Published Following Council Agreement	14 Dec 11	
6c	Publication of Core Strategy Preferred Options	2012	
6d	Preparation of Site Allocations DPD	2012	
6e	Annual Review and Monitoring	Autumn 2011 +	



## **Appendix B: SLAA Project Timeline**



## **Appendix C: List of SLAA Related LDF Executive Panel Reports**

The following table lists SLAA related reports to East Herts Council's LDF Executive Panel. The reports, agenda papers and minutes can be viewed under the relevant meeting date at [www.eastherts.gov.uk/ldfpanel](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/ldfpanel).

<b>Date of Panel</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Title of Report</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
26 <sup>th</sup> July 2007	6	Housing Capacity Assessment	To consider the non-technical summary of the study
22 <sup>nd</sup> November 2007	8	Housing Capacity Assessment and Edge of Settlement Assessment	To consider the revised study and make the HCA available for comment
24 <sup>th</sup> April 2008	8	LDF Evidence Base - Technical Studies 2007/08 and 2008/09	To agree that various technical studies, including a SHLAA, be undertaken to inform the LDF
17 <sup>th</sup> July 2008	7	Housing Capacity Assessment and Edge of Settlement Assessment - Responses to Period for Comment	To consider the responses received and inform members of the requirement to produce a SHLAA
6 <sup>th</sup> November 2008	7	Annual Monitoring Report 2007/08 and Requirement to provide a continuous 5 year supply of housing	To inform Members on the requirement, implications of, and ongoing work to deliver a continuous five year supply of housing
27 <sup>th</sup> August 2009	8	Strategic Land Availability Assessment - Call for Sites Progress Report	To update Members on the responses to the Call for Sites consultation and to agreement for the responses to be taken into account as part of the preparation of the Core Strategy Issues and Options consultation and the preparation of the East Herts SLAA
27 <sup>th</sup> August 2009	9	LDF Evidence Base - Technical Studies 2008/09 and 2009/10	To update Members on progress on the various technical studies, including a SLAA, that are being undertaken to inform the LDF
27 <sup>th</sup> May 2010	5	LDF Core Strategy Issues and Options Consultation Document	To consider and agree the Core Strategy Issues and Options document for 12 weeks public consultation
27 <sup>th</sup> May 2010	7	Call for Sites Update Report	To update Members on the submissions received to the Call for Sites consultation between 12/08/2009 and 05/05/2010 and seek Member agreement for the responses to be taken into account as part of the preparation of the East Herts SLAA
23 <sup>rd</sup> September 2010	8	LDF Evidence Base - Technical Studies 2009/10 and 2010/11	To update the Panel on progress in respect of completed and ongoing LDF evidence base related technical studies from 2009/10 and seek agreement to those underway or proposed to be undertaken during 2010/11, including the SLAA

## **Appendix D: Draft Terms of Reference**



# East Herts Local Development Framework

## Strategic Land Availability Assessment Partnership Terms of Reference

### **Purpose of the SLAA Partnership**

- 1.1 The purpose of the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) Partnership is to assist in the preparation of the East Herts SLAA technical study that forms part of the evidence base for the East Herts Local Development Framework (LDF).
- 1.2 The SLAA Partnership will act as an independent body appointed by East Herts Council that is representative of key stakeholders in the district, for the sole purpose of the preparation of the SLAA.
- 1.3 The objectives of the SLAA Partnership are as follows
  1. To provide advice and opinions on the deliverability and developability of identified sites in an efficient and timely manner; and,
  2. To add value to the SLAA process through the skills, expertise and knowledge of each of the Partnership's members.

### **Scope of the SLAA Partnership**

- 1.4 The background to the SLAA is set out in the SLAA Project Plan, which interprets the Government's standard methodology for undertaking Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments (SHLAA), as required by Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3).
- 1.5 The scope of the SLAA Partnership is as follows:
  1. To consider and give advice and opinions on the findings of the initial assessment undertaken by East Herts Council of the suitability of potential development sites within East Herts;
  2. To consider and give advice on the availability of the potential development sites by indicating by what five year period for development (if any) the site should be included;
  3. To assess the achievability of the potential sites for development which are being assessed for the purpose of the SHLAA.
- 1.6 In considering the developability of the sites, each Partnership member will have regard to any relevant published documents and draw from their own experience. Partnership members will not be expected to advise on areas beyond their experience.

### **Membership of the SLAA Partnership**

- 1.7 Membership of the SLAA Partnership will be on a voluntary/unpaid basis. East Herts Council will not be liable for any expenses incurred by Partnership Members during the SLAA process.

- 1.8 Key stakeholders who will be invited to sit on the partnership are listed in the Project Plan. Where there are numerous stakeholders, a representative may be appointed. If a stakeholder is unable to attend, a nominated substitute will be accepted. The names and contact details of Partnership members will be recorded and published in the SLAA report.
- 1.9 A representative of East Herts Council will chair all meetings and will hold the casting vote in any decisions made. East Herts Council will aim for a consensus on the result amongst relevant Partnership members. Members will be asked to respect the views and opinions of other members and act at all times in a professional and courteous manner.
- 1.10 Meetings will be held during normal office hours at East Herts Council offices. Notes of meetings will be taken and minutes recorded which will be published and made available following publication of the SLAA report itself.
- 1.11 Interest in the development of one or more potential sites will not preclude membership on the Partnership. However, members of the Partnership will be expected to indicate where potential conflicts of interest might arise with regard to sites that are being considered and shall take no part in the deliberations concerning such sites. This does not preclude providing information as to the deliverability (e.g. suitability, availability and achievability) of a particular site.

#### **Operation of the SLAA Partnership**

- 1.12 The SLAA report will be prepared on behalf of East Herts Council. Copyright will rest with East Herts Council. The SLAA database will remain the property of East Herts Council, which will be responsible for any amendments to the SLAA database as a result of the Partnerships assessments. East Herts Council will also be responsible for the regular updating and monitoring of the SLAA.
- 1.13 The SLAA Partnership will provide advice and guidance in respect of the deliverability and developability of sites. East Herts Council reserves the right to amend any assessment of sites between the preparation of the draft report and the publication of the final SLAA report.
- 1.14 Partnership members will be provided with all necessary information, which may include unpublished information. They will be required to keep this information confidential until publication of the SLAA report.

#### **Agreement**

- 1.15 Agreement of these Terms of References includes acknowledging the purposes of the SLAA to assist with the preparation of the East Herts LDF in a timely manner. Contravention of the Terms of Reference may lead to dismissal from the SLAA Partnership.
- 1.16 I hereby agree to, and abide by, the SLAA Terms of Reference:

**Signed:**

**Dated:**

**Print Name:**

**Organisation:**





## **Appendix E: SLAA Call for Sites Guidance Note**



## **Appendix F: SLAA Call for Sites Pro-forma**



## **Appendix G: Frequently Asked Questions**



# East Herts Local Development Framework Strategic Land Availability Assessment

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What is the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA)?

The SLAA is a piece of ongoing technical research that will inform the preparation of the East Herts Local Development Framework (LDF) in respect of land supply. It will assist, as appropriate, in determining planning applications.

### 2. Why do we need a SLAA?

Government planning guidance requires us to produce a SLAA. It helps us demonstrate that we have an adequate supply of land for development to meet our future needs and prove that our LDF is fit for purpose. It is just one way to help pro-actively shape the future of East Herts to 2031.

### 3. What is the purpose of the SLAA?

The SLAA does two things:

1. It identifies the development potential of sites across East Herts (e.g. how many houses can be built on a site);
2. It provides an assessment of when, if and how the site could be developed. It helps us take policy decisions as to how we can best meet our housing requirement and how much development should go where.

### 4. What does the SLAA not do?

The SLAA is a technical document and does not make decisions about whether a particular site should be developed. That is the purpose of the planning system, either through the LDF or through a planning application. The SLAA provides information as to whether a particular site could be developed. As such, the SLAA does not automatically rule out sites that are outside of settlement boundaries, currently in agricultural use or in the Green Belt.

### 5. Why do we need to build more houses anyway?

To meet the existing and future housing needs of the district. The level of housing growth is based on population forecasts and projections. Current demographic evidence suggests that East Herts has an ageing population as well as an increasing number of single person households. Both of these pressures increase the demand for new housing. Lack of housing also has socio-economic consequences with local people being unable to live in their own communities. However, the need for housing must be balanced against social, environmental, and infrastructure considerations. The SLAA informs these considerations.

### 6. How is the SLAA produced?

The SLAA is produced by East Herts Council in partnership with stakeholders including town and parish councils and representatives of the development industry and the wider planning profession.

### **7. Will residents be consulted on the results of the SLAA?**

Yes. Through consultation on the relevant LDF policy documents residents will be able to comment on the results of the SLAA. However, the SLAA itself won't be consulted on as it is a technical study which is not normally subject to consultation.

### **8. Haven't you already done this work? Haven't you done a Call for Sites?**

Yes, the SLAA is being done in stages and much of the preparation work has already been completed. A Housing Capacity Assessment (HCA) in 2007 looked at the capacity of our towns and villages to accommodate housing development, while the Call for Sites is an ongoing process. It seeks suggestions from landowners, developers and other interested parties for development and change of use.

### **9. What work still needs to be done?**

The technical assessment setting out when, if and how a site could be developed will be carried out by the SLAA Partnership during summer/autumn 2011.

### **10. How will the SLAA be used?**

The SLAA will inform the LDF Core Strategy policy document currently being prepared. It will show that the options chosen by the Council are feasible and that there is sufficient deliverable land in different areas. It will provide a list of sites from which the Council can select the most sustainable. It will also be used to demonstrate that the Council has a five year supply of housing land in the district, as required by the Government.

### **11. What happens next?**

Once work on the SLAA is completed, it will be updated and rolled forward every year. This will not entail starting from scratch, but the SLAA will be monitored to see which sites have been developed and which new sites can be added.

### **12. Where can I find out more information?**

The detailed Methodology and the Council's Project Plan for undertaking the SLAA are available at [www.eastherts.gov.uk/slaa](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/slaa). Government planning guidance is available at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding>. More information about the East Herts LDF can be found at [www.eastherts.gov.uk/ldf](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/ldf). If you have any queries about the SLAA, please contact Planning Policy on 01279 655261 or email [planningpolicy@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@eastherts.gov.uk).