

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 2 JULY 2013

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING  
AND TRANSPORT

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5. EMPLOYMENT LAND REVIEW 2013

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

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**Purpose/Summary of Report:**

- This report introduces the Employment Land Review 2013 which has updated the previous review undertaken by Halcrow in 2008. The report also proposes that Officers of the Council explore the viability and feasibility of resourcing the key recommendations contained in the report.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DECISION That:**

<b>(A)</b>	<b>The recommendations detailed at paragraph 7.2 of Essential Reference Paper B be scrutinised; and</b>
<b>(B)</b>	<b>The Executive be advised of any recommendations.</b>

1.0 Background

1.1 Following a decision by the Executive to identify priority funding for the Council's Prosperity theme a part time, temporary Officer was recruited to report on the stock of employment land in the district. The report had two main objectives. Firstly, to update the Employment Land review conducted by Halcrow in 2008 and secondly to identify areas and projects that would be appropriate for Council investment.

1.2 The resulting study includes the following.

1.3 An analysis of the study undertaken by Halcrow in 2008

1.4 Policy and other changes since 2008 including national and local economy, national planning policy, local planning policies, changes to permitted development rights, emerging district plan and growth at Stansted Airport.

- 1.5 The methodology to the 2013 review and a “traffic lights” comparison of individual sites with the Halcrow report linked to gains and losses of sites.
- 1.6 A review of the main settlements
- 1.7 Opportunities for intervention, conclusions and recommendations.
- 2.0 Report
- 2.1 The 2008 report by Halcrow revealed that the majority of the district’s employment areas were fit for purpose and functioning well. The situation has not changed significantly in the interim and despite the recession, the number of vacant units is low. In addition, the amount of employment land lost to other uses is minimal. While there is a political will to be seen to be supporting the local economy, there are relatively few opportunities for interventions that would deliver more and better jobs in the short term. Even minor works such as signage and environmental improvements are likely to involve a considerable input of resources although they would confirm the Council’s support for the local economy and may encourage both tenants and landowners to improve their properties. More significant benefits could be achieved by concentrating on perhaps two major interventions in Hertford and Bishop’s Stortford.
- 2.2 The Council therefore instructed Officers to identify resources that can deliver actions 2.3 – 2.7 but to be mindful that any resource committed to this element of economic development will need to compete with other economic priorities.
- 2.3 The Council will undertake a targeted and proactive programme of interventions designed to raise the quality of existing employment areas by working with tenants and landowners to improved signage and environmental conditions
- 2.4 The Council will work with landowners, HCC and Hertfordshire Highways to improve access to and signage for the Raynham Road Estate in Bishop’s Stortford to take advantage of its location close to Junction 8 of the M11 and Stansted Airport
- 2.5 The Council will work with landowners, HCC and other agencies to overcome the current access constraints on further development at Mead Lane and bring forward brownfield land for

development in accordance with the Draft Mead Lane Urban Design Framework

- 2.6 The Council will continue to pursue the provision of a vehicular link between the Foxholes Estate and Caxton Hill as a first stage in restructuring uses at Caxton Hill
- 2.7 The Council will undertake a separate review of all rural employment land
- 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

**Essential Reference Paper B** – Employment Land Review 2013 Part 1

**Essential Reference Paper C** – Employment Land Review Part 2

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