

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

DISTRICT PLANNING EXECUTIVE PANEL – 3 OCTOBER 2013

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING
AND TRANSPORT

DEVELOPER/LANDOWNER QUESTIONNAIRES AND ATLAS
MEETINGS

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- This report sets out actions taken to date to obtain pertinent information from relevant landowners/developers/agents with an interest in land in the shortlisted Areas of Search to establish deliverability;
- It also seeks approval to the information received forming part of the evidence base to inform and support the preparation of the District Plan.

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

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| (A) | The responses to the Developer Questionnaires (including subsequent information supplied), and the meeting notes between ATLAS and developers and/or their representatives, be supported as part of the evidence base to inform and support the preparation of the District Plan. |
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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNCIL: That:

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| (A) | The responses to the Developer Questionnaires (including subsequent information supplied), and the meeting notes between ATLAS and developers and/or their representatives, be agreed as part of the evidence base to inform and support the preparation of the District Plan. |
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1.0 Background

1.1 Following the agreement of Council of a shortlist of options for

further testing in connection with the emerging District Plan on 7th August 2012 (at that time relating to the development of Part 1 – Strategy), questionnaires were sent to relevant landowners/developers/agents with an interest in those areas of land remaining in the selection process. These questionnaires sought to establish the deliverability of land in those areas in order that the Council would have sufficient confidence that its strategy could be delivered once finalised.

- 1.2 This report details the outcome of those requests for information and related work undertaken since that time.
- 2.0 Report
- 2.1 During the early stages of the Area of Search sieving process (at Steps 1 to 3), it was not considered necessary that contact be made by Officers to landowners or their representatives, other than in relation to the separate Call for Sites process. This was due to the high level nature of the appraisals being undertaken and the unmanageability of the process given the numbers of potential site contacts involved at that time.
- 2.2 However, at the stage that the list was reduced from 69 initial Areas of Search to those contained within the scenarios agreed in respect of District Planning Executive Panel 26 July 2012 Agenda Item 10 – District Plan Part 1: Strategy Supporting Document – Chapter 4: Places and Next Steps (ERP B Table 2: Summary of Outcomes from Sieve 2: Settlement Evaluations), it became necessary to establish, firstly, whether interest still remained in bringing those areas of land forward for development and, secondly, to elicit more detailed information beyond that supplied via the original Call for Sites exercise. This more comprehensive level of data would ensure that decisions would be made on the basis of a more up-to-date evidence base than previously available. Additionally, and most importantly, this would ensure that any areas selected would offer greater confidence of deliverability within the plan period and that any necessary infrastructure would be capable of being put in place in a timely manner.
- 2.3 While it was noted that some landowners, developers and agents with interests in locations within the district would have welcomed the opportunity to meet with Officers to promote their sites, it was decided that it would be more appropriate to elicit information in the form of a questionnaire. This was not only related to practical

issues of staff resources and the ability to carry out the significant amount of work required towards public consultation on the Council's Preferred Strategy, but more importantly that it would avoid the potential that any landowners might consider that there had been any inequitable treatment of parties.

- 2.4 It was therefore determined that, unless Officers considered that there was an exceptional overriding reason for a meeting to take place, there would be no meetings with developers directly, but that information would be sought through written questions. This would also have the distinct advantage that all dialogue would be in the public domain.
- 2.5 Questionnaires were therefore disseminated to points of contact for those areas of land submitted previously via the Call for Sites for all the scenarios carried forward to Sieve 3 (and which excluded villages except where they formed part of one of these scenarios). The questionnaires were sent during the latter part of August 2012 with a deadline for the receipt of responses of Friday 28th September 2012. It was clearly stated in the accompanying explanatory text that any responses would be made public.
- 2.6 Questionnaires were formed of two parts; firstly, a section generic to all parties, followed by questions specific to individual areas, as appropriate. The standard format was devised to enable better processing of information and for comparisons to be made where appropriate, especially in cases where Areas of Search involved multiple land ownerships.
- 2.7 Responses were subsequently received for all Call for Site submissions within the remaining relevant Areas of Search, as detailed above, albeit that some were delayed due to changes in either land ownership or relevant representatives. Summary tables detailing the questionnaire responses from promoters of land for the remaining Areas of Search for the five main settlements and scenarios involving East of Welwyn Garden City, North of Harlow, and Hunsdon Areas may be found at **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**, the contents of which are available to view at: www.eastherts.gov.uk/developerinfo). Accompanying maps for each show the land availability in those locations, as submitted via the Call for Sites process. The Call for Sites reference numbers and any relevant Sub-Area delineations are displayed for ease of correlation with information contained in the tables.
- 2.8 Two respondents confirmed that they wished to withdraw their

submissions from further consideration. These areas of land both fall within Area of Search 13 (Hertford South Sub-Area C); however, three areas of land remain in the process for consideration within this Sub-Area for which completed questionnaires have been received.

- 2.9 Since the return of the questionnaires some respondents have provided additional information to aid the consideration of their submission areas. This material is also available to view alongside the questionnaires at the same web location detailed above (at paragraph 2.7).
- 2.10 Additional to that data, there remained a need for further clarification to enable full consideration of the development proposals where significant areas of land would be involved and for which delivery would be likely to be dependent on particularly expensive or complex elements of infrastructure.
- 2.11 As proposed in the District Plan – Update Report at the District Planning Executive Panel on 25 July 2013 (Agenda Item 6), the Council has now appointed ATLAS to offer project support in relation to obtaining such information.
- 2.12 Meetings have recently taken place between ATLAS, as an independent impartial body, and representatives of land submissions at the following locations:

Area of Search 4: Bishop’s Stortford South

Sub-Area A Land south of Whittington Way (41/002)

Area of Search 19: Ware North

Sub-Area A Nun’s Triangle (05/003)

Sub-Area B Land south of Fanhams Hall Road & east of Trinity Centre (44/001)
Land north of Ware (44/005 part)

Area of Search 20: Ware East

Sub-Area A Land east of Ware (05/020 & 44/005 part)

Area of Search 61: East of Welwyn Garden City

Birchall Farm (26/003)

Area of Search 62: North of Harlow

Sub-Area A Land north of A414/Eastwick Road (21/004 part)

Sub-Area B Land north of A414/Eastwick Road (21/004 part)
Eastern part of Briggens Estate (29/004)

Area of Search 69: Hunsdon Area

Land north of A414/Eastwick Road (21/004 part)

At the time of writing, a telephone conversation was also due to be undertaken by ATLAS in respect of:

Area of Search 61: East of Welwyn Garden City

Hatfield Estate (part) (26/004)

2.13 The terms of reference and approach to meetings used by ATLAS is included at **Essential Reference Paper 'C'**, while the actual meeting notes detailing the areas of discussion and views expressed are provided via links within the tables on the website discussed at paragraph 2.7. The information gained via this approach can now be utilised to further refine consideration of the remaining Areas of Search. It is also intended that further updates to information submitted by developers/landowners or ATLAS will be added as it becomes available, so in this respect the tables should be viewed as live documents.

2.14 Members are therefore invited to approve the information received to form part of the evidence base to inform and support the preparation of 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

Developer/Landowner Information Received Following Issue of Questionnaires August 2012

www.eastherts.gov.uk/developerinfo

District Planning Executive Panel 26 July 2012 Agenda Item 10 – District Plan Part 1: Strategy Supporting Document – Chapter 4: Places and Next Steps (ERP B Table 2: Summary of Outcomes from Sieve 2:

Settlement Evaluations)

<http://online.eastherts.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/g2025/Public%20reports%20pack%2026th-Jul-2012%2019.00%20District%20Planning%20Executive%20Panel.pdf?T=10>

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