

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

DISTRICT PLANNING EXECUTIVE PANEL – 18 NOVEMBER 2013

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING  
AND TRANSPORT

DISTRICT PLAN TOPIC-BASED POLICIES REPORT (OCTOBER 2013)

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

**Purpose/Summary of Report**

- This report presents 12 chapters of the Draft District Plan, which contain a series of policies with supporting text organised by topic, such as housing, natural environment and heritage. These topic-based policy chapters effectively make up the second half of the District Plan, and are those most commonly used by Development Management in the determination of planning applications. This report seeks endorsement of these policies for their inclusion within the Draft East Herts District Plan for Consultation purposes.

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

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| <b>(A)</b> | <b>the topic-based policies be supported for inclusion in the Draft East Herts District Plan for consultation purposes; and</b>   |
| <b>(B)</b> | <b>the Head of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport, be authorised to make non-material, and typographical corrections to the topic based policies, prior to inclusion in the District Plan for consultation purposes.</b> |

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNCIL: that:**

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| <b>(A)</b> | <b>the topic-based policies be agreed for inclusion in the Draft East Herts District Plan for consultation purposes; and</b>  |
| <b>(B)</b> | <b>the Head of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport, be authorised to make non-material, and typographical corrections to the topic based policies, prior to inclusion in the District Plan for consultation purposes.</b> |

## 1.0 Background

1.1 The emerging Draft East Herts District Plan will contain details on the preferred development strategy for the district (and settlement-specific policies for each town or location of potential development). In order to ensure the strategy for the District is achieved, specific policies are required which contain more detail and guidance on the proposed approaches to key issues. For example, the development strategy policies will set out an overall number of dwellings that will be required throughout the Plan period; while the housing topic policies will describe what proportion of those new dwellings should be affordable homes, or those designed to meet specific needs such as for older people and vulnerable groups for example. These matters of detail are necessary for applicants to understand the approach the Council will take before they prepare proposals; it provides more certainty on some matters, and details where there may be more flexibility on others.

## 2.0 Report

2.1 The policies presented in Essential Reference Paper B are based upon a series of topics that have been developed through the on-going sieving process as presented to the Panel over the last few years. These topics reflect the issues raised in previous public consultation exercises. They also reflect the framework of topics established in the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (2010). The Topic chapters are as follows:

- Housing
- Economy
- Retail and Town Centres
- Design
- Transport
- Community Facilities, Sport and Recreation
- Natural Environment
- Landscape
- Heritage
- Climate Change
- Water
- Environmental Quality

2.2 The Planning Policy Team has been working with colleagues in the Development Management department and other

departments within the Council to prepare policies to guide development and to use in the determination of planning applications. It is intended that these policies form the second half of the Draft District Plan.

- 2.3 Where appropriate, officers have worked with external partners such the Environment Agency, Natural England, Sport England and other more local experts such the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust to ensure the draft policies are fit for purpose and reflect changing national guidance and best practice approaches where available.
- 2.4 As part of the drafting process, officers have been meeting with a Member Working Group of 15 Members to discuss the draft policies and make amendments where necessary. This process has been very helpful for Members to understand the technical details and evidence behind each policy, and for officers to understand local concerns. Matters of consistency or clarification have been discussed in great detail to ensure that the supporting text and the policies themselves are easy to read and easy to understand.
- 2.5 At each stage, Members were given the opportunity to provide feedback, which has been documented throughout the process. All Members were emailed copies of the draft topic-based policies on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2013, with a deadline for comments being Monday 21<sup>st</sup> October. Two Members responded and their comments have been worked into the drafts presented in **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**.
- 2.6 There has been a further process of checking internally to ensure that cross-references are correct, or to make additional signposts to other policy topic areas where necessary to aid navigation around the document. In the process of drafting the development strategy and settlement-specific policies, further amendments have been made to the draft policies to ensure they are user-friendly, comprehensive and fit-for-purpose. The chapters presented in **Essential Reference Paper 'B'** are 'clean' versions.
- 2.7 As part of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) process, the policies are assessed against the District Plan objectives and the SA Framework (as presented in the SA Scoping Report of 2010). This is an important process as the policies are the mechanism by which the development strategy and the strategic objectives of the District Plan are achieved. The SA of the Plan as a whole will be presented alongside the Draft District Plan early next year.

- 2.8 Subject to their endorsement by the Panel, Executive and Council, officers would like to undertake a further period of testing of the policies through their application to real applications in parallel to the existing Local Plan 2007 policies. This would enable both Policy and Development Management officers to trial their use and to make amendments where necessary before their inclusion in the submission of the District Plan.
- 2.9 It should be noted that policies will continue to evolve as a result of further technical work, such as on Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, and an updated Open Space for Sport and Recreation Assessment, for example. There are also instances where references will need to be added which cross-reference to the first half of the Plan. In addition to the policies included in ERP'B', there will be new policies on 'Delivery' along with the Development Strategy and settlement-specific policies presented to Members at the Panel on 16 January 2014.
- 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

None

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