

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

DISTRICT PLANNING EXECUTIVE PANEL – 3 DECEMBER 2013

EXECUTIVE – 9 DECEMBER 2013

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING
AND TRANSPORT

EAST HERTS GREEN BELT REVIEW – PARTS 2 to 6,
(DECEMBER 2013)

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- This report summarises the findings of the East Herts Green Belt Review – Parts 2 to 6 (December 2013), and seeks endorsement to use the Review to inform the preparation of the East Herts District Plan.

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

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| (A) | the East Herts Green Belt Review – Parts 2 to 6, December 2013, be supported as part of the evidence base to inform and support the East Herts District Plan; and |
| (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 Green Belt Review. |

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNCIL: That:

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| (A) | the East Herts Green Belt Review – Parts 2 to 6, December 2013, be agreed as part of the evidence base to inform and support the East Herts District Plan; and |
| (B) | the Head of Planning and Building Control, in |

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| <p>consultation with the Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport, be authorised to make non-material, and typographical corrections to the Green Belt Review.</p> |
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1.0 Background

1.1 Over the last two years the Council has been undertaking a process of short-listing options as part of the emerging development strategy to deliver the District's objectively assessed needs. Evidence gathered through this process, including through the ongoing Strategic Land Availability Assessment, indicates that only a small fraction of the District's residential development needs can be accommodated within the existing built-up areas on previously developed sites. There is therefore no option but to look outside the towns for suitable locations in which to accommodate development. As four of the five main towns in the District are surrounded by Green Belt, this will result in the need to release Green Belt land.

1.2 In order to inform the strategy selection process and to determine the most suitable and appropriate location for development within the Green Belt, a Green Belt Review is being undertaken. The purpose of the Review as a whole is twofold:

- To address whether the District's objectively assessed need for development can be accommodated within the constraints created by the Green Belt;
- To inform the strategy selection process of the District Plan.

1.3 The Review is split into two parts. Members will recall that on 3 October this year, Part 1 of the Green Belt Review was presented to the District Plan Executive Panel.

1.4 Part 1 of the Review has informed the Detailed Site Assessments undertaken in Part 2 of the Review, the subject of this report. The purpose of Part 2 is to undertake a detailed assessment of the Green Belt for the shortlisted areas of search remaining at the end of Chapter 4 of the Supporting

Document. This report also contains Parts 3 to 6, which includes more information on the approach towards Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt, minor boundary amendments necessary as a result of digital mapping improvements, new or compensatory Green Belt and the approach towards safeguarding Green Belt land for future development beyond the emerging Plan period.

2.0 Report

- 2.1 Part 2 of the Green Belt Review comprises 9 sections, beginning at section 3 (where Part 1 of the Review left off). Section 3 describes the approach and methodology of the detailed site assessments, which is undertaken in two stages: Stage 1 is a purpose test; an assessment of the Green Belt against the purposes of the Green Belt as defined by the NPPF. Stage 2 is a boundary assessment; identifying new boundaries within which to contain development in order to reinforce the strength of the Green Belt boundary against the built-up edges of settlements. Section 3 also describes the approach taken towards assessing villages.
- 2.2 Section 4 of Part 2 explains how the Green Belt Review works alongside and in parallel to the strategy selection process. It explains how the strategy selection process has informed the detailed site assessments and how the detailed site assessments go on to inform the strategy selection process in an integrated manner.
- 2.3 Sections 5 to 11 of Part 2 contain the two-stage detailed site assessments arranged by settlement, which concludes with two options; one based upon the extent to which a location performs against the purposes of the Green Belt (Option 1) and one based upon the strength of potential new Green Belt boundaries (Option 2).
- 2.4 Each settlement section contains an overview location map showing the shortlisted areas of search and a map of each area of search showing the detailed site assessment areas. Each section also contains the stage 1 purpose assessment, comprising a series of tables for each Green Belt purpose with supporting explanatory text, and the stage 2 boundary assessment, illustrated by a series of maps showing strong

boundaries and recommended options for new Green Belt boundaries based upon the assessment with explanatory text.

- 2.5 These options are simply suggestions based on Green Belt considerations, and will be used in conjunction with the Review itself to inform the emerging strategy of the District Plan. It must be emphasised that any land that is released from the Green Belt will be determined by the Council through the District Planning process based on a balance of considerations.
- 2.6 Part 3 of the Review comprises section 12, which details the Council's approach to Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt and the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt. If amendments to the Major Developed Site boundaries are required in due course, then this will be done as part of the Minor Boundary Review undertaken in Part 4.
- 2.7 Part 4 of the Review comprises section 13, which explains the need for a detailed review of existing boundaries as a result of digital mapping technology improvements, as a result of developments that have occurred since the Green Belt was established, and to rectify anomalies where boundaries dissect buildings for example. This Minor Boundary Review will be undertaken in the next few months and will be presented to Members in due course.
- 2.8 Part 5 of the Review comprises section 14, which examines the need for longer term Green Belt planning in order to ensure the permanence of the Green Belt. Translated, this means that sufficient flexibility should be drawn into boundary amendments to reduce the need to review the Green Belt in the foreseeable future. Whilst it is impossible at this stage to predict what may be necessary in twenty years time as a result of potential further population growth, the NPPF requires this to be considered as part of the Review. As such, section 14 details the Council's intended approach towards the safeguarding of land for future development.
- 2.9 Part 6 of the Review comprises section 15, which details the Council's intended approach to the creation of new Green Belt required as a result of potential future development, i.e. the need for compensatory Green Belt. At this stage, there are

several broad locations for growth being considered as part of the development strategy, but their final form will not be determined for some time. As such, it is not possible to assess how much land should be covered by a Green Belt designation until such time that the final development strategy is determined and any planning applications are determined as a result.

- 2.10 It is also important that the approach to any new Green Belt is not simply a numbers game – that if 10 hectares is released for development then 10 hectares of new Green Belt is designated. This undermines the purpose of the Green Belt. It will be necessary to undertake a detailed assessment of potential new Green Belt at such time as the development strategy for the District is determined. The creation of new Green Belt is likely to have a wider impact than the release of small areas of Green Belt adjacent to the existing settlements and may need a single issue public consultation on this matter. Further work will be undertaken and will be presented to Members in due course.

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

- Criteria-Based Assessments on Green Belt, Strategic Gaps and Boundary Limits, included in Chapter 3 of the Strategy Supporting Document, presented to the District Plan Executive Panel 29 March 2012.
- East Herts District-Wide Green Belt Review – Part 1 (September 2013), www.eastherts.gov.uk/greenbeltreview

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