

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

DISTRICT PLANNING EXECUTIVE PANEL – 17 JULY 2014

EXECUTIVE – 5 AUGUST 2014

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING
AND TRANSPORT

EAST HERTS EMPLOYMENT LAND REVIEW UPDATE 2013

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- This report summarises the findings of the East Herts Employment Land Review Update 2013 and seeks agreement to use the Study to inform the preparation of the East Herts District Plan and to inform Development Management decisions.

<u>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISTRICT PLANNING EXECUTIVE PANEL AND EXECUTIVE:</u> That:	
(A)	The Employment Land Review Update 2013, be supported as part of the evidence base to inform and support the East Herts District Plan; and
(B)	The Employment Land Review Update 2013, be supported to inform Development Management decisions.
<u>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNCIL:</u> That:	
(A)	The Employment Land Review Update 2013, be agreed as part of the evidence base to inform and support the East Herts District Plan; and
(B)	The Employment Land Review Update 2013, be agreed to inform Development Management decisions.

1.0 Background

1.1 In 2008, the Council commissioned consultants Halcrow to carry out an Employment Land Review, section six of which assessed

the quality of each of the major employment sites in the district and graded them using a 'traffic lights' system:

- **Green** – priority for retention as high quality employment land (61%);
- **Amber** – where employment uses remain viable but where intervention may be required to retain employment uses (35%);
- **Red** – those that could be considered for release for alternative uses (4%).

1.2 Parallel to the work of the Planning Policy Team, the Economic Development Team has been working on an update to the Council's Economic Development Strategy. As part of their work, the Council agreed at its meeting on 4th July 2012, a report proposing four new strategic themes as a revision to the Economic Development Strategy and identifying project funding that would deliver these. One theme was to '*create a more business friendly environment in our towns and town centres and deliver targeted initiatives to support the viability of employment land in the district*'. Funding of up to £144,000 from the New Homes Bonus was agreed to support Hertford Futures, the Bishop's Stortford 2020 Vision and an Industrial Estates Modernisation Programme.

1.3 In order to assess the quality of the District's employment sites and to understand the interventions that may be necessary to improve their quality, and therefore how to allocate this funding, the Economic Development Team undertook a new assessment of employment sites based upon the 2008 Employment Land and Policy Review by Halcrow. The Employment Land Review Update 2013 was presented to the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee on 2nd July 2013. The minutes of the meeting are included at **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**. Recommendations of that report were presented to Council on 24th July 2013.

1.4 The purpose of this Report is to inform the District Planning Executive Panel of this joint work and to agree the use of this update to inform the Plan-preparation process and Development Management decisions.

2.0 Report

2.1 The objective of the 2013 audit was to update the 2008 Halcrow Study findings and to identify opportunities for interventions that could improve the quality of the employment areas and deliver

more and better quality jobs. Each of the 42 employment areas identified in the 2008 Review were surveyed and information collected on changes since 2008 together with any significant and unimplemented planning consents. In addition, the 2013 audit takes into account a number of smaller locations in rural areas so the total number of identified employment areas within the district is now in excess of 60.

- 2.2 A programme of meetings was undertaken with local commercial agents to build up a picture of the 'demand' side and anticipated changes over the next 10 years and contact was made with individual businesses both 'on site' and at a Bishop's Stortford Business event.
- 2.3 Initial findings reinforced the overall conclusions of the Halcrow report in terms of the relative attractiveness of the different employment locations. In spite of the recession, demand (certainly in Bishop's Stortford), seems to be holding up reasonably well and there is evidence of several landowners investing in new development or the replacement of outdated stock (Woodside and Raynham Road, both in Bishop's Stortford). However some 'Amber' areas have been lost to other uses, notably the GSK site at Bury Green and the former employment site at Terlings Park where the Council has resolved to grant consent for residential development. Overall, commercial agents confirmed that much of the stock is outdated in terms of quality and estate layout and that little new land is available for employment use, (an issue which is being addressed in the new District Plan).
- 2.4 The 2013 Update is available to view on www.eastherts.gov.uk/elrupdate2013. For the purpose of this Report, it is only necessary to acknowledge that this updated audit has been undertaken, and whilst its express purpose was to inform the potential allocation of New Homes Bonus funding, it nonetheless forms an important update to the Council's evidence base for its emerging District Plan.
- 2.5 Alongside the update of the 2008 Review, further work is on-going to develop the evidence base for the District Plan. Consultants DTZ were commissioned in 2012 to report on likely future patterns of employment growth in the district, to consider the socio-economic factors that will influence where that growth takes place, to consider the implications for the distribution of planned development and to produce employment forecasts to 2031. Their findings were considered by the District Planning

Executive Panel on 28th November 2012.

2.6 The consultants note that East Herts is not a self contained economy but functions as part of a wider sub-region and tends to play a supporting role to adjacent urban centres and Stansted Airport. Each of the surrounding authorities has significant large scale sites (or potential sites), better located to capture major investment and jobs and while the economy of East Herts is likely to continue to grow, it will be through the attraction of small and medium sized employers. Bishop's Stortford is seen as the town with the strongest prospects for employment growth because of its location close to the M11 but opportunities in Hertford and Ware are likely to be more restricted and there is likely to be a need to rejuvenate and adapt existing employment estates and potentially identify new sites for B1 development.

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

- The Corporate Business Scrutiny 2 July 2013. Item 90 - Committee Report and Essential Reference Papers A and B – <http://online.eastherts.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cld=143&MId=2093&Ver=4>
- The East Herts Employment Land Review Update 2013 – <http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/elrupdate2013>
- East Herts Employment Forecasts and Strategic Economic Development Advice, DTZ 2012 – <http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/economicadvice>
- Employment Land and Policy Review 2008 – <http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/elr2008>

Contact Member: Cllr Mike Carver - Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport
mike.carver@eastherts.gov.uk

Contact Officer: Kevin Steptoe - Head of Planning and Building Control
01992 531407
kevin.steptoe@eastherts.gov.uk

Report Author:

Jenny Pierce - Senior Planning Policy Officer

jenny.pierce@eastherts.gov.uk