

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

DISTRICT PLANNING EXECUTIVE PANEL – 8 DECEMBER 2014
EXECUTIVE – 6 JANUARY 2015

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING
AND TRANSPORT

DELIVERY STUDY UPDATE REPORT

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- This report provides an update on progress with the Delivery Study;
- It includes the latest set of recommendations from Peter Brett Associates, relating to the approach to financial viability, and the wide-ranging implications of this in terms of many aspects of the emerging District Plan;
- It also sets out delays with critical pieces of evidence, and the implications of this for the overall timeline for the District Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISTRICT PLANNING EXECUTIVE
PANEL AND EXECUTIVE: That:

(A)	the District Plan Delivery Study Update Note from PBA, together with the presentation on Financial Viability, and the Progress Update, contained at Essential Reference Papers ‘B’, ‘C’, and ‘D’ respectively, including the implications of those for many aspects of the District Plan work, including the timeline, be noted.
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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNCIL: That:

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1.0 Background

- 1.1 The District Plan Delivery Study is critical to determining whether or not the development strategy set out in the Preferred Options District Plan can be delivered. The study could result in material changes to the Draft Plan. The specification for the study was published in summer 2014 (see Background Papers).
- 1.2 Peter Brett Associates (PBA) has been appointed to undertake the study on behalf of the Council. An initial Update from PBA, which included initial recommendations on transport and the calculation of Objectively Assessed Housing Needs, was previously reported to the Panel (see Background Papers).
- 1.3 Written outputs from the Delivery Study will be posted on the Council's website (see Background Papers).
- 1.4 The Council continues to work closely with ATLAS in relation to the strategic scale sites proposed in the District Plan, to ensure that the approach to testing of the preferred options meets the necessary levels of rigour and transparency.

2.0 Report

- 2.1 In order to assist Members in understanding the significant implications of PBA's emerging advice, John Baker, Partner at PBA, visited the Council on 7 November to discuss a wide range of deliverability issues at the Member Policy Working Group. The presentation from this session is contained at **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**. PBA also produced a more detailed Update Note relating to whole-plan viability, infrastructure delivery, and policy trade-offs, which is contained at **Essential Reference Paper 'C'**.
- 2.2 The main messages from these documents may be summarised as follows:
 - Some policies have significant cost implications, and it may not always be possible to achieve all of the policy aspirations because they may not be financially viable;
 - Affordable Housing in particular, is a significant cost and, depending on infrastructure and other costs associated with a scheme, it may be necessary to significantly reduce the level of affordable housing sought in some instances;

- The Government is proposing to use the building regulations, rather than planning policy, to achieve construction and energy standards, and this may require significant revisions to some of the Council's draft policies;
- Financial viability assessment is a specialist field, but there is an important role for Members in terms of helping to decide on local priorities, in instances where a trade-off between policy aspirations is required;
- The Council's infrastructure planning function should be recognised and strengthened, both in terms of internal and external arrangements.

Progress Update

- 2.3 An update on progress with the Delivery Study is contained at **Essential Reference Paper 'D'**, as at 19 November 2014. This update shows progress against the eight tasks of the Delivery Study as set out in the original specification.
- 2.4 From the update note it will be clear that a number of meetings with the promoters of strategic sites have been held. Any submissions from these meetings, including presentations and meeting notes, will be posted to the Council's website (see Background Papers). It should be noted that any material posted to the website is part of an ongoing assessment process, and site promoters' plans are likely to change over time, both in response to challenges from the Council and due to their own planning and evidence-gathering processes.
- 2.5 As part of work on the Delivery Study, the Council has also sought to engage with local issues through the East Herts Association of Parish and Town Councils, and also through the Bishop's Stortford Neighbourhood Plan group.

Timeline

- 2.6 Considerable progress has been made, but it is clear that there are a number of reasons why it has not yet been possible to conclude the study, including delays with the four-authority Strategic Housing Market Assessment, receiving meaningful viability inputs from some strategic site promoters, the need to resolve some outstanding infrastructure issues (including for example the Bishop's Stortford Secondary Schools aspirations), and satisfactory resolution of the approach to management of the cumulative impacts of development on transport infrastructure.

- 2.7 This has implications for the overall timeline for the next iteration of the District Plan, because this evidence and the issues arising are critical to resolve satisfactorily prior to another public consultation, in order to ensure that the plan is found sound at Examination in Public.
- 2.8 The Council fully recognises the implications of any delay for the planned delivery of development across the District. Working together with PBA and ATLAS, the Council will investigate any reasonable means by which the overall process can be expedited in order to bring forward the District Plan as soon as possible without jeopardising the prospects for planned development accompanied by the necessary supporting infrastructure.
- 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

- Submissions from the site promoters, including meeting notes are on the Council's website at:
www.eastherts.gov.uk/preferredoptions2014
- Outputs from the Delivery Study to date are posted to the Council's website at: www.eastherts.gov.uk/deliverystudy
- Delivery Study Update Report 17 July (contains the Specification)
- Delivery Study Update Report 22 October (contains the first Update Note from PBA).

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: Martin Paine - Senior Planning Policy Officer
martin.paine@eastherts.gov.uk