

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

DISTRICT PLANNING EXECUTIVE PANEL – 8 SEPTEMBER 2016

REPORT BY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

EAST HERTS DRAFT DISTRICT PLAN – NEW DRAFT CHAPTER 4 –  
GREEN BELT AND RURAL AREA BEYOND THE GREEN BELT

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

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**Purpose/Summary of Report**

The purpose of this report is:

- To present to Members a new draft Chapter 4 (Green Belt and Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt) for subsequent incorporation into the final draft District Plan.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISTRICT PLANNING EXECUTIVE  
PANEL: That Council, via the Executive, be advised that:**

<b>(A)</b>	<b>the draft revised Chapter 4 (Green Belt and Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt), as detailed in Essential Reference Paper 'B' to this report, be agreed as a basis for inclusion in the final draft District Plan, with the content being finalised when the consolidated plan is presented in September 2016.</b>
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1.0 Background

1.1 The Council published its Draft District Plan Preferred Options for consultation for a period of twelve weeks between 27<sup>th</sup> February and 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2014.

1.2 The issues raised through the consultation with regard to the Chapter 4 Green Belt and Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt were considered at the District Planning Executive Panel on the 25<sup>th</sup> August 2016.

1.3 This report presents a redrafted Chapter 4 which has been updated to take account of the issues raised through the

## Preferred Options Consultation.

- 1.4 **Essential Reference Paper ‘B’** contains the revised draft chapter.
- 2.0 Report
- 2.1 Chapter 4 has been rewritten to ensure consistency with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). In particular, a new section on exceptional circumstances has been included. The NPPF states that Green Belt boundaries can only be amended in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of a Local Plan (paragraph 83). However, there is no definition in the NPPF of what constitutes exceptional circumstances, as this will vary for each locality.
- 2.2 In East Herts there is a combination of factors that exist locally that together constitute the exceptional circumstances that require the Council to amend its Green Belt boundaries. This includes the high level of housing need, including affordable homes, exacerbated by a significant backlog of unmet need, and the lack of suitable alternative locations to the north of the District.
- 2.3 Chapter 3 (The Development Strategy) of the District Plan therefore sets out that the challenging level of housing need cannot be met in a sustainable way without undertaking a carefully planned review of the Green Belt. As such approximately 6% of the District’s Green Belt has been removed in order to help meet a significant proportion of the housing need, both within this Plan period and beyond. The revised Green Belt boundary will be shown on the Policies Map.
- 2.4 Other amendments to the chapter include the revision of Policy GBR1 (Green Belt) to refer specifically to the provisions of the NPPF rather than seeking to replicate paragraphs 89 and 90 of the Framework.
- 2.5 A new section on Neighbourhood Planning has also been added to the chapter. Hertford Heath, Stanstead Abbots & St Margarets, and Watton-at-Stone are identified as Group 1 Villages. As these villages are considered to be sustainable locations for development, these villages will be encouraged to consider whether it is appropriate to amend their Green Belt boundary through the formulation of a Neighbourhood Plan, to accommodate additional development especially where it

contributes to wider sustainability objectives and the delivery of community benefits.

- 2.6 Policy GBR2 (Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt) has been updated to ensure consistent referencing to other policies in the Plan.
- 2.7 The Draft District Plan Preferred Options version included a section on Major Developed Sites. This section has been deleted in its entirety as it sought to go beyond the requirements of the NPPF. If the Council receives an application for the limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of a site that was previously identified as a Major Developed Site this will now be considered in accordance with provisions of Policy GBR1 and Policy GBR2.
- 2.8 Members are invited to agree the revised chapter, as detailed in **Essential Reference Paper 'B'** to this report, as a basis for inclusion in the final District Plan, with the content being finalised when the consolidated plan is presented in September 2016.
- 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

Chapter 4 (Green Belt and Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt) Issue Report – considered by the District Planning Executive Panel on the 25<sup>th</sup> August 2016

<http://democracy.eastherts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=151&MIId=2952>

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