

Committee Agenda



Webcast Meeting



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Local Development Framework Cabinet Committee Thursday, 11th March, 2010

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping

Time: 7.30 pm

Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall
Tel: 01992 564470
Email: gwoodhall@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Members:

Councillors Mrs D Collins (Chairman), R Bassett, M Cohen, B Rolfe, Mrs M Sartin and Ms S Stavrou

PLEASE NOTE THE START TIME OF THIS MEETING

1. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

1. This meeting is to be webcast. Members are reminded of the need to activate their microphones before speaking.

2. The Chairman will read the following announcement:

“I would like to remind everyone present that this meeting will be broadcast live to the Internet and will be capable of subsequent repeated viewing, with copies of the recording being made available for those that request it.

By being present at this meeting, it is likely that the recording cameras will capture your image and this will result in your image becoming part of the broadcast.

You should be aware that this may infringe your human and data protection rights. If you have any concerns then please speak to the Webcasting Officer.

Please could I also remind Members to activate their microphones before speaking.”

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(Assistant to the Chief Executive) To declare interests in any item on the agenda.

4. MINUTES

To confirm the minutes of the last meeting of the Cabinet Committee held on 9 November 2009 (previously circulated).

5. TERMS OF REFERENCE

To note the Terms of reference for the Cabinet Committee, as agreed by the Council on 17 February 2009; minute 113(a) refers.

(1) That a Local Development Framework Cabinet Committee be appointed with the following terms of reference:

(a) To oversee and submit recommendations to the Cabinet as appropriate on:

(i) the preparation of the Local Development Framework (LDF);

(ii) the preparation of the Core Strategy including agreement of consultation stages and documentation, and the responses that should be made to any representations received;

(iii) the preparation of other Development Plan Documents including agreement of consultation stages and documentation, and the responses that should be made to any representations received;

(iv) the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents including agreement of consultation stages and documentation, and the responses that should be made to any representations received; and

(v) the revision of the Local Development Scheme and monitoring the achievement of milestones;

(b) To consider and provide input to consultants' reports which contribute to the establishment of an up-to-date evidence base to influence preparation of the LDF;

(c) To consider options for joint or coordinated working with other councils, which best meet the needs of this District, as required by the East of England Plan and (where relevant) the London Plan and to make recommendations to the Cabinet thereon;

(d) To consider the comprehensive review of the East of England Plan, and make recommendations to the Cabinet on any responses to be made;

(e) To liaise with the Planning Services Scrutiny Standing Panel as appropriate; and

(f) To work within the budgetary provision for the LDF, as approved by the Cabinet and the Council.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, together with paragraphs (6) and (24) of the Council Procedure Rules contained in the Constitution requires that the

permission of the Chairman be obtained, after prior notice to the Chief Executive, before urgent business not specified in the agenda (including a supplementary agenda of which the statutory period of notice has been given) may be transacted.

In accordance with Operational Standing Order (6) (non-executive bodies), any item raised by a non-member shall require the support of a member of the Cabinet Committee and the Chairman of the Cabinet Committee. Two weeks' notice of non-urgent items is required.

7. EPPING FOREST LANDSCAPE STUDIES (Pages 5 - 16)

(Forward Planning Manager) To consider the attached report (LDF-006-2009/10).

8. STRATEGIC HOUSING MARKET ASSESSMENT - FINAL REPORT (Pages 17 - 20)

(Principal Planning Officer) To consider the attached report (LDF-007-2009/10).

9. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK - PROGRESS UPDATE (Pages 21 - 26)

(Forward Planning Manager) To consider the attached report (LDF-008-2009/10).

10. "GENERATING AND APPRAISING SPATIAL OPTIONS FOR THE HARLOW AREA" - SCOTT WILSON REPORT (Pages 27 - 32)

(Principal Planning Officer) To consider the attached report (LDF-009-2009/10).

11. PLANNING ADVISORY SERVICE DIAGNOSTIC ON THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK (Pages 33 - 38)

(Forward Planning Manager) To consider the attached report (LDF-010-2009/10).

12. GYPSY & TRAVELLER DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT

(Forward Planning Manager) To provide the Cabinet Committee with an oral update on progress.

13. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

Exclusion

To consider whether, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press should be excluded from the meeting for the items of business set out below on grounds that they will involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the following paragraph(s) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended) or are confidential under Section 100(A)(2):

Agenda Item No	Subject	Exempt Information Paragraph Number
Nil	Nil	Nil

The Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, which came into effect on 1 March 2006, requires the Council to consider whether maintaining the exemption listed above outweighs the potential public interest in disclosing the information. Any member who considers that this test should be applied to any

currently exempted matter on this agenda should contact the proper officer at least 24 hours prior to the meeting.

Confidential Items Commencement

Paragraph (9) of the Council Procedure Rules contained in the Constitution require:

- (1) All business of the Council requiring to be transacted in the presence of the press and public to be completed by 10.00pm at the latest.
- (2) At the time appointed under (1) above, the Chairman shall permit the completion of debate on any item still under consideration, and at his or her discretion, any other remaining business whereupon the Council shall proceed to exclude the public and press.
- (3) Any public business remaining to be dealt with shall be deferred until after the completion of the private part of the meeting, including items submitted for report rather than decision.

Background Papers

Paragraph (8) of the Access to Information Procedure Rules of the Constitution define background papers as being documents relating to the subject matter of the report which in the Proper Officer's opinion:

- (a) disclose any facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the report is based; and
- (b) have been relied on to a material extent in preparing the report and does not include published works or those which disclose exempt or confidential information (as defined in Rule 10) and in respect of executive reports, the advice of any political advisor.

Inspection of background papers may be arranged by contacting the officer responsible for the item.

Report to the Local Development Framework Cabinet Committee



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Report reference: LDF-006-2009/10
Date of meeting: 11 March 2010

Portfolio: Leader

Subject: Epping Forest Landscape Studies

Responsible Officer: Ian White (01992 564066)

Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) That the Landscape Character Assessment be noted by members as part of the evidence base for the Council's Core Strategy; and**
- (2) That the Settlement Edge Landscape Sensitivity Study be noted by members as part of the evidence base for the Council's Core Strategy.**

Executive Summary:

In April 2009, Epping Forest District Council commissioned Chris Blandford Associates (CBA) to undertake two Landscape Studies of the District to contribute to the evidence base for the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF). The two studies commissioned were a 'District-wide Landscape Character Assessment' and a 'Settlement-edge Landscape Sensitivity Assessment'.

The District-wide Landscape Character Assessment identifies and analyses the District's various landscapes in terms of their evolution, diversity, distinctiveness, sensitivity to change and management need. The Settlement-edge Landscape Sensitivity Assessment provides a more detailed understanding of sensitive landscape and environmental features around the edges of the twenty-two principal settlements within the District. This study also assesses how areas of similar landscape character and environmental features contribute to the structure, character and setting of the settlements.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To ensure that full account is given to landscape character and sensitivity in policy formulation and planning decisions, both reports are recommended to the Council for use as part of the evidence base for informing the preparation of the Local Development Framework.

Other Options for Action:

Not to accept the reports as part of the LDF evidence base.

Report:

Introduction

1. In April 2009 the Council commissioned Chris Blandford Associates (CBA) to undertake two Landscape Studies of the District to provide a comprehensive assessment of its landscape types, and to analyse the sensitivity of the landscape around the principal settlements where new housing and employment land is likely to be located to meet the targets of the East of England Plan.
2. These documents will become part of the Council's technical evidence base to inform the Local Development Framework (LDF).

The District-wide Landscape Character Assessment

3. The overall aim of landscape planning, design and management should be to achieve 'sustainable landscapes' that are visually, ecologically and culturally as rich as possible to meet all of society's social, economic and environmental needs. Prepared through desk based research and field surveys, and then set out as a study report with accompanying 1:25000 scale mapping, the Landscape Character Assessment is intended to achieve this by giving a better understanding of the District's landscapes in terms of their diversity, distinctiveness, evolution, sensitivity to change and management need.
4. In terms of its methodology, the study is based on the *Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance For England and Scotland* (Countryside Agency/Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002), the latest published guidance, and also acknowledges current best practice. It addresses:
 - (a) the relatively objective process of landscape characterisation, which involves identifying, mapping classifying and describing 'landscape character'; and
 - (b) the more subjective process of evaluating such character to inform planning and land management decisions.
5. The study explains the importance of landscape character and describes the physical and historical influences on the landscape, identifying the key forces for change affecting landscape character today. It defines Landscape Character Types and Landscape Character Areas within the District and describes them in their national and county context. A map of these Landscape Character Areas and their corresponding Landscape Character Types is available at Appendix A.
6. The study makes a series of recommendations:
 - (a) to inform Local Development Framework policies for protecting and enhancing landscape character;
 - (b) to provide a baseline and framework for monitoring landscape change;
 - (c) for further work to enhance the evidence base;
 - (d) on how the study can be used to raise the general awareness in the planning process of the importance of landscape character in contributing to the quality of life within the District;
 - (e) that a landscape character objective and criteria-based landscape character policy should be included in the Core Strategy; and

(f) that local character considerations should also be incorporated into design, nature conservation and heritage policies.

7. The study also proposes that the Council gives consideration to developing a framework for monitoring landscape change within the Landscape Character Areas. Finally, the study recommends that the Council works with Essex County Council and other partners to enhance the current character evidence base. Potential options to achieve this include Local Distinctiveness Studies, Landscape Design Guidance, Settlements Studies, Historic Environment Characterisation Studies, Area-based Regeneration Initiatives, Green Infrastructure Network Planning, Green Space Strategies and River Corridor Environmental Strategies. In building on the partnership approach to the preparation of Landscape Character Assessments in Essex, the study also advises that consideration is given to developing a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for the District.

Settlement-edge Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

8. Prepared through desk based research and field survey work and then set out as a study report with accompanying 1:10000 scale mapping, the Landscape Sensitivity Analysis was undertaken around the twenty-two 'principal' settlements within the District, to inform the appraisal of land allocations in the LDF. It also outlined the extent to which these areas of landscape contribute towards the purpose of including land within the Green Belt, and how they contribute now, and potentially in the future, towards Green Belt objectives.

9. In terms of its methodology, the study has been informed by the Countryside Agency's *'Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland: Topic Paper 6 – Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity'*. For consistency with neighbouring local authority areas, this methodology was based on the approach set out within the Harlow Area Landscape and Environment Study (also completed by CBA) and refined with discussions with officers.

10. The study differentiates between zones within the District that are more sensitive than others and a summary of the basic findings are located in Appendix B of this document. This is hardly a surprising conclusion, but it will be an important part of the evidence base to help to identify the most and least suitable sites for growth, and those requiring protection through current and future conservation techniques, as far as landscape impact is concerned. Any conclusions of this study should be read in conjunction with the District-wide Landscape Character Assessment.

Resource Implications:

£1.3 million is available for the production of the LDF between 2008/09-2011/12, including the preparation of the evidence base.

Legal and Governance Implications:

None relevant.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

The use of these studies will help ensure that the unique landscape of the District is fully considered when preparing the LDF.

Consultation Undertaken:

No formal consultation. These are technical documents that will be used to inform the emerging LDF, and will be background papers when the Issues and Options Consultation for the Core Strategy is published.

Background Papers:

Epping Forest District Council Landscape Character Assessment, Chris Blandford Associates (January 2010).

Epping Forest District Council Settlement Edge Landscape Sensitivity Study, Chris Blandford Associates (January 2010).

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

Policy GU4 of the Corporate Plan highlights the need for the Council to develop a Local Development Framework (LDF). Adding these documents to the Council's LDF evidence base will therefore contribute towards the soundness of the LDF.

Equality and Diversity:

This is a technical study that will be used to inform the LDF. A full Equality Impact Assessment will be required for the LDF at a later date.

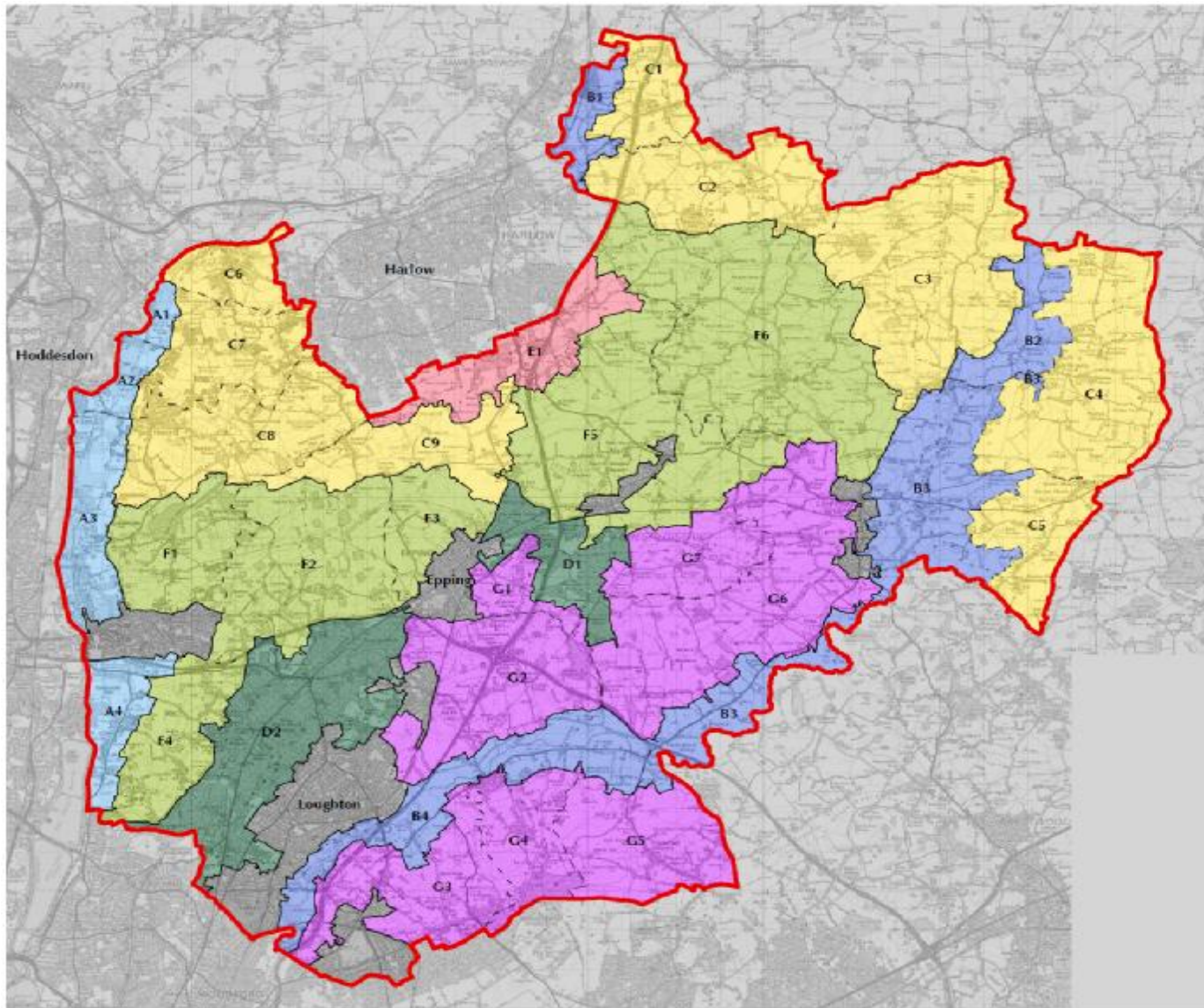
Did the initial assessment of the proposals contained in this report for relevance to the Council's general equality duties, reveal any potentially adverse equality implications? No

Where equality implications were identified through the initial assessment process, has a formal Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? N/A

What equality implications were identified through the Equality Impact Assessment process?
None Relevant.

How have the equality implications identified through the Equality Impact Assessment been addressed in this report in order to avoid discrimination against any particular group?
None Relevant.

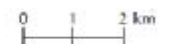
APPENDIX A - EPPING FOREST LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPES AND AREAS



KEY

Epping Forest Landscape Character Types and Areas

- A River Valley Floodplain:**
Flooded Gravel Pits and Marshes
A1 Rye Meads
A2 Nazeing Mead
A3 Lea Valley Marshes
A4 Ramney Marsh
- B River Valley**
B1 River Stort
B2 Upper Roding
B3 Middle Roding
B4 Lower Roding
- C Farmland Plateau**
C1 Sheering
C2 Matching
C3 Abbess
C4 Willingale
C5 Nine Ashes
C6 Roydon
C7 Roydon Hamlet
C8 Bumble's Green
C9 Epping Green
- D Wooded Ridges**
D1 Lower Forest to Beachet Wood Ridge
D2 Epping Forest Ridge
- E Farmland Ridges**
E1 Jack's Hatch to Church Langley
- F Ridges and Valleys**
F1 Holyfield
F2 Uphire
F3 Cobbin's Bridge
F4 Lippits and Daws Hills
F5 North Weald
F6 Magdalen Laver and Moreton
- G Wooded Ridges and Valleys**
G1 Coopersale
G2 Theydon Garmon
G3 Chigwell
G4 Lambourne
G5 Stapleford Abbots
G6 Stapleford Tawney and Stanford Rivers
G7 Toot Hill
- Urban**
- Study Area**



APPENDIX B - SETTLEMENT EDGE LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

The following tables have been extracted from the recently finalised Settlement Edge Landscape Sensitivity Study (January 2010). Together, they provide a basic outline of the overall sensitivity of each of the District's key settlement edge landscapes. Details of how these levels of sensitivity have been decided can be ascertained from the Settlement Edge Landscape Sensitivity Study itself.

ABRIDGE

Landscape Setting Area	Landscape Character Sensitivity									Visual Sensitivity						Overall Sensitivity to change			
	Representation of typical character			Number of sensitive natural, cultural and historic features			Overall Landscape Character Sensitivity			Intervisibility			Visual Prominence				Overall Visual Sensitivity		
	Positive	Moderate	Limited	Many	Some	Few	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low		High	Moderate	Low
1																			High
2																			High
3																			High

CHIGWELL/CHIGWELL ROW

Landscape Setting Area	Landscape Character Sensitivity									Visual Sensitivity						Overall Sensitivity to change			
	Representation of typical character			Number of sensitive natural, cultural and historic features			Overall Landscape Character Sensitivity			Intervisibility			Visual Prominence				Overall Visual Sensitivity		
	Positive	Moderate	Limited	Many	Some	Few	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low		High	Moderate	Low
1																			Moderate
2																			Moderate
3																			High
4																			High
5																			Moderate
6																			High

CHIPPING ONGAR/HIGH ONGAR FRINGES

Landscape Setting Area	Landscape Character Sensitivity									Visual Sensitivity						Overall Sensitivity to change			
	Representation of typical character			Number of sensitive natural, cultural and historic features			Overall Landscape Character Sensitivity			Intervisibility			Visual Prominence				Overall Visual Sensitivity		
	Positive	Moderate	Limited	Many	Some	Few	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low		High	Moderate	Low
1																			Moderate
2																			High
3																			High
4																			Low
5																			Low
6																			High

EPPING/COOPERSALE COMMON FRINGES

Landscape Setting Area	Landscape Character Sensitivity									Visual Sensitivity						Overall Sensitivity to change			
	Representation of typical character			Number of sensitive natural, cultural and historic features			Overall Landscape Character Sensitivity			Intervisibility			Visual Prominence				Overall Visual Sensitivity		
	Positive	Moderate	Limited	Many	Some	Few	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low		High	Moderate	Low
1																			Moderate
2																			High
3																			High
4																			Low
5																			High
6																			Moderate

EPPING GREEN FRINGES

Landscape Setting Area	Landscape Character Sensitivity									Visual Sensitivity						Overall Sensitivity to change			
	Representation of typical character			Number of sensitive natural, cultural and historic features			Overall Landscape Character Sensitivity			Intervisibility			Visual Prominence				Overall Visual Sensitivity		
	Positive	Moderate	Limited	Many	Some	Few	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low		High	Moderate	Low
1																			High
2																			Moderate

FYFIELD

Landscape Setting Area	Landscape Character Sensitivity									Visual Sensitivity						Overall Sensitivity to change			
	Representation of typical character			Number of sensitive natural, cultural and historic features			Overall Landscape Character Sensitivity			Intervisibility			Visual Prominence				Overall Visual Sensitivity		
	Positive	Moderate	Limited	Many	Some	Few	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low		High	Moderate	Low
1																			High
2																			High
3																			High

LOUGHTON/BUCKHURST HILL/THEYDON BOIS FRINGES

Landscape Setting Area	Landscape Character Sensitivity									Visual Sensitivity						Overall Sensitivity to change			
	Representation of typical character			Number of sensitive natural, cultural and historic features			Overall Landscape Character Sensitivity			Intervisibility			Visual Prominence				Overall Visual Sensitivity		
	Positive	Moderate	Limited	Many	Some	Few	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low		High	Moderate	Low
1																			High
2																			Moderate
3																			Moderate
4																			Moderate
5																			Low
6																			Low

LOWER NAZEING FRINGES

Landscape Setting Area	Landscape Character Sensitivity									Visual Sensitivity						Overall Sensitivity to change			
	Representation of typical character			Number of sensitive natural, cultural and historic features			Overall Landscape Character Sensitivity			Intervisibility			Visual Prominence				Overall Visual Sensitivity		
	Positive	Moderate	Limited	Many	Some	Few	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low		High	Moderate	Low
1																			Low
2																			Moderate
3																			Moderate
4																			Moderate
5																			Low

LOWER SHEERING/SHEERING FRINGES

Landscape Setting Area	Landscape Character Sensitivity									Visual Sensitivity									Overall Sensitivity to change
	Representation of typical character			Number of sensitive natural, cultural and historic features			Overall Landscape Character Sensitivity			Intervisibility			Visual Prominence			Overall Visual Sensitivity			
	Positive	Moderate	Limited	Many	Some	Few	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low	
1																			High
2																			High
3																			High
4																			Moderate
5																			High

MORETON

Landscape Setting Area	Landscape Character Sensitivity									Visual Sensitivity									Overall Sensitivity to change
	Representation of typical character			Number of sensitive natural, cultural and historic features			Overall Landscape Character Sensitivity			Intervisibility			Visual Prominence			Overall Visual Sensitivity			
	Positive	Moderate	Limited	Many	Some	Few	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low	
1																			Moderate
2																			High
3																			High
4																			High

NORTH WEALD BASSETT & NORTH WEALD AIRFIELD FRINGES

North Weald Bassett Landscape Setting Area	Landscape Character Sensitivity									Visual Sensitivity									Overall Sensitivity to change
	Representation of typical character			Number of sensitive natural, cultural and historic features			Overall Landscape Character Sensitivity			Intervisibility			Visual Prominence			Overall Visual Sensitivity			
	Positive	Moderate	Limited	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low	
1																			Low
2																			Moderate
3																			Moderate
4																			High
5																			High
6																			Low

ROYDON FRINGES

Landscape Setting Area	Landscape Character Sensitivity									Visual Sensitivity						Overall Sensitivity to change			
	Representation of typical character			Number of sensitive natural, cultural and historic features			Overall Landscape Character Sensitivity			Intervisibility			Visual Prominence				Overall Visual Sensitivity		
	Positive	Moderate	Limited	Many	Some	Few	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low		High	Moderate	Low
1																			High
2																			High
3																			High
4																			High

SEWARDSTONE FRINGES

Landscape Setting Area	Landscape Character Sensitivity									Visual Sensitivity						Overall Sensitivity to change			
	Representation of typical character			Number of sensitive natural, cultural and historic features			Overall Landscape Character Sensitivity			Intervisibility			Visual Prominence				Overall Visual Sensitivity		
	Positive	Moderate	Limited	Many	Some	Few	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low		High	Moderate	Low
1																			Low
2																			High

STAPLEFORD ABBOTTS

Landscape Setting Area	Landscape Character Sensitivity									Visual Sensitivity						Overall Sensitivity to change			
	Representation of typical character			Number of sensitive natural, cultural and historic features			Overall Landscape Character Sensitivity			Intervisibility			Visual Prominence				Overall Visual Sensitivity		
	Positive	Moderate	Limited	Many	Some	Few	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low		High	Moderate	Low
1																			Low
2																			High
3																			Moderate

THORNWOOD COMMON FRINGES

Landscape Setting Area	Landscape Character Sensitivity						Visual Sensitivity						Overall Sensitivity to change						
	Representation of typical character			Number of sensitive natural, cultural and historic features			Overall Landscape Character Sensitivity			Intervisibility				Visual Prominence			Overall Visual Sensitivity		
	Positive	Moderate	Limited	Many	Some	Few	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low		High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low
1																			Moderate
2																			Moderate
3																			High

WALTHAM ABBEY FRINGES

Landscape Setting Area	Landscape Character Sensitivity						Visual Sensitivity						Overall Sensitivity to change						
	Representation of typical character			Number of sensitive natural, cultural and historic features			Overall Landscape Character Sensitivity			Intervisibility				Visual Prominence			Overall Visual Sensitivity		
	Positive	Moderate	Limited	Many	Some	Few	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low		High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low
1																			High
2																			Moderate
3																			High
4																			Low
5																			Moderate

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Report to the Local Development Framework Cabinet Committee



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Report reference: LDF-007-2009/10
Date of meeting: 11 March 2010

Portfolio: Leader

Subject: Strategic Housing Market Assessment – Final Report

Responsible Officer: Amanda Wintle (01992 564543)

Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) To note the findings of the completed “Strategic Housing Market Assessment” report, and add this into the evidence base to support the preparation of the Local Development Framework; and**
- (2) To note that a further piece of research is currently underway to establish the viability of the provision of affordable housing.**

Executive Summary:

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) is required by Planning Policy Statement 3: *Housing* to inform the preparation of housing policies in the Core Strategy and other parts of the Local Development Framework.

The SHMA identifies that there is an overall need for 70% of all new housing to be affordable (social rented and intermediate housing). Further work is currently being completed to test the viability of the provision of affordable housing in the District.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

The SHMA is an important part of the evidence base to underpin the preparation of the Core Strategy. This new evidence will help to achieve corporate objectives of increasing the provision of affordable housing in the District.

Other Options for Action:

This study has been undertaken to inform the preparation of the Local Development Framework, and is based on available technical information. Without such a study any housing policies in the Local Development Framework would be likely to be found unsound, and therefore there are no reasonable alternative options.

Report:

1. Planning Policy Statement 3: *Housing* (2006) requires that planning policies within Local Development Frameworks are based on robust evidence of housing need and demand. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) provides this evidence. In March 2008, the London Commuter Belt (East) consortium appointed Opinion Research Services (ORS)

working with Savills to undertake this work. The consortium includes Epping Forest, Harlow, East Herts, Broxbourne, Brentwood and Uttlesford Councils, and the study seeks to identify the way in which the various housing markets operate at a sub-regional and district level.

2. The SHMA covers the period to 2026 and provides evidence which will update the information contained in the Housing Needs Survey completed in 2003. It provides an analysis of the housing demand across the District, also taking into account the growth requirements of the East of England Plan. For the purposes of this work, it has been assumed that 6,600 new units will be built within Epping Forest District to fulfil the policy requirements of the East of England Plan. This assumption was used as a “best estimate” at the outset of the study, pending the final completion of the “Harlow Options” report (Scott Wilson) and preparation of the Core Strategy.

3. The SHMA draws out key findings in respect of affordable housing provision, tenure split and housing size mix across the District. Across the sub-region, the SHMA identifies that 46% of all new dwellings should be affordable. At a District level, this increases to a need for 70% of all new dwellings to be affordable. Within this figure, it is suggested that 44% should be social rented units, and 27% should be intermediate affordable housing (figures may not sum due to rounding). This shows there is a considerable requirement for housing to address the needs of those households that earn between £20,000 and £35,000. Below this income range, there are housing benefits which will subsidise housing costs, and above this there are “entry level” properties that are affordable. For those households within this band, there is a shortage of housing products to suit their needs.

4. The SHMA identifies a need for a variety of house sizes, which is summarised in the table below:

Dwelling size	Market housing	Intermediate affordable housing	Social rented affordable housing
1 bedroom	0.5%	12.1%	40.0%
2 bedrooms	31.6%	42.7%	28.1%
3 bedrooms	47.1%	39.5%	27.9%
4 bedrooms	17.2%	4.8%	3.7%
5+ bedrooms	3.7%	0.9%	0.3%

5. Clearly, this confirms there is a significant need for affordable housing across the District. It will be for the policies contained within the Core Strategy to determine how such an issue will be addressed over the lifetime of the Core Strategy (i.e. to 2031).

6. Policies must also take into account matters such as the viability of development. In December 2009, Level were appointed to undertake an assessment of the viability of affordable housing provision suggested in the SHMA. This work is being carried out on behalf of Epping Forest, East Herts, Harlow, Brentwood and Uttlesford Councils (Broxbourne Council’s timetable for their Core Strategy did not permit them to be part of this further piece of joint work). This further work is due to be completed by mid-April 2010, and when completed will have tested a number of scenarios, taking into account available information on other matters including section 106 costs and land type. This viability work is part of a two-stage process, the second of which is part of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), during which specific sites will be tested in terms of the viability of delivery of affordable housing.

Resource Implications:

Preparation of the Core Strategy will be from existing resources.

Legal and Governance Implications:

None relevant.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

None relevant at this time.

Consultation Undertaken:

Key stakeholder events were undertaken through the preparation of the SHMA.

Background Papers:

London Commuter Belt (East) / M11 Sub-Region – Strategic Market Housing Assessment, January 2010 – Opinion Research Services / Savills.

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

Some earlier SHMAs prepared by other authorities were found to be unsound because viability had not been assessed. This significant risk will be addresses by the supplementary report.

Equality and Diversity:

Preparation of the Local Development Framework as a whole will be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment at a later date.

Did the initial assessment of the proposals contained in this report for relevance to the Council's general equality duties, reveal any potentially adverse equality implications? No

Where equality implications were identified through the initial assessment process, has a formal Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? N/A

What equality implications were identified through the Equality Impact Assessment process? N/A.

How have the equality implications identified through the Equality Impact Assessment been addressed in this report in order to avoid discrimination against any particular group? N/A.

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Report to the Local Development Framework Cabinet Committee



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Report reference: LDF-008-2009/10

Date of meeting: 11 March 2010

Portfolio: Leader

Subject: Local Development Framework – Progress Update

Responsible Officer: Kevin Wright (01992 564095)

Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) To note progress on the background studies required for the Local Development Framework (LDF); and**
- (2) To note that funding would initially be contained within the LDF budget, but that a future maximum supplementary estimate in the sum of £60,000 (£30,000 each) might be required for the:**
 - (a) Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment; and**
 - (b) review of planning policy on the Lea Valley glasshouse industry.**

Executive Summary:

This report provides an update of progress on the different background studies for the LDF that will contribute to the evidence base and guide future decision making on planning matters in the District. The report sets out the work to be done on the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and a review of planning policy on the Lea Valley glasshouse industry. The work on the SHLAA was originally intended to be carried out in-house, but it is now considered that it would make better use of the available resources to engage consultants to complete this work. The last study of the glasshouse industry was published in 2003, and this influenced the policies in the Adopted Local Plan Alterations. It was always the intention to review these policies after a period of about five years.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To keep Members informed of progress on the LDF evidence base.

To ensure funding is available to carry out key pieces of work to provide evidence for future decisions on housing and review planning policy on the Lea Valley glasshouse industry.

Other Options for Action:

The work on the SHLAA could be carried out in-house as originally envisaged. However this has implications for use of officer time which is likely to be very significant, given the experience of other authorities. This could result in unacceptable delays to the overall LDF timetable.

A commitment was made in the Alterations to the Local Plan to review the planning policy on the Lea Valley glasshouse industry. A current planning application for the redevelopment of a Lea Valley glasshouse nursery for residential use has highlighted the need for a policy review to aid decision making on this and any further proposals.

Report:

Progress update on background studies for the LDF

1. *Employment Land Study* (Joint with Brentwood Borough Council) – Officers from Epping Forest worked with colleagues from Brentwood on the tendering process and are jointly managing the study. Working across local authority boundaries with Brentwood is a practical method for producing the study due to localised economic and employment issues. W S Atkins was appointed in December 2009 to carry out the work. The study will report on capacity and need for employment land within Epping Forest District for the period covered by the LDF from 2001 to 2021, and as much detail as is practicable for the period 2021 to 2031. The study is expected to report its findings in April 2010.

2. *Strategic Flood Risk Assessment* - This study is being prepared jointly by Epping Forest District Council and Harlow District Council to consider the nature and extent of flood risk across the area. Officers from Forward Planning and Land Drainage are carrying out the work in-house for the Epping Forest District area of the study. A final report is expected in April 2010.

3. *Town Centres Study* – A draft of the final report was presented to officers in October 2009 for checking and comment. As a result of discussion with Roger Tym & Partners it was decided that further work was needed to make the report as up to date as possible. The extra work is to ensure the report references Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth which was published in December 2009. PPS4 replaces four different national policy guidance documents, either in part or entirely, including PPS6: Planning for Town Centres. In addition more up to date information on expenditure growth in the District is to be added. It has been agreed with Roger Tym & Partners that the report will be completed by the end of March 2010.

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)

4. PPS3: Housing requires all Local Planning Authorities to carry out a SHLAA that will demonstrate housing potential in the area for the following 5, 10 and 15 year periods. The SHLAA is intended to be an objective assessment of potential housing sites within Epping Forest District. The output will be a list of sites and their potential housing capacity that could be used to allocate new land for housing within the LDF when it replaces the existing Local Plan and Alterations. **It is important to note that the SHLAA does not make decisions about where housing should go or which sites are most suitable. It only provides information on potential housing sites.** The decisions about how many sites are needed and where these should be will be made as part of consultation on the LDF in particular the Core Strategy. The SHLAA is a key piece of evidence in decision making on the Core Strategy.

5. The SHLAA is a substantial piece of work as it involves investigating all potential housing sites across Epping Forest District. The work is initially desk based using maps, aerial photographs, land databases and data collected in the “Call for Sites” to find possible sites. This is followed by field visits to those that are not initially excluded for example because the site is within a nationally protected area. Assessment of potential sites will involve input from those with technical knowledge of the house building industry to test the

market viability of each site. A final report then brings together all the potential sites and their housing capacity. In the case of this District, it is particularly important to have an early and robust assessment of urban capacity, because this will determine the amount of Green Belt land that may need to be released.

6. Officers have reappraised their original decision to carry out the SHLAA in-house. Experience elsewhere suggests the SHLAA evolves to be a much larger piece of work than was envisaged at the outset. In some planning authorities the work has taken two officers working full-time up to 18 months. Apart from the pressure on officer time to do other background studies and work connected to the LDF process there is time pressure to obtain information from the SHLAA in the short term to feed into consultation on the Core Strategy.

7. The way forward would be carry out the initial desk top work in-house with the site visits and related work, in particular viability testing, to be tendered out for consultants to complete. The additional budget for the SHLAA would be used for consultants to carry out the site visits and viability testing of sites that requires input from the property industry.

8. Brentwood Borough Council appointed consultants to carry out 250 site visits and related work for a cost of around £30,000. It is estimated that a similar figure of £30,000 will be required for consultants to carry out work on the SHLAA on behalf of Epping Forest District Council.

Update of research into the Lea Valley glasshouse industry

9. Policy E13 of the original Local Plan designated areas of the Lea Valley for the glasshouse industry. The intention was to concentrate glasshouses into specific areas of the Lea Valley. Defined as temporary structures for horticulture, glasshouses are considered appropriate development within the Green Belt. However their impact on the openness of the Green Belt can be intrusive and in part the concentration policy was to locate glasshouses in areas where they would be visually less intrusive. It was also hoped to assist the glasshouse industry by providing land for expansion close to existing operations.

10. A study of the industry in the Lea Valley was completed in 2003, and this work provided evidence on which to base revised planning policies. The Alterations to the Local Plan were adopted in 2006, and replaced policy E13 with policies E13A, B and C. The policy of concentration was continued, planning decisions now had to consider harm to the overall viability/vitality of the Lea Valley glasshouse industry, and the dereliction of new glasshouse sites was to be prevented. The Alterations acknowledged that the Lea Valley glasshouse industry had changed since the Local Plan was adopted in 1998. As a result some glasshouse sites were identified for immediate de-designation and others were identified for future potential de-designation when the policy was again reviewed.

11. As with much of Epping Forest District, there are competing pressures for land in the Lea Valley with high values for housing development if planning consent can be gained. "Hope value" for future housing development could lead owners of glasshouse sites to allow the current land use to deteriorate. Recent work by the Greater London Authority on food production within the Green Belt highlighted the sustainability advantages of growing food in close proximity to the London market. A further important consideration is the long-term vitality of the successful parts of the Lea Valley glasshouse industry and how planning policy could best assist this aim.

12. A current planning application in the Lea Valley has highlighted the need for further information on the above issues. The proposal is for residential development on a glasshouse site that was identified for potential future de-designation. Decision making on individual sites needs to be made in the context of the wider Lea Valley glasshouse industry. It is therefore

necessary to undertake a further review of the glasshouse industry in the District to take into account the issues raised above. This is also a good opportunity to review the forecasts made in the last study in light of the impact the recession may have had, and the potential impact of significant recent developments such as "Planet Thanet".

13. The work required is very specialised and would be carried out by external consultants. Initial contact with potential consultants suggests that a study and review of the existing policy could cost up to approximately £30,000.

Resource Implications:

The current LDF budget does not make provision for either the SHLAA or the review of policy on the Lea Valley Glasshouse industry to be undertaken by external consultants. Officers are attempting to contain these costs within existing resources. However a future supplementary estimate up to £60,000 may be required.

Legal and Governance Implications:

N/A

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

N/A

Consultation Undertaken:

None

Background Papers:

PPS12: Local Spatial Planning (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2008);

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments: Practice Guidance (Department for Communities and Local Government, July 2007);

Viability of the Horticultural Glasshouse Industry in Epping Forest District; Prospects for the future and likely scale of development over the next 10 to 15 years (Reading Agricultural Consultants Ltd in association with Gerry Hayman and Hennock Industries Ltd, September 2003)

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

Delays to the SHLAA will impact on the overall timetable for the LDF in particular the Core Strategy. A later review of the planning policy on the Lea Valley glasshouse industry could compromise strategic decisions and again result in delays to the LDF process.

Equality and Diversity:

Did the initial assessment of the proposals contained in this report for relevance to the Council's general equality duties, reveal any potentially adverse equality implications? No

Where equality implications were identified through the initial assessment process, has a formal Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? N/A

What equality implications were identified through the Equality Impact Assessment process?
N/A.

How have the equality implications identified through the Equality Impact Assessment been addressed in this report in order to avoid discrimination against any particular group?
N/A.

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Report to the Local Development Framework Cabinet Committee



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Report reference: LDF-009-2009/10
Date of meeting: 11 March 2010

Portfolio: Leader

**Subject: Generating and Appraising Spatial Options for the Harlow Area –
Scott Wilson Report**

Responsible Officer: Amanda Wintle (01992 564543)

Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

To note the findings of the completed “Generating and Appraising Spatial Options for the Harlow Area” report, and add this into the evidence base to support the preparation of the Local Development Framework;

Executive Summary:

Scott Wilson was appointed in January 2009 to identify the spatial options that exist around Harlow to deliver the growth envisaged by the East of England Plan. This work is now complete, and a suggested spatial approach has been identified. This suggests that, over the period to 2031, development around Harlow should be distributed as follows; 10,000 dwellings to the north, 7,300 to the east, and 1,000 dwellings each to the west and south. Criteria are suggested for the required review of Green Belt boundaries which will be required, particularly to the north of Harlow, to deliver the growth.

A “Plan-Monitor-Manage” framework is suggested to enable a coordinated approach to be taken across the three district authorities.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

Policy HA1 of the East of England Plan required that this study be completed. The Local Development Framework for Epping Forest District must be prepared in accordance with the Regional Spatial Strategy, and this study will now be a key piece of the evidence base to take into account when preparing policies to deliver the requirements of the RSS.

Other Options for Action:

The East of England Plan specifically requires that this work is completed to inform the preparation of the Local Development Framework in Epping Forest, Harlow and East Herts District areas. This study has now been completed following engagement with key stakeholders and the development industry by an independent organisation. There are no reasonable alternative options.

Report:

1. Policy HA1 of the East of England Plan (May 2008) requires:

“...Harlow, East Hertfordshire and Epping Forest District Councils working with county transport authorities, the Regional Assembly, the Government Office and Harlow Renaissance should undertake an appraisal of planning and transport options to inform the preparation of joint or coordinated Local Development Documents. This work should establish the planning framework for Harlow and its urban extensions in accordance with this RSS and an implementation strategy to support its regeneration and growth.”

2. In January 2009, Scott Wilson was appointed jointly by the three local planning authorities to undertake this study, with payment being made through the Programme of Development Fund. The study will form a key piece of evidence for each of the three local authorities in preparing their Core Strategies to cover the period to 2031. The brief to the consultants included four objectives:

(a) to formulate a set of criteria to aid the identification of sustainable locations for regeneration and growth and new Green Belt areas;

(b) to provide evidence of the spatial options for delivery of regeneration and growth in and around Harlow;

(c) to inform the scale, phasing and sequencing of regeneration and growth and the implementation requirements needed to support the range of options for delivering the regeneration and growth of Harlow and the surrounding areas; and

(d) to provide a framework to implement plan-monitor-manage (P-M-M) to demonstrate housing can be implemented at the required pace and ensure regeneration and growth are balanced and sustainable.

3. To meet the requirements of the brief, Scott Wilson defined the “Harlow Area” and identified a number of Spatial Land Areas in and around Harlow. These Areas were used as a basis to collect information, and to assess the impact of growth.

4. Criteria were developed, which were applied to the Spatial Land Areas to identify the extent of land potentially available for development, and then the suitability and deliverability of that land. The criteria were grouped under the following headings:

- Exclusionary – land which did not meet these criteria was excluded (using GIS) on the basis that development in these areas would not constitute a “reasonable” option. These areas were defined as “undevelopable” land. Examples of exclusionary criteria are areas of high flood risk, areas of outstanding natural beauty, and international environmental designations.

- Discretionary – these criteria did not necessarily lead to the exclusion of land but they were important from a sustainability perspective and would influence the type and likelihood of development. Examples included high quality agricultural land, groundwater protection zones, and areas of lower flood risk.

- Opportunity – these criteria enhanced the suitability of a particular site or area. Examples included opportunities for regeneration, transport routes and accessibility.

5. The criteria were applied to the Spatial Land Areas in the order given above. Under the exclusionary criterion, land was excluded if it fell within any of the following categories:

(a) OS Meridian Urban Areas (i.e. the extent of urban development); employment areas;

- (b) national and local nature designations and;
- (c) areas designated as Flood Zone 3.

6. Discretionary criteria included issues relating to regeneration, sustainable transport and constraints identified by policy HA1. Finally, the opportunity criteria considered where the most significant gains could be achieved in terms of the regeneration of specific areas of Harlow and the protection of the Green Belt.

7. The application of these criteria led to five spatial options being identified. These options were tested to determine whether they were “reasonable”, and from this a final suggested spatial approach was identified. Summaries of the initial spatial options and the final suggested spatial approach are included in Appendix 1.

8. Spatial Option A (RSS Northern-led) took the given parameters of policy HA1 as the central criteria, and focused development primarily to the north of Harlow. This imagined 10,000 new dwellings to the north of Harlow by 2021, with much smaller urban extensions to the east, south and west. However, the significant infrastructure required (particularly transport infrastructure to the north) to enable this development meant that this could not be delivered within the RSS plan period (i.e. by 2021).

9. Spatial Option B (Policy-led 2) reflected the directional requirements of policy HA1, but also recognised more strongly the need to ensure there would be significant regeneration benefits arising from any development. However, by splitting development more evenly around Harlow, considerable uncertainty was raised over whether a critical mass would be reached to require significant improvements to the road network. This was particularly the case for developments to the north and east, which could require a new junction with the M11 and a relief road to the north of Harlow. Given the uncertainties which exist over the infrastructure required to deliver this option, it was not considered a reasonable alternative.

10. Spatial Option C (Combined criteria-led) deviated significantly from the policy background provided by the East of England Plan. This option was developed by considering how the Spatial Land Areas did against a strict application of the opportunity criteria. It subsequently focused on those areas which performed most positively when the criteria were considered cumulatively. In this instance, a significant proportion of growth was suggested to the south of Harlow, although it was stressed that any such development or accompanying infrastructure should not breach the landscape ridge to the south. Fundamentally, this option did not comply with the Regional Spatial Strategy and therefore failed the test of conformity with that Strategy. It was therefore not considered a reasonable option.

11. Spatial Option D (Regeneration-led) considered the impact of growth around Harlow in terms of the regeneration benefits that could arise. A number of measures of deprivation were considered alongside the infrastructure requirements to deliver the proposed growth. The scale of growth to the south and west would require substantial improvements to the sewage treatment network, and there was a significant risk that these upgrades would not be delivered within the plan period. It was therefore not considered a reasonable option.

12. Spatial Option E (Sustainable Transport-led) was proposed on the basis of the available public transport network. In this instance no development was proposed to the south of Harlow, but significant development was proposed to the west. This was due to the proximity of this area to Roydon station. It was recognised, however, that substantial new transport infrastructure would be required both to the north and west of Harlow to ensure proper linkages to the existing town. Substantial development to the west may also require a southern bypass to be reconsidered, therefore significantly increasing the investment that will be needed around the town. When this was considered in addition to improvements that will

be required to the sewerage network, it was not considered that this option will be deliverable in the plan period, and was therefore not practical or reasonable.

13. Taking into account all of the information presented, a “hybrid” suggested spatial option has been put forward. This reflects the requirements of policy HA1 of the East of England Plan, and the limitations of likely infrastructure funding. Appendix 1 shows this hybrid option. It is important to note that this option is based on the information that is currently available. The figures included in this option should not be treated as absolute, but are a basis on which each of the three authorities can begin to prepare their Core Strategies. It is likely that the distribution of development around Harlow will continue to evolve as preparation of the Core Strategies progresses.

14. Policy HA1 creates considerable uncertainty over the eventual scale of development to the north of Harlow, although it stipulates that Development Plan Documents should plan for a development of “*at least 10,000 dwellings and possibly significantly more*”. A review of Green Belt boundaries will be required to deliver this growth, and as a result the consultants were asked to identify criteria to guide this review. These criteria will be used when considering the Green Belt boundary review, particularly in East Herts District to the north of Harlow, where such a review will help to shape the eventual size of the northern extension.

15. Finally, a “Plan-Monitor-Manage” framework has been suggested, which will allow the three authorities to implement and monitor the growth of Harlow in a coordinated manner. The adoption of such a framework as part of the Core Strategies and Annual Monitoring Reports of each authority will seek to address some of the issues raised in the recent report by the Planning Advisory Service (December 2009), where it was identified that more formal arrangements between the three authorities should be entered into.

Resource Implications:

There are no direct resource implications arising from the report itself. However, the need for formal coordinated working between the three District authorities, the two County Councils and other key stakeholders is likely to have an impact on resources in future.

Legal and Governance Implications:

Formal arrangements should be made between the relevant organisations to ensure that the growth of Harlow is delivered as required by the East of England Plan, in a manner which is considered acceptable to this authority.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

None relevant at this time.

Consultation Undertaken:

The key stakeholders named in policy HA1 were consulted at regular intervals throughout the preparation of the study. The development industry was given an opportunity to input to the work by way of submission of several proforma providing information on land holdings around Harlow.

Background Papers:

East of England Plan, May 2008
Generating and Appraising Spatial Options for the Harlow Area – Scott Wilson, January 2010
(Main report including two Annexes)

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

There are risks associated with joint or co-ordinated working because of continuing lack of political support by East Herts for the RSS proposals for the north of Harlow. These risks may increase if there is a change of Government at the May election as the Conservatives have indicated that they will abolish the regional tier of government and all housebuilding etc targets associated with it.

Equality and Diversity:

Preparation of the Local Development Framework as a whole will be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment at a later date.

Did the initial assessment of the proposals contained in this report for relevance to the Council's general equality duties, reveal any potentially adverse equality implications? No

Where equality implications were identified through the initial assessment process, has a formal Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? N/A

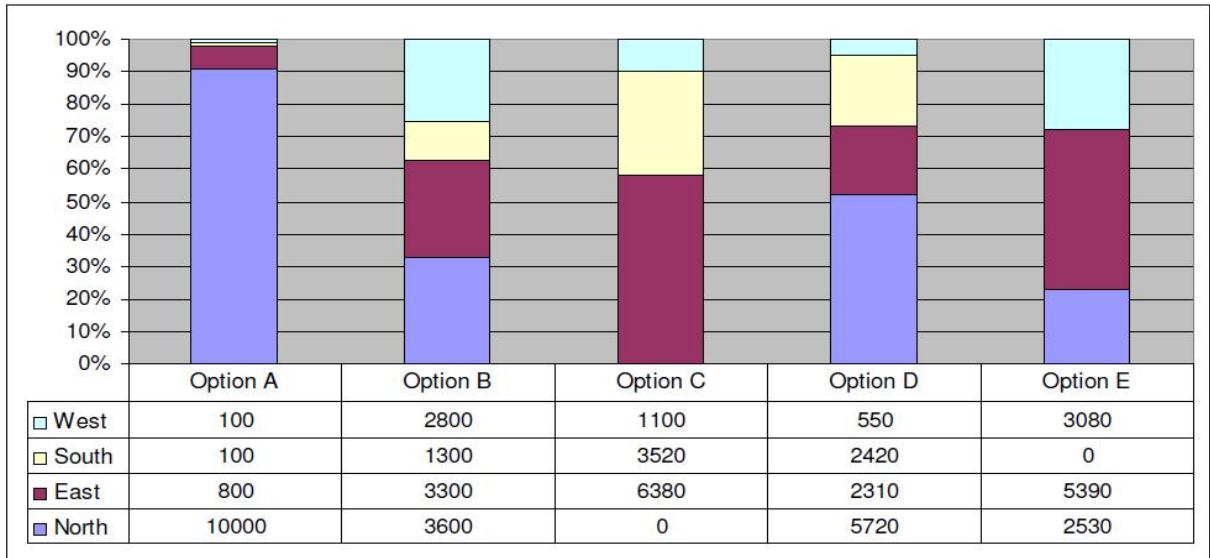
What equality implications were identified through the Equality Impact Assessment process?
N/A.

How have the equality implications identified through the Equality Impact Assessment been addressed in this report in order to avoid discrimination against any particular group?
N/A.

Appendix 1

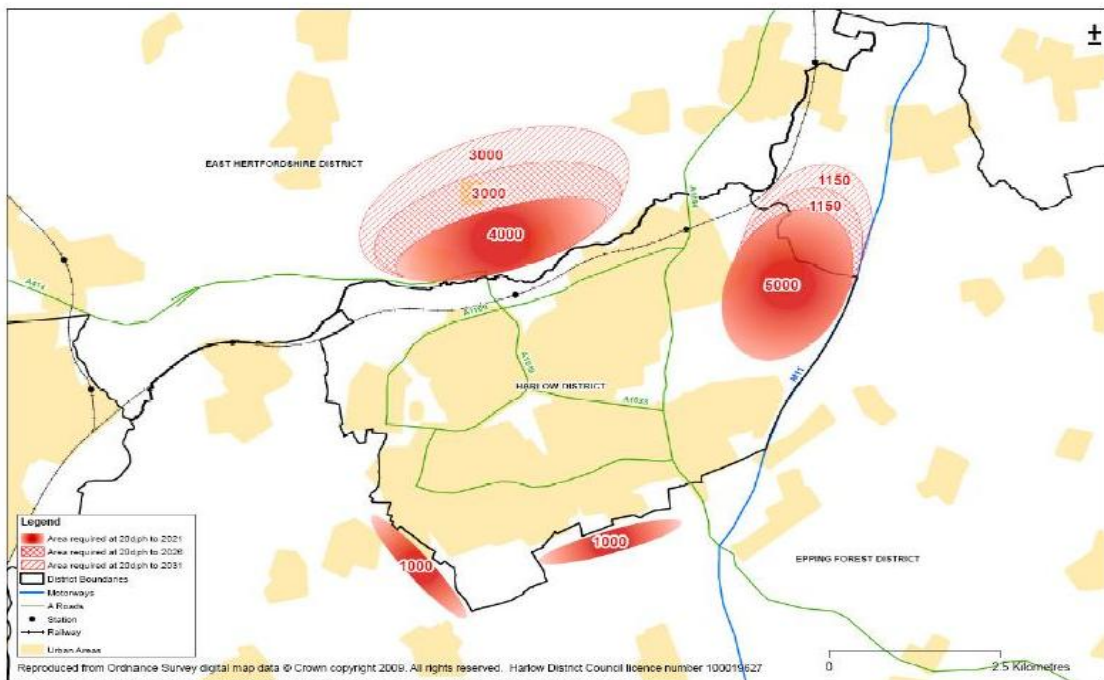
Extract: Generating and Appraising Spatial Options for the Harlow Area – p51

Table 7: Comparison of Spatial Options A - E



Extract: Generating and Appraising Spatial Options for the Harlow Area – p87

Figure 38: Suggested Spatial Approach for the Harlow Area to 2031



Report to the Local Development Framework Cabinet Committee



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Report reference: LDF-010-2009/10
Date of meeting: 11 March 2010

Portfolio: Leader

Subject: Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Diagnostic on the Local Development Framework (LDF)

Responsible Officer: Ian White (01992 564066)

Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) To consider and adopt the following recommendations, listed in order of priority, made by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) in relation to the preparation of the Local Development Framework (LDF):

(a) ensure that the Leader and the Chief Executive are engaged with the partnership work with East Herts and Harlow to champion the development of joint or co-ordinated work and documents in a timely way;

(b) produce an engagement plan that identifies the key stakeholders, including internal services, across the area, and how best to engage with them throughout the preparation of the joint or co-ordinated Development Plan Document (DPD);

(c) develop a joint briefing/awareness programme for key internal partners and Members to raise understanding of the benefits of the LDF;

(d) involve non-executive Members as part of the visioning and objective setting to increase ownership of the LDF;

(e) address and plan for the sharing of information, monitoring of the core (strategy) DPD, consultation processes and evaluation, including the need for ICT systems;

(f) encourage Councillors to seek support through the PAS Planning Members' and Leaders' networks; and

(g) seek further support from the county Local Strategic Partnership on best practice and sign-posting to information.

Executive Summary:

A consultant on behalf of the Planning Advisory Service visited the Epping Forest District Council and conducted a number of interviews about the LDF preparation on 12 October 2009. The final report, containing recommendations for actions, was received in December 2009. The recommendations included in the report are set out above, but cover matters including the further involvement of backbench Members in the LDF process, the need to address the governance arrangements that need to be made to deliver the proposed growth of Harlow, and further liaison with other key stakeholders.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

The Planning Advisory Service has undertaken this review in order to aid the Council in achieving a sound LDF. Having now received the final report, the recommendations should be considered and appropriate action taken.

Other Options for Action:

Not to take action following the recommendations of the Planning Advisory Service.

Report:

1. At its meeting on 10 September 2009, the LDF Cabinet Committee noted the decision of the Chief Executive to participate in the LDF Diagnostic as offered by PAS, and agreed to receive the completed report and consider any recommendations. A PAS consultant visited the authority on 12 October and had meetings with the Leader, the Chief Executive, the Director of Planning and Economic Development, the Assistant Director of Policy and Conservation, the Assistant Director of Development Control, the Forward Planning Manager, the Principal Planning Officer and other LDF team members, and the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Manager. The consultant also met Principal Planning and Senior Highways Officers from the County Council and held a telephone interview with a GO-East Officer. A series of documents relating to the LDF, the Local Development Scheme (LDS), the Gypsies and Travellers Development Plan Document (DPD) and the Essex Local Area Agreement (LAA) were also examined.

2. Similar exercises by PAS were carried out for East Herts (the same consultant) and Harlow at about the same time.

3. The final version of this Council's PAS report was received on 7 December 2009. The report is structured into 7 headings:

- Achieving outcomes;
- Integration and collaboration;
- Leading and engaging the community;
- Management;
- Innovation, learning and managing risks;
- Shared knowledge and evidence; and
- Decision-making.

Achieving outcomes

4. The Gypsies and Travellers DPD has been a difficult and contentious issue for the authority, work on which has undermined the delivery of other elements of the LDS. Public perceptions of the planning process have suffered as a result of the consultation on increased pitch provision for Gypsies and Travellers, and from the related negative media coverage. That being said, the consultant was complimentary about the "very robust approach to the delivery" of the DPD, and in particular the work undertaken to engage with the travelling community.

5. Delay to the preparation of the Core Strategy has been compounded by the delay to the preparation of the East of England Plan. Since its publication, officers have worked hard to develop the evidence base and ensure co-ordinated working on growth options for Harlow. This work needs to evolve to include discussions with Members of all the authorities. The joint or co-ordinated work requirement has made the process appear more cumbersome, and

is perceived as an obstacle to progressing other priorities, in particular shaping the future of the district outside the Harlow area.

Integration and collaboration

6. Within the Council, the consultant recognised the existence of strategic management teams, but she felt that there was poor communication across these teams. The LDF is a standing agenda item for the Corporate Executive Forum, but across other Directorates there appeared to be limited understanding of the work and information that was available from the LDF team.

7. It is essential that there is a debate around the roles and relationships of Epping, Harlow and East Herts Councils, so that key partners can share a common spatial vision and objectives to develop and deliver their LDFs. The consultant understood that there is no buy-in to this process from East Herts politicians, but noted that the Leader of EFDC was taking a proactive approach to facilitate better engagement, at Member level, with the neighbouring authorities.

8. The consultant suggests that an open and transparent discussion between Members and officers over the spatial approach to development in all three districts has the potential to benefit all the authorities. It remains unclear how the Council is working with East Herts and Harlow, the two County Councils and the Regional Development Agency to integrate plans to deliver infrastructure in the longer term. A co-ordinated multi-organisational approach is required.

9. It is not clear that the work of corporate partners is integrated into the LDF work streams. Better buy-in from partner services needs to be established and this would be facilitated by the championing of the LDF process.

10. The authority is working well with the Epping Forest LSP, but still struggles to engage with the County LSP, and would welcome further help and support with best practice.

Leading and engaging the community.

11. The consultant concluded that the Leader and Chief Executive understand the LDF process and the intention to link with the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and other strategic documents. They recognise that there is still work to be done as the connections are not as well understood in other areas of planning. The authority still has a focus on the regulatory approach of development control, rather than moving towards a development management approach.

12. The splitting of the planning service between three portfolio holders impacts on how the process is championed and delivered. Planning was perceived as having a low profile which was exacerbated by the division of the portfolio. While the Leader is responsible for the LDF, and the LDF Cabinet Committee has been established for some time, the wider membership does not appear to have a consistent understanding of the LDF. Backbench Members are not sufficiently involved and therefore tend to be parochial in their outlook. They appear to be able only to consider the effects on their wards rather than helping the authority to develop and deliver a clear vision for the area as a whole.

13. The Forward Planning team is perceived as predominantly inward-facing and focused on specific topics. It has taken time to make the cultural transition required by the 2004 Planning Act. It was unclear whether the Core Strategy was seen as a delivery plan for the Council's wider strategic aspirations.

14. The report is complimentary about several recent initiatives by the authority to involve the local community. These include the close links with the LSP and in particular the strong programme of engagement to refresh the SCS, the use of web casting, the techniques used to involve the travelling community, and guidance notes for town and parish councils concerning village plans and design statements.

Management

15. The consultant felt that the amount of work required for the (new) planning process has been underestimated and the full implications of programmes have not been grasped. There was very little evidence of resource-based plans or Gantt charts and the authority needs to pay far greater attention to project and resource management. Such systems need to be developed to refocus resources to where they are most required.

16. A project management approach would enable the better alignment of key strategies and joint or co-ordinated working across the three authorities and with other agencies.

17. Improvements to computer programmes to facilitate the collation of representations and the sharing of information are also required. The consultant was concerned about the impact the lack of suitable ICT has had on the collation and analysing of the Gypsies and Travellers consultation responses.

18. Since the report from the consultant has been completed, Forward Planning have commenced installation of a web-based consultation system which is fully integrated with the existing Northgate planning applications system.

Innovation, learning and managing risks.

19. The implications and responsibilities of joint or co-ordinated working with neighbouring authorities and partners have yet to be formally worked through. Senior management has been slow to respond to the needs of the LDF process and team, and needs to identify how working with the neighbouring authorities will benefit the Council.

20. The risks to partnership working need to be identified, monitored and mitigated wherever possible. Effective governance arrangements are required between the three authorities to ensure the development and delivery of improved places for their local communities.

Shared knowledge and evidence

21. It would be useful to look at how information is shared across the organisation and with partners to ensure that the best use is being made of resources for the monitoring of the LDF, SCS and LAA. This should ensure that information is collected once but used on numerous occasions. Links will also be required with Hertfordshire databases.

22. The Council opted out of the county monitoring service several years ago as there was duplication of work and information was not always available at appropriate times. The consultant suggests that this decision should be re-visited as better monitoring is required to draw out clear messages to inform the development of future policy.

23. It would be useful to have a standing item on sharing information at senior management meetings, and a central area for information storage. Better shared systems could be developed with the Performance Improvement Unit and with the County Council Observatory.

Decision-making

24. There are no clear governance arrangements in place to cover the growth agenda and joint or co-ordinated working with neighbouring authorities. It is a complicated picture involving three district councils, three LSPs, two county councils, at least one PCT and other partners. It is certainly unclear as to who might be the lead organisation.

25. The consultant concludes that it is essential that a common vision and objectives, memorandum of understanding, programme and governance arrangements are established to facilitate decision making.

Resource Implications:

Dependent on decisions taken regarding the PAS recommendations.

Legal and Governance Implications:

Dependent on decisions taken regarding the PAS recommendations.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

Not applicable.

Consultation Undertaken:

Corporate Executive Forum.

Background Papers:

Copy of the PAS report issued on 7 December 2009.

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

The report addresses the risks associated with joint or co-ordinated working with East Herts and Harlow Councils. While not part of the PAS study, account may need to be taken of the Conservative Green Paper on Planning which is due to be published in late February. This discusses abolishing the regional government tier and all housebuilding targets associated with regional spatial strategies.

Equality and Diversity:

Did the initial assessment of the proposals contained in this report for relevance to the Council's general equality duties, reveal any potentially adverse equality implications? No

Where equality implications were identified through the initial assessment process, has a formal Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? N/A

What equality implications were identified through the Equality Impact Assessment process?
N/A

How have the equality implications identified through the Equality Impact Assessment been addressed in this report in order to avoid discrimination against any particular group?

N/A