

Committee Agenda



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Local Development Framework Cabinet Committee Thursday, 27th May, 2010

Place: Council Chamber
Civic Offices, High Street, Epping

Time: 7.00 pm

Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (Office of the Chief Executive)
Email: gwoodhall@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
Tel: 01992 564470

Members:

To be agreed at the meeting of the Annual Council on 25 May 2010.

<p>PLEASE NOTE THE START TIME OF THIS MEETING</p>
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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.

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. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT (Pages 5 - 12)

(Director of Planning & Economic Development) To consider the attached report (LDF-001-2010/11).

8. STRATEGIC HOUSING LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT - DRAFT METHODOLOGY (Pages 13 - 32)

(Director of Planning & Economic Development) To consider the attached report (LDF-002-2010/11).

9. 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-001-2010/11
Date of meeting: 27 May 2010

Portfolio: Leader

Subject: Landscape Character Assessment - Evidence Base Study

Responsible Officer: Ian White (01992 564066).

Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

To provisionally “sign off” the content of the Landscape Character Assessment Study as part of the Local Development Framework Evidence Base.

Executive Summary:

The landscape is a key part of the attractiveness of the District and is highly valued by residents and visitors. The Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) identifies the different character types within the District, and provides a better understanding of how this landscape has been formed, its diversity and distinctiveness, its sensitivity to change and management needs

The resulting assessment will help guide decision making that will better take into account the landscape character of the District. In particular the LCA will enable the Council to adopt detailed policy which seeks to conserve and enhance the landscapes of the District. Such policy will ensure that the landscape of the District continues to be as rich as possible visually, ecologically and culturally and better able to meet the current and future needs and interests of the community. There are also strong links with Biodiversity Action plans and some of their targets.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To ensure that full account is given to the protection and enhancement of landscapes in policy formulation, decisions on planning applications and the management of land.

Other Options for Action:

Not to include the Study as part of the Evidence Base.

Report:

Context for Study

1. PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (2004) advises that carefully drafted, criteria-based policies in local development documents, utilising tools such as landscape character assessments, should provide sufficient protection for rural areas which are not included in national designations (eg Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty). PPS7 (para 24)

also warns against “rigid local designations” that may unduly restrict acceptable sustainable development and the economic activity that underpins the vitality of rural areas.

2. The East of England Plan identifies 20 “Countryside Character Areas” in the region and policy ENV2 (Landscape Conservation) advises that “Planning authorities and other agencies should recognise and aim to protect and enhance the diversity and local distinctiveness of the countryside character areas by:

(a) developing area-wide strategies, based on landscape character assessments, setting long-term goals for landscape change, targeting planning and land management tools and resources to influence that change, and giving priority to those areas subject to most growth and change;

(b) developing criteria-based policies, informed by the area-wide strategies and landscape character assessments, to ensure all development respects and enhances local landscape character; and

(c) securing mitigation measures where, in exceptional circumstances, damage to local landscape character is unavoidable.”

3. In April 2009 the Council commissioned Chris Blandford Associates (CBA) to undertake a Landscape Character Assessment of the District. The brief required that the study should be (a) in accordance with “Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland” (Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage 2002), and subsequent topic papers on best practice and methodologies as published by national bodies; and (b) broadly informed by historic patterns of land use change and methods and nature of enclosure.

4. CBA completed a County-level study of landscape character in 2002, and a “Harlow Area Landscape and Environment Study” (2004) as part of the Evidence Base for the East of England Plan Examination in Public. They have also prepared character assessments in other Essex districts including some neighbouring authorities, so their appointment ensured that there would be a significant level of consistency in approach and analysis across council boundaries.

The Study

5. The study is in 4 sections:

(i) an introduction which lists the aims and objectives and describes the methodology;

(ii) an overview of the District, outlining the physical and historical influences which have shaped the present-day landscape, and identifying key forces for change;

(iii) the “meat” of the document – the identification of 7 Landscape Character Types, within which are 33 distinct Landscape Character Areas; and

(iv) recommendations for taking the study forward – these include:

(a) applications of the assessment, incorporating Landscape Character, into the Local Development Framework;

(b) monitoring landscape change; and

(c) enhancing the Evidence Base.

6. The development of the LCA was carefully monitored primarily by the Principal Officer (Landscape and Trees) with assistance from the Forward Planning Manager; all drafts were subject to modifications and improvements, and as now presented the Assessment is considered “fit for purpose”.

7. The 7 Landscape Character Types (see map at Appendix 1) identified by the consultants are briefly described below:

(i) River Valley Floodplain – the Lea Valley running south from Roydon to Sewardstone with 4 Character Areas described;

(ii) River Valley – 4 Character Areas again, one being the River Stort at Lower Sheering, and the others covering the River Roding from Berners Roding south-west to Buckhurst Hill;

(iii) Farmland Plateau – 9 Character Areas are identified in 3 distinct sections, the first from Sheering to Abbess Roding and Fyfield (3 Areas). The second comprises Berners Roding, Willingale, Norton Heath and Nine Ashes (2 Areas). The third (4 Areas) is in the north-west of the District, including Roydon, Nazeing, Epping Green and Thornwood Common;

(iv) Woodland Ridges – there are 2 distinct Character Areas, the first being immediately north and east of Epping, and the second being the main Epping Forest ridge running south-west from Epping to the District boundary with Chingford;

(v) Farmed Ridges – 1 Character Area running along the south side of Harlow;#

(vi) Ridges and Valleys – 2 distinct sections comprising 6 Character Areas, the first including all the land between Waltham Abbey and Epping, and running south to include Sewardstonebury (4 Character Areas). The second covers the countryside around North Weald, including The Lavers, Moreton and Bobbingworth (2 Character Areas);

(vii) Wooded Ridges and Valleys – 2 sections in the southern half of the District bisected by the River Roding. The first (4 Character Areas) runs south-west from Ongar to Theydon Bois and Loughton, abutting the southern edge of Epping. The second (3 Character Areas) is south of the Roding from Chigwell east to Stapleford Abbots.

8. The study lists the Key Characteristics of the 7 Types and describes in some detail all of the Character Areas, concluding with suggested guidelines for Landscape Planning and Land Management.

Applications of the Character Assessment

9. A recent public consultation exercise as part of the preparation of the Sustainable Communities Strategy has highlighted just how important the “greenness” of the District is to local residents. This obviously reflects the success of Green Belt policies over the last 50 or so years, with the rural landscape being the major contributor towards the District’s greenness. The Assessment enables a deeper understanding of the rural landscape by:

(i) identifying and describing what gives places their identity and distinctiveness; and

(ii) helping to guide new development to be sympathetic to those particular qualities by protecting and enhancing valued characteristics.

10. The Core Strategy should therefore include at least one policy dealing with landscape

character – a draft proposed policy is included as Appendix C in the study – to ensure that the implications of different locations and patterns of strategic development are considered. In general terms, this policy approach is supported, however this is subject to detailed consideration of the proposed wording and the outcome of any public consultation. It will be useful to develop more detailed policies for other Development or Supplementary Planning Documents, based on the suggested landscape planning and land management guidelines in the Character Area sections of the study. This will accord with the approach proposed in the East of England Plan as outlined in paragraph 2 of this report. The more detailed policies will be of particular use for taking decisions on planning applications.

11. Landscape character should also feature in other Core Strategy policies – notably those addressing nature and heritage conservation and design. This will ensure that these policies are based upon comprehensive evidence which will help protect the unique features of the District.

12. The Assessment will be used to inform the Sustainability Appraisal of the Core Strategy and other DPDs. It will also provide a baseline for monitoring the impact of new development on landscape character, and the targeting of landscape enhancements in relation to development schemes.

13. There are obvious close links with the Biodiversity Action Plans of both the District and Council Councils, and with the emerging Living Landscapes Strategy which is being drawn up by Essex Wildlife Trust. The Character Assessment may also help to inform National Indicator 197 (management of wildlife sites). There is growing national and regional interest in the preparation of “Green Infrastructure Strategies”. These are intended to bring together consideration of landscape, biodiversity, food production, recreation, education and climate change and to develop links between, and networks of, green spaces to promote appropriate uses for the benefit of local communities in this District. Such a strategy could also encompass the more “traditional” Green Belt issues such as openness and the prevention of urban sprawl or coalescence of settlements. A Green Infrastructure Strategy can be prepared either as an integral part of a Core Strategy or as a stand-alone document. If the Council does adopt such a strategy, this will have very close links with the assessment of the character of the rural landscape.

14. A Landscape Sensitivity Study has also been prepared by CBA. This Study considers the main towns and villages in the District, and the sensitivity of the landscape to change. The outcomes of this Study will be considered at a future meeting of the LDF Cabinet Committee.

15. The consultants suggest how the Character Assessment could be developed or enhanced in the future. Ideas include landscape design guidance, and more detailed studies on local distinctiveness and historic environment.

Resource Implications:

The study cost £24,745 and was funded from the LDF budget.

Legal and Governance Implications:

None relevant.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

The Character Assessment enables a deeper understanding of the rural landscape of the District – a key component of its greenness.

Consultation Undertaken:

None at this stage, although the study will be part of the Evidence Base for the Core Strategy and will therefore be subject to public consultation at appropriate times.

Background Papers:

PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (2004)
East of England Plan (2008)
Harlow Area Landscape and Environment Study (2004) – CBA
Essex Landscape Character Assessment (2002) – CBA
Epping Forest Biodiversity Action Plan 2008 - 2012

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

None.

Equality and Diversity:

Preparation of the Local Development Framework as a whole will be subject to an on-going Equality Impact Assessment, as part of the Sustainability Appraisal.

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? N/A

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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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 Rammey 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

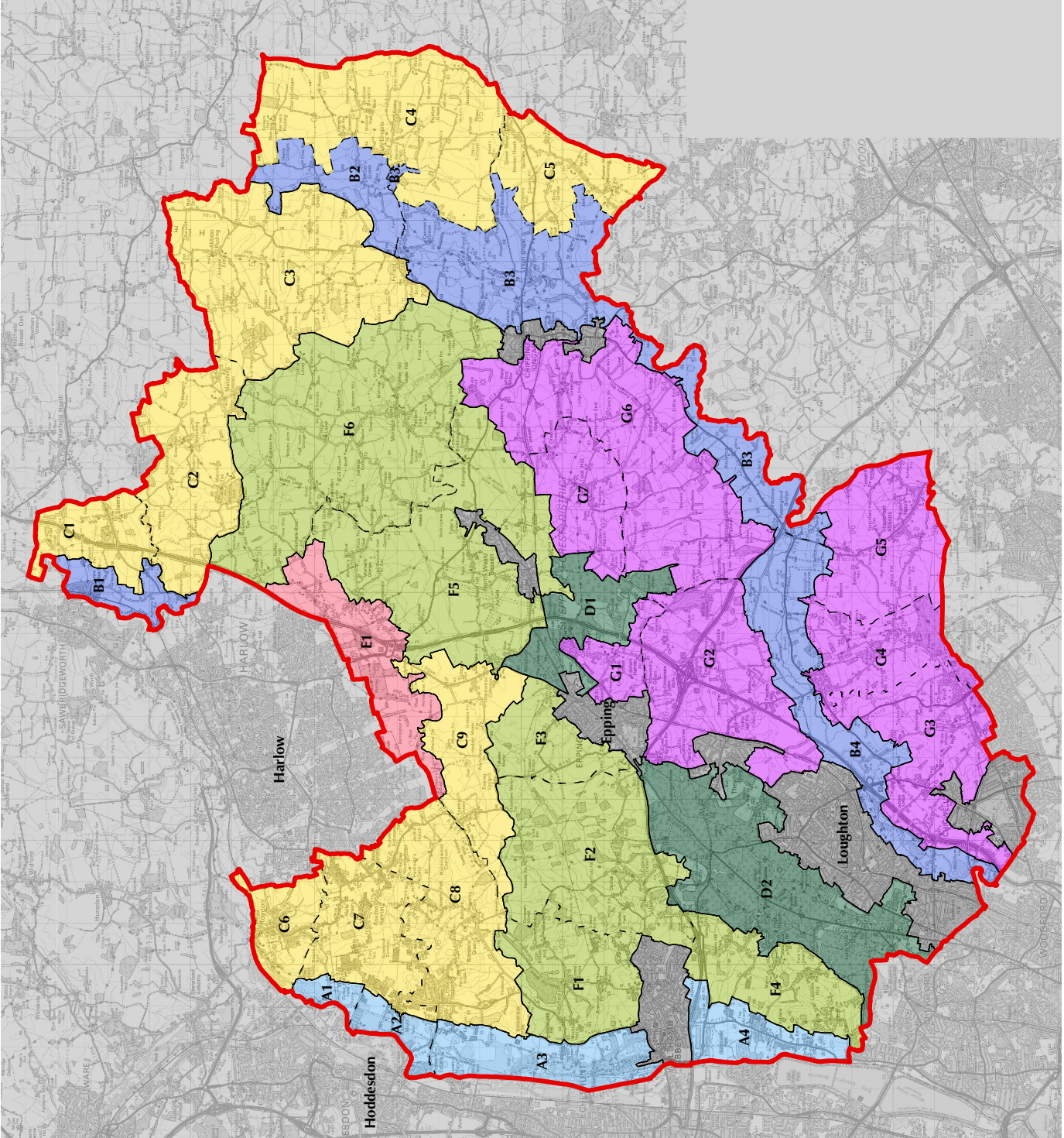
- D Wooded Ridges
- D1 Lower Forest to Beachet Wood Ridge
- D2 Epping Forest Ridge

- E Farmland Ridges
- E1 Jack's Hatch to Church Langley

- F Ridges and Valleys
- F1 Holyfield
- F2 Upshire
- F3 Cobbin's Bridge
- F4 Lippitts and Daws Hills
- F5 North Weald
- F6 Magdalen Laver and Moreton

- G Wooded Ridges and Valleys
- G1 Coopersale
- G2 Theydon Carnon
- G3 Chigwell
- G4 Lambourne
- G5 Stapleford Abbotts
- G6 Stapleford Tawney and Stanford Rivers
- G7 Toot Hill

- Urban
- Study Area



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Report to the Local Development Framework Cabinet Committee



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Report reference: LDF-002-2010/11
Date of meeting: 27 May 2010

Portfolio: Planning & Economic Development

Subject: Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) - Draft Methodology

Responsible Officer: Kevin Wright (01992 564095).

Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Draft Methodology be approved for consultation with key local stakeholders and as the basis upon which to appoint external consultants.

Executive Summary:

Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3) requires that the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) be carried out in consultation with key local stakeholders such as house builders, developers, social housing providers and town and parish councils. The draft methodology sets out how the SHLAA will be carried out and the criteria that will be used in making an assessment of sites. In accordance with PPS3 it is important that these stakeholders are given the opportunity to comment on the draft methodology for the SHLAA.

The SHLAA will provide evidence for decisions to be made in the Core Strategy on the location of housing development in the District. The SHLAA is a technical document; it will not make decisions about the location of future housing development however it will give an indication of the available capacity.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To allow key local stakeholders to be consulted on the SHLAA Draft Methodology and to appoint external consultants to undertake the assessments.

Other Options for Action:

To not approve the Draft Methodology for consultation and the basis for appointing consultants. However, the SHLAA is a key part of the evidence for the LDF, and may cause the Core Strategy to be found unsound if not carried out correctly.

Report:

1. PPS3 requires local planning authorities to plan, monitor and manage the supply of housing. In planning for housing development local planning authorities are required to identify sufficient land for housing to cover the period of the Local Development Framework. For Epping Forest District this will be from 2011 to 2031.

2. The Core Strategy is the key document within the Local Development Framework, and it is this document which will identify the broad locations for future development. The primary role of the SHLAA is to identify sites with potential for housing, assess their housing capacity and assess when they could be developed. The SHLAA is a technical document that will assess the housing potential of identified sites. The information in the SHLAA is a key part of the Evidence Base and will support decisions that are made in the Core Strategy.

3. In carrying out the SHLAA the local planning authority needs to consult with house builders, developers, social housing providers and town and parish councils. By involving these stakeholders at this stage the aim is to ensure the assessment of housing capacity is thorough and realistic. Consultation on the methodology will ensure that the evidence provided by the SHLAA will stand up to scrutiny when the Core Strategy is subject to public examination by a Planning Inspector.

4. The SHLAA Practice Guidance allows local planning authorities some discretion in designing the methodology to suit the local authority area. The SHLAA Draft Methodology involves a desktop review to identify potential sources of sites for housing development in accordance with the SHLAA Practice Guidance. However for the desktop review discretion has been exercised in setting a site size threshold of 6 dwellings or 0.2 hectares for this District (see paragraphs 20 and 21 of the SHLAA Draft Methodology in Appendix 1 to this report). Based on previous experience in the District, sites below this threshold yield only a small number of dwellings. Therefore for the likely return it was felt the amount of effort involved to consider these smaller sites was not worthwhile. If the SHLAA does not identify sufficient land to meet the minimum housing target for the District these smaller sites could then be considered.

5. As part of the desktop review each identified site is assessed against a set of standard questions in a Site Appraisal Sheet. This draws out further information about each site and its potential suitability for housing development (see paragraph 22 of the SHLAA Draft Methodology in Appendix 1, and the Site Appraisal Sheet in Appendix 2 to this report). The questions in the Site Appraisal Sheet are divided into 3 stages. To be considered suitable for housing development a site must meet the minimum requirements of Stage 1. The aim of Stage 1 is to ensure that potential housing sites are located either within or adjoining an existing settlement, are not within the zone for the highest risk of flooding and would not impact on sites of European or national conservation or heritage importance. Provided a site meets these minimum requirements a further assessment is made in Stages 2 and 3 against a range of other constraints.

6. The Site Appraisal Sheet uses a traffic light scoring system for each question. Answers to questions will receive a score of 1 for green, 2 for amber and 3 for red. At the end of the assessment the scores for a site are added together. The lower the overall score the more suitable the site is likely to be for housing.

7. Before Stage 1 of the Site Appraisal Sheet all sites are included. After Stage 1, Greenfield sites located away from existing settlements within the Green Belt policy are discounted. These isolated sites covered by the Green Belt policy may only be considered if it is found that all the other types of sites fail to provide sufficient housing capacity to meet the minimum housing target for the District. However after Stage 1 Greenfield or brownfield sites adjoining existing settlement boundaries that are within the Green Belt policy will not be discounted. It is for the Core Strategy to decide whether the Green Belt policy around existing settlements will be reviewed such that some of these sites could be developed for housing. The reasoning for this approach is that brownfield sites within the main towns close to public transport are considered the most sustainable, whereas Greenfield sites located away from existing settlements, are considered the least sustainable.

8. All the sites identified by the desktop review will be visited with attention paid to particular considerations, for example current development hotspots that have been the focus of recent planning permissions and that give an indication of recent market demand (see paragraph 25 of the SHLAA Draft Methodology at Appendix 1).

9. The next steps would be to consult with the stakeholders identified in the Appendix of the SHLAA Draft Methodology. Following the consultation, changes would be made to the draft methodology as appropriate and a final methodology published. Consultants would then be appointed to carry out the SHLAA using the methodology. The SHLAA will involve continuous engagement with the development industry to ensure the assessments of capacity on each site are realistic. The output from the SHLAA will be a list of potential housing sites, their capacity and an assessment of when they could be developed. Members will receive the draft list of sites from the SHLAA at a future meeting of this Committee. It is anticipated that the work will take approximately 6 months from the appointment of consultants.

Resource Implications:

From LDF budget – estimated cost £30,000 as set out in report LDF-008-2009/10 (11/03/10).

Legal and Governance Implications:

No relevant implications.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

No relevant implications.

Consultation Undertaken:

None.

Background Papers:

Report to LDF Cabinet Committee LDF-008-2009/10 (11/03/10)
Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (2nd edition, January 2010)
Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments Practice Guidance (July 2007)

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

Risk to the Core Strategy not being found “sound” by the Inspector at the public examination due to the procedures for carrying out the SHLAA not being correctly followed.

Equality and Diversity:

Preparation of the Local Development Framework as a whole will be subject to an on-going Equality Impact Assessment, as part of the Sustainability Appraisal.

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? No

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

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.

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

Draft Methodology for Consultation

Introduction

1. This document sets out the method to be used for carrying out a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). The SHLAA is an important part of the evidence base to support the delivery of sufficient land for housing to meet the local need for more homes.
2. The methodology has been prepared in accordance with Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments, Practice Guidance published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (July 2007).

Local Planning Context

3. Local planning authorities in England and Wales are required to produce a Local Development Framework (LDF) containing policies to guide development within their area. Epping Forest District Council is in the process of producing an LDF to replace the existing Local Plan and Alterations.
4. The key document in the LDF is the Core Strategy which will make decisions about the locations for new housing, employment, infrastructure and community facilities within Epping Forest District. The SHLAA will provide information on potential housing sites within the district to assist the decisions that will be made in the Core Strategy. It is important to note that the SHLAA will only provide background information on potential housing sites. The SHLAA is not a policy document.
5. The Regional Plan for the East of England identifies a housing target for Epping Forest District of 3,500 houses in the period 2001 to 2021. This equates to an average of 175 new dwellings per annum. Since the baseline of 2001 a significant number of new dwellings have either been built, received planning consent, are under development or identified in a development brief (1,784 dwelling completions, 712 dwellings planning consent not implemented, 299 dwellings commenced not completed, 167 dwellings in development brief up to 31/03/09). In the remaining period to 2021 538 dwellings are needed to be developed to meet the minimum housing target in the East of England Plan.
6. The East of England Plan is now being reviewed to provide new targets for development, including housing, up to 2031. A new housing target for the district up to 2031 is likely to be confirmed in 2011 when the review of the East of England plan is adopted. Current indications suggest there will be a continuation of a similar growth rate over 2011-2031. The SHLAA will therefore be carried out within these parameters.
7. The East of England Plan also sets out a housing target for Harlow which includes "urban extensions" of the existing town into the districts of East Hertfordshire and Epping Forest. In practice this means that any new housing forming an urban extension from Harlow will not count towards the housing target for Epping Forest District. In effect this increases the number of new dwellings to be planned for within Epping Forest District.

National Planning Policy

8. The national approach to planning for housing is contained in Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3) which seeks to provide a ready supply of land for housing to meet future demand and needs. To ensure there is sufficient land available at the local level PPS3 requires planning authorities to carry out an assessment of land supply for housing in their area known as the SHLAA. Specifically this requires the following:
- **Identify specific, deliverable sites for the first five years of a plan that are ready for development** – this information is to be kept up to date and topped up as sites are developed
 - **Identify specific, developable sites for years 6-10**, and ideally years 11-15, in plans to enable the five year supply to be topped up¹
9. For years 11-15 broad locations for growth can be indicated where it is not possible to identify specific sites. An allowance for windfall sites² should not be made for the first 10 years of the plan. However where local circumstances make it difficult to identify specific sites a windfall allowance may be justified.

Purpose of the SHLAA

10. The role of the SHLAA is to identify sites with potential for housing in appropriate locations; assess their potential; and assess when they are likely to be developed.

Overall aim of the SHLAA

11. According to the Practice Guidance the SHLAA should aim to achieve the following outcomes
- i. Produce a list of sites, cross referenced to maps showing locations and boundaries of specific sites (or broad locations where applicable)
 - ii. Provide an assessment of each site's deliverability/developability and a realistic timescale for when the site is expected to be developed i.e. during the period 0-5 years, 6-10 years or 11-15 years.
 - iii. An estimate of the potential number of houses that could be developed on the site.
 - iv. Provide details of any constraints on the site.
 - v. Recommendations on how these constraints could be overcome and when.

Partnership Approach

12. Where possible the SHLAA should be carried out at the level of the Housing Market Area which usually extends across the boundary of neighbouring local authorities. A joint Housing Market Assessment has been carried out for the local

¹ Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments, Practice Guidance – Department for Communities and Local Government (July 2007)

² Windfall – a housing site that was not allocated by local planning policy and becomes available for development at a later date

authorities in the sub-region known as the M11/London Commuter Belt East. This area comprises the districts of Uttlesford, Epping Forest, Harlow, Brentwood, East Hertfordshire and Broxbourne. A number of Housing Market Areas have been identified in the sub-region, and Epping Forest District falls within 5 separate areas.

13. Epping Forest, Harlow and East Hertfordshire are adopting a co-ordinated approach to the development of their individual Local Development Frameworks because of the planned regeneration and growth of Harlow and how it will involve the two neighbouring districts. All three local authorities have timetabled the stages in producing their Core Strategy to happen at approximately the same time. Each of the three local authorities will produce their own SHLAA. Due to the different nature of the three districts the timing of each SHLAA will vary although this should not affect the overall timetable for producing each Core Strategy.
14. The other authorities in the sub-region, Uttlesford, Brentwood and Broxbourne are all at different stages in the production of their LDF. It was decided that it was not practical to prepare the SHLAA in partnership with these neighbouring authorities. The SHLAA is to be prepared for the area of Epping Forest District only, this approach being acceptable under the Practice Guidance. The other authorities in the Housing Market Area will be consulted on the Epping Forest SHLAA, in particular East Hertfordshire and Harlow.

Key Local Stakeholders

15. The work of producing the SHLAA will include the input of key local stakeholders such as house builders, social landlords, planning agents, town/parish councils and any other agencies that have a recognised interest in the district. These key local stakeholders ('the SHLAA Partnership') will be consulted on this methodology and their views will help to shape the way in which the SHLAA is carried out. In addition the views of key local stakeholders will be sought in assessing the deliverability and developability of potential sites.

Stages in the Methodology

16. These stages are set out below and follow the approach given in the Practice Guidance.
 - 1) Planning the Assessment
 - 2) Determining which sources of sites will be included in the Assessment
 - 3) Desktop review of existing information
 - 4) Assessing which sites and areas will be surveyed
 - 5) Carrying out the survey
 - 6) Estimating the housing potential of each site
 - 7) Assessing when and whether sites are likely to be developed
 - i. Assessing suitability for housing
 - ii. Assessing availability for housing
 - iii. Assessing achievability for housing
 - iv. Overcoming constraints
 - 8) Review of the Assessment
 - 9) Identifying and assessing the housing potential of broad locations (where necessary)
 - 10) Determining the housing potential of windfall (where justified)

17. The Forward Planning team at Epping Forest District Council will manage the production of the SHLAA via the appointed consultants. The Forward Planning team has an extensive knowledge of local policies and the development of housing sites within the District which will be relayed to the appointed consultants. At different stages other officers of the Council will be needed to provide specific assistance (see Stages 6 and 7). Consultation with key local stakeholders will ensure that the assessment is properly conducted to the expected level of detail and in accordance with the Practice Guidance.

Stage 2 Determining which sources of sites will be included in the Assessment

Table 1 below lists the sources of potential sites that will be considered in the assessment. If any other sources of potential sites become apparent during the Assessment these will also be investigated.

Sites in the planning process	
Source of potential sites	Source of information
Unimplemented planning permissions for housing	In-house database
Planning permissions for housing under construction	In-house database
Housing allocations	Local Plan and Alterations
All other land allocations	Local Plan and Alterations
Sites not currently in the planning process	
Sources of potential sites	Source of information
Vacant and derelict land and buildings	National Land Use Database Urban Housing Capacity Study 2002 Empty Property register Valuation office database LPA vacant property registers (industrial and commercial) Commercial property databases English House Condition Survey
Surplus public sector land	Essex County Council Land Terrier Primary Care Trust(s) Environment Agency British Waterways Contact Utility companies for Land holdings EFDC Land Terrier via Asset Management Group Register of Surplus Public Sector Land
Land in non-residential use which may be suitable for redevelopment for housing	Urban Housing Capacity study 2002 National Land Use Database Call for Sites Site visits Desktop survey
Additional housing opportunities in established residential areas	Urban Housing Capacity Study 2002 Desktop survey using Aerial Photographs Site visits
Large scale redevelopment and re-design of existing residential areas	Call for Sites Development and Design Brief St John's, Epping Broadway Options Development Brief,

	Debden Broadway Site visits
Sites in rural settlements and rural exception sites	Local Plan representations that were not allocated. Call for Sites Parish Council information Site visits
Urban extensions	Call for Sites
New free standing settlements	Call for Sites

18. Wherever possible the initial assessment will not exclude consideration of any type of land. The exception will be those sites that have particular designations and are protected from harmful development, for example Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

Stage 3: Desktop review of existing information

19. The sources of information for potential sites have been discussed in Table 1 above. A Call for Sites exercise was conducted in 2008 to enable landowners, developers and members of the public to put forward potential development sites. Due to the delay in producing the Core Strategy, sites being put forward under the Call for Sites process are still currently being accepted.

20. Apart from setting out the sources of information another key aspect is deciding the size of sites that will be included in the assessment. It is possible to look at all sites that have potential for at least one dwelling. However the potential housing yield from the exercise would be unlikely to justify the amount of extra work involved. Analysis of the information for the 5 year housing land supply for the District shows that while there are a considerable number of small sites they contribute a relatively small number of dwellings in the overall housing supply. A 5 year housing land supply can still be achieved even when those sites with 5 or less dwellings are removed from the figures.

21. It is proposed that a threshold of 6 dwellings minimum per site is set PPS3 states that a minimum density for new dwellings to be achieved is 30 dwellings per hectare. Therefore the threshold for sites to be included in the assessment should be 6 dwellings or 0.2 hectare (this area allows for 6 dwellings at a density of 30 dwellings per hectare).

22. As part of the desktop review each site will be assessed against a Site Appraisal Sheet (see Appendix to this report). This asks a series of standard questions that draw out further information about each site and its potential suitability for housing development.

23. All the sites identified by the desktop review will be listed and mapped at the scale of 1:1250.

Stage 4: Assessing which sites and areas will be surveyed

24. All the sites identified by the desktop review will be visited. In addition to considering all identified sites attention will be paid to the following:

- Current development hotspots that are the focus of recent planning permissions and give an indication of current market demand;

- Town and district centres and an area within 10 minutes walking time of these centres (up to 800metres is approximately a 10 minute walk time);
 - Principal public transport corridors and their walking catchment areas.
25. The survey of potential sites will follow a sequence with the most sustainable sites considered first. In this context the most sustainable sites are considered to be urban brownfield sites in the main towns located close to existing public transport routes, followed by brownfield sites in the main towns, followed by brownfield sites surrounding the main towns, then Greenfield sites around the main towns, then brownfield sites in smaller settlements, then sites on the edge of smaller settlements, then brownfield sites located away from existing settlements and finally Greenfield sites located away from settlements.
26. The above sequence is based on the guidance in PPS3 to give preference to brownfield sites in urban areas particularly where located close to existing public transport links and infrastructure, for example a town or district centre. Any site in the above sequence that is located close to existing public transport links will be considered more sustainable and preferred over a similarly located site that is not close to existing public transport links.

Stage 5: Carrying out the survey

27. A standard site visit sheet will be used by all those carrying out the survey, to ensure a consistent approach.

Stage 6: Estimating the housing potential of each site

28. The housing potential for each surveyed site will be guided by the dwelling densities that are appropriate in a particular area of the District. The lowest density for potential sites will be 30 dwellings per hectare in accordance with national planning policy in PPS3 unless the character of the area specifically justifies a lower density being considered.
29. Where an estimation of potential has already been made this will be used e.g. unimplemented planning permissions, pre-application discussions, development briefs.
30. For other sites the estimate will take into account the context of the location and existing dwelling densities. This will be combined with using examples of recent schemes in other similar areas to determine an appropriate density.

Stage 7: Assessing when and whether sites are likely to be developed

31. In deciding when and whether development is likely to occur consideration must be given to the suitability, availability and achievability of the site. Any constraints and whether they can be overcome should also be considered.
- Suitability – a site would be considered suitable for housing development if it offers an appropriate location for development and would contribute to the creation of sustainable, mixed communities. Factors to be considered include planning policy restrictions; physical problems or limitations such as access, flood risk or contamination; potential impacts such as effect on landscape

features or natural habitats; environmental conditions that would be experienced by prospective residents.

- Availability – this depends on there being no restrictions in terms of legal ownership, and an owner prepared to sell for development or a developer expressing interest to develop the site. Planning permission does not necessarily indicate availability if for example the landowner is not willing to sell the site. Assessment will be made on the best available information on the ownership and legal status of a site.
- Achievability – where the economic conditions allow for development at a particular time the site can be considered achievable. Essentially the cost of development needs to be balanced against the eventual value of the dwellings when sold. To gauge whether a site is economically viable for development, views will be sought from local Council officers, housebuilders and developers/agents to gain an understanding of viability. Their comments on the selected sites can then be used to check whether conclusions drawn on the economic viability of the remaining sites are correct.
- Overcoming constraints – Any constraints and the actions needed to overcome them will be considered. For example a new road access may be needed to make development possible.

32. A conclusion can then be reached about whether, according to the Practice Guidance, the site is deliverable or developable.

- Deliverable – a site is available now, offers an appropriate location for housing development now and there is a reasonable prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years from the date of adoption of the plan.
- Developable – a site should be in an appropriate location for housing development, and there should be a reasonable prospect that it will be available for and could be developed at a specific point in time.

33. It is important to note however, that the identification of a site at this stage does not mean it will ultimately be found to be a suitable development site. Allocation of sites for housing purposes will be via the Local Development Framework.

Stage 8: Review of the Assessment

34. Once stages 6 and 7 are completed a list of sites will have been generated where the housing potential of each site has been assessed and a judgement made on when the site could come forward for development. A map showing the boundary of each site will also be produced.

35. The information collected will be used in updating the five year land supply of deliverable housing sites and will also be used to produce a housing trajectory showing when potential housing sites are likely to come forward up to 2031, the period covered by the revised East of England Plan.

36. The collated information will be set out in a spreadsheet showing the likely delivery of the identified sites with housing potential over the periods 0 to 5 years,

6 to 10 years and 11-15 years as required. The 15 year period covered by the SHLAA would start in 2011 when it is intended the Core Strategy will be adopted.

Stage 9: Identifying and assessing the housing potential of broad locations (where necessary)

37. If insufficient sites have been found the next step would be to identify broad locations for housing development. Broad locations give some indication to the local community about where future development will be directed and provide some certainty to developers about where development will be encouraged. If it is necessary to find broad locations for housing development regard will be had to the policies in the East of England Plan, the nature and scale of opportunities in the area identified and market conditions.

Stage 10: Determining the housing potential of windfall (where justified)

38. PPS3 makes it clear that where possible the supply of land for housing should be based on specific sites or where necessary broad locations as these provide a more positive approach with greater certainty over the future direction of housing growth. Therefore the intention is not to make an allowance for windfall sites as part of the housing supply; however this position will be kept under review as the SHLAA progresses.

Key Stakeholders for Consultation

Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) Neighbouring Councils

Borough of Broxbourne
Brentwood Borough Council
East Hertfordshire District Council
Harlow Council
Uttlesford District Council

Other Neighbouring Authorities

Chelmsford Borough Council
Enfield Council
Havering London Borough
Redbridge Council
Waltham Forest Council

Housing Associations

East Thames Housing Group (Dan Read, 0208 522 2000 email: dan.read@east-thames.co.uk)
Hastoe Housing Association (Ulrike Maccariello, 01799 522901 email:umaccariello@hastoe.com)
London and Quadrant Housing Trust (Andrew Clarke, 0208 535 2931 email: aclarke.lqgroup.org.uk)
Moat Housing Group (Paul Martin, 01621 841180 email: paul.martin@moat.co.uk)
Warden Housing Association (Home Group) (Jay Rutnam, 01279 621621 email: jay.rutnam@homegroup.org.uk)

Town/Parish Councils

Abbess, Beauchamp and Berners Roding Parish Council
Buckhurst Hill Parish Council
Chigwell Parish Council
Epping Town Council
Epping Upland Parish Council
Fyfield Parish Council
High Ongar Parish Council
Lambourne Parish Council
Loughton Town Council
Matching Parish Council
Moreton, Bobbingworth and the Lavers Parish Council
Nazeing Parish Council
North Weald Bassett Parish Council
Ongar Town Council
Roydon Parish Council
Sheering Parish Council
Stanford Rivers Parish Council
Stapleford Abbots Parish Council
Stapleford Tawney Parish Council
Theydon Bois Parish Council
Theydon Garnon Parish Council
Theydon Mount Parish Council
Waltham Abbey Town Council
Willingale Parish Council

Housebuilders or Planning Agents

Andrew Newman

BB Partnership

Bellway Homes Essex

Bidwells

BRD Tech

Clear Designs

Colin Southgate

Crest Nicholson (Eastern) Ltd

Darren Hunt

David Sadler

Hill Partnerships

Higgins Homes Plc

JB Planning (Tim Waller tim.waller@jbplanning.com 01438 312130 they promoted 2 sites through Call for Sites)

JCN Design Ltd

JSP Partnerships

JTS Partnership

Ken Fox

Ken Judge

Martyn Pattie

Redrow Homes Eastern Ltd

White & Mileson

Other Agencies/Bodies

Corporation of London

English Heritage

Environment Agency

Essex County Council

Lee Valley Regional Park Authority

Natural England

Draft SHLAA Site Appraisal Sheet

Site Name/Address

Ownership

Method

The Appraisal sheet uses a traffic light system to compare the most and least suitable sites for potential housing development.

Stage 1 is a filter for the minimum requirements for a site to be suitable. In Stage 1 a **site will be discounted** if there is a red light for question 1) and 2), AND/OR one of question 3), 4) or 5).

All remaining sites are assessed against the questions in Stages 2 and 3. A score is given for each light the site receives as follows: Green 1, Amber 2, and Red 3. A green light is where there is no impact or issue. An amber light is where there is an impact or issue although it can be mitigated or it is not significant. A red light is where there is a significant issue. After all questions have been answered the score for the site is added together to give an overall suitability for housing development on the site.

The sites with the lowest overall score after Stages 2 and 3 are likely to be more suitable for housing development in comparison to sites with a higher overall score.

For questions where it is a subjective judgement as to whether it is a green, amber or red light the decision will be made on the best available information.

Stage 1 – Strategic Constraints

1) Is the site in the Green Belt?

No

Yes

2) Is it a Greenfield or Brownfield[#] site and is it within or adjoining an existing settlement?

Brownfield site within an existing settlement boundary*

Brownfield site adjoining an existing settlement boundary*

Brownfield site not within or adjoining an existing settlement boundary*

Greenfield site within or adjoining an existing settlement boundary*

Greenfield site not within or adjoining an existing settlement boundary*

[#] Brownfield or previously developed land as defined in Annex B of PPS3 Housing

* existing settlement boundary is those settlements shown on the Local Plan Proposals Map as being outside the area of Green Belt policy.

3) Is the site within Flood Risk Zone 3b?

No – Zone 1, little or no risk

No – Zone 2, low to medium risk

No – Zone 3a, high risk exception test required

Yes – site is discounted

4) Is the site within or does it impact a European Site of Nature Conservation (Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, RAMSAR sites), Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Nature Reserve (NNR), or Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA)?

No

Yes – adverse impact/impacts that can be mitigated against

Yes – within or significantly impacts, site will be discounted

5) Would development of the site affect Listed Buildings, Scheduled Ancient Monuments or Historic Parks & Gardens?

Opportunity to enhance/no significant adverse impact

Significant adverse impact that can be mitigated

Significant adverse impact that cannot be mitigated – site will be discounted

Stage 2 – Local Constraints

6) How would development of the site impact on the character of the landscape?

Opportunity to enhance/no adverse impact

Adverse impact/impact that can be mitigated

Significant adverse impact

7) Is the site a Local Nature Reserve, Local Wildlife Site or does it contain any Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species or Habitats?

Opportunity to enhance/no adverse impact

Adverse impact/impact that can be mitigated

Significant adverse impact

8) Are there any protected trees (TPOs) on the site?

No

Yes – adverse impact/impact that can be mitigated

Yes – significant impact on the protected trees

9) Is there any relevant planning history (Planning applications, planning appeals, Local Plan Inquiry)?

No

Yes – relevant does not preclude development

Yes – relevant raises issues that can be mitigated against

Yes – relevant raises significant issues

10) Is the site allocated/being considered for development in the Minerals and Waste Plan LDF?

No

Yes – proposed

Yes – allocated

11) Is the site (or part of) within the boundary of the Lee Valley Regional park?

No

Yes – impact on the Lee Valley Regional Park is minimal

Yes – impact on the Lee Valley Regional Park is significant

12) Is the site within 30m of an underground Electricity Transmission cable, within 100m of an Electricity Transmission Overhead line or within 150m of a High Pressure Gas Pipeline?

No

Yes – distance scores Moderate on relevant National Grid risk table

Yes – distance scores High on relevant National Grid risk table

Stage 3 – Other Constraints

13) Accessibility – distance from the following:

Public transport - Bus stop (with at least hourly service), Underground station or Railway station

Within 400m

More than 400m and less than 800m

More than 800m

Local employment provision

Within 400m

More than 400m and less than 800m

More than 800m

Nearest primary school

Within 400m

More than 400m and less than 800m

More than 800m

Existing (village) shop/Post Office

Within 400m

More than 400m and less than 800m

More than 800m

GP surgery/health centre

Within 400m

More than 400m and less than 800m

More than 800m

Nearest secondary school

Within 400m

More than 400m and less than 800m

More than 800m

Nearest Principal/Smaller/District centre as defined in the Local Plan & Alterations?

Within 400m

More than 400m and less than 800m

More than 800m

Nearest Local centre as defined in the Local Plan & Alterations?

Within 400m

More than 400m and less than 800m

More than 800m

14) Is there potential contamination on site?

Opportunity to enhance/no adverse impact

Adverse impact/impact that can be mitigated

Significant adverse impact

15) Are there potential noise problems with the site?

No

Adverse impact/impact that can be mitigated

Significant adverse impact

16) Could the topography constrain development of the site?

No

Adverse impact/impact that can be mitigated

Significant adverse impact

17) Would development of the site be likely to affect, or be affected by, an Air Quality Management Area?

No

Adverse impact/impact that can be mitigated

Significant adverse impact

18) Are there issues with car parking in the area?

No significant issues

Significant issues that can be mitigated against

Significant issues

19) Is there sufficient access to the site?

Yes - access is suitable

No - however access issues can be overcome

No - significant issues with access

20) Is the site used to access nearby properties/businesses/roads or pathways?

No not used for access

Yes however there are alternative means of access

Yes however alternative access can be provided

Yes providing alternative access may preclude against development

21) Do any nearby buildings overlook or front onto the site?

No

Yes although site could be designed to overcome this problem without reducing housing capacity

Yes to overcome this problem housing capacity on the site would need to be reduced

22) Is the site part of a larger site or could it prejudice the development of any strategic sites?

No

Yes it is part of a larger site although this would not prejudice the development of strategic sites

Yes it is part of a larger site and would prejudice the development of strategic sites

23) Is the site within or adjacent to a Conservation Area

No

Yes it is adjacent to a Conservation Area

Yes it is within a Conservation Area

24) Would development of the site affect any locally listed buildings (e.g. Buildings of Local Interest)?

No

Yes - not adversely

Yes - impact could be mitigated against

Yes – significant impact

25) Would development of the site affect a Protected Lane (as defined by the Local Plan proposals map)?

No

Yes – impact could be mitigated against

Yes – significant impact

26) Would development of the site affect any archaeological remains and their settings?

No

Yes – not adversely

Yes – impact can be mitigated against

Yes – significant impact

27) Does the shape of the site impact upon its developability?

No

Yes – not adversely

Yes – impact can be mitigated against

Yes – significant impact

28) Does the site relate well with existing communities?

Yes

No – although the problems can be overcome

No

29) Is the site (or part of) Common Land?

No

Yes

30) Will development take place on Previously Developed Land?

Yes

No

31) Is the site identified in the Employment Land Review?

No

Yes

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