

**Report to the Local Development
Framework Cabinet Committee**



Report reference: LDF-001-2011/12
Date of meeting: 13 June 2011

**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Planning & Technology
Subject: Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment - Update
Responsible Officer: Amanda Wintle (01992 564543)
Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) To approve the minor amendments to the draft methodology and site assessment form, as previously agreed by the Local Development Framework Cabinet Committee.

Executive Summary:

The draft methodology and site assessment form were agreed for public consultation, and as the basis for the appointment of consultants in May 2010. Due to staff losses in the Forward Planning team this work has not been advanced as quickly as was hoped, and neither the consultation nor the appointment of consultants has yet taken place. It is now necessary to amend the methodology and site assessment form to bring these up to date before work continues.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To allow key local stakeholders to be consulted in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment draft methodology and appoint external consultants to undertake the assessments.

Other Options for Action:

To not approve these minor amendments to the draft methodology and site assessment form.

Report:

1. The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) is an essential piece of evidence that will help determine the amount of land that is potentially available for housing purposes. The LDF Cabinet Committee received reports in March and May 2010, which made recommendations about the approach that should be taken. The report considered in May 2010 included the draft methodology and site appraisal form that would be published for a period of consultation, and would also form the basis of an invitation to tender for suitable organisations to complete this study.

2. Due to the loss of key staff members from the Forward Planning team, this work has not been progressed as quickly as had been anticipated. In further reviewing the draft methodology and site appraisal form it became clear that some minor amendments were

needed. These changes will bring the methodology up to date in light of changing government policy, and to amend the appraisal form to make the assessment process clearer.

3. Firstly, the methodology (Appendix 1) has been updated to reflect the changing position in relation to government policy. The coalition government has made it clear that the requirement for a full and robust evidence base remains, however it is also clear that the Regional Spatial Strategies which have previously provided housing targets for all local authority areas are to be revoked. The Localism Bill contains the legislation required to revoke all Regional Spatial Strategies, and it is currently anticipated that this will be enacted by early 2012. In the meantime, this piece of evidence base work can be commenced, although clearly care will need to be taken to ensure that the changing policy background is monitored.

4. Secondly, in respect of the site appraisal form (Appendix 2), amendments have been made to make the ordering of the criteria more logical, and to make some of the criteria either clearer or more specific.

5. The changes that have been made are:

(a) Stage A – this has been re-ordered to show firstly the issues which could cause a site to be immediately discounted with no further investigation, followed by those which would be discounted for policy reasons.

(b) Stage B – almost throughout this section, the wording of the criteria have been amended to make clear the difference between the “amber” and “red” criteria. Further, the criterion relating to Conservation Areas has been moved from Stage C to Stage B as this relates to local policy.

(c) Stage C - clarification is provided for the travel times relating to the distances from amenities. These distances are determined using a combination of national policy and guidance, and previous good practice for appropriate travel times. Further, some of these distances have been amended to take into account the likely frequency of these amenities, and how reasonable it is to expect people to travel to reach them. For example, the same distance criteria had been used for both primary and secondary schools, even though student intake numbers and travel distances are greater for secondary schools than primary schools. It is more appropriate, that for facilities that do not occur so frequently, the distance to them is greater.

6. Subject to these amendments being agreed by the Local Development Framework Cabinet Committee, the Forward Planning team will now commence a tender exercise to appoint suitable consultants to complete this study, and make the draft methodology available for comment in accordance with the previously agreed consultation exercise.

Resource Implications:

From LDF Budget – estimated cost £30,000 as set out in report LDF-008-2009/10 (11/03/2010).

Legal and Governance Implications:

No relevant implications.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

No relevant implications.

Consultation Undertaken:

None.

Background Papers:

Planning Policy Statement 3: *Housing* (as amended January 2010); and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Practice Guidance (July 2007).

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

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

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? No

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.