

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



Report reference: LDF-002-2011/12
Date of meeting: 1 August 2011

**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Planning

Subject: Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)- Update II

Responsible Officer: Amanda Wintle (01992 564543)

Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) To approve the further minor amendments to the draft methodology and site assessment form, as requested at the Local Development Framework Cabinet Committee meeting of 13 June 2011, and further discussed with the Chairman and the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Technology following the meeting

Executive Summary:

Minor amendments to both the draft methodology and the site assessment form for the forthcoming Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) were agreed by LDF Cabinet Committee on 13 June 2011. The Chairman of the Cabinet Committee, in discussion with the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Technology requested further minor amendments, in discussion with Forward Planning officers, after the 13 June meeting. These minor amendments are now brought before LDF Cabinet Committee for final approval.

The most significant changes proposed are to reinforce the importance and reliance on Green Belt policy when assessing potential sites, protection of Greenfield sites, and that accessibility distances are predicated on appropriately accessible terrain.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To finalise the draft methodology and site assessment form, thus allowing key local stakeholders to be consulted on the SHLAA draft methodology, and allowing the appointment of external consultants to undertake the assessments.

Other Options for Action:

To not approve these further 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 considered a report in May 2010 which 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. Officers' proposed changes to the original draft methodology and form were subsequently agreed at the LDF Cabinet Committee meeting of 13 June 2011. At that meeting, further amendments were requested, and were subsequently discussed with the Chairman and the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Technology. This report has been put to LDF Cabinet Committee for their final approval of these amendments.

3. The four proposed amendments will affect both the site appraisal form and the methodology, and are as follows:

- 'Greenfield sites within or adjoining an existing boundary' (Stage A, Question 5 on the site assessment form) – the proposal is to raise the score of this classification, from 'Amber' to 'Amber/Red', i.e. analysing it as even less suitable as a housing site;
- Reference will be made to the Council's recognition of the importance of the character and appearance of the Green Belt, and that it will refer to current Green Belt policy in the assessment of potential sites;
- Accessibility to shops and services (Stage C, Questions 14a to h) – the proposal is to include a note in the methodology that such accessibility distances, for example, 400m to the nearest bus stop, are on the basis of an appropriately accessible terrain being in place, such as a pavement. Also, a note has been added to explain why the range of distances proposed have been chosen; and
- A paragraph emphasising that the SHLAA process will only be an *initial* assessment of the potential suitability of sites for future housing; there would necessarily be much further testing of sites in future before they would have any planning standing.

4. Paragraph 25 in the methodology has also been altered, so that it now accurately reflects the 'Brownfield/Greenfield/settlement location' order of preference for sites, within 'Stage A, Question 5' of the site appraisal sheet, as agreed by the Cabinet Committee.

5. Should these amendments be agreed by the Local Development Framework Cabinet Committee, the Forward Planning team would commence a tender exercise to appoint suitable consultants to complete this study, and make the draft methodology available for consultation beginning in September 2011.

Resource Implications:

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

Legal and Governance Implications:

The preparation of a robust SHLAA supports the following corporate objectives:

- Cabinet 2011/12 Key Objective 6, as the SHLAA could help the future provision of affordable housing
- Cabinet 2011/12 Key Objective 8, as a robust SHLAA would be one of the key parts of the LDF Evidence Base necessary to produce a 'sound' Core Planning Strategy

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

The SHLAA is an essential part of the Local Development Framework Evidence Base. The LDF is charged with delivering sustainable development, which is in accordance with the aims of the Safer, Cleaner and Greener agenda.

Consultation Undertaken:

None

Background Papers:

[Report to LDF Cabinet Committee LDF-008-2009/10 \(11/03/2010\)](#)

[Report to LDF Cabinet Committee LDF-002-2010/11 \(27/05/2010\)](#)

[Planning Policy Statement 3: *Housing* \(as amended June 2011\)](#)

[Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Practice Guidance \(July 2007\)](#)

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

If procedures for carrying out the SHLAA were not followed correctly, there would be a risk that the Core Planning Strategy would not be found “sound” by an Inspector. The SHLAA must be robust in order to form a useful part of the LDF Evidence Base.

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?

The preparation of the SHLAA may actually impact positively on equality issues, as it could help to identify sites for the future provision of affordable housing. This could, in turn, improve the quality of life of people living in the district, particularly those who might be on lower incomes, who cannot afford market housing in this expensive part of the country.

Stage C ‘Other Constraints’ in the site assessment form gives preference to potential housing sites which have easy access to services such as shops and schools. Any preferred sites for future housing are therefore likely to provide easy access to essential services, and thus be suitable for a larger range of residents, including those with mobility issues.

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?

The potential positive impacts listed above are not limited to any one particular group; they would affect anyone who was allocated any affordable housing provided, and indeed anyone living in any market housing provided.