

Report to the Local Development Framework Cabinet Committee



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Report reference: LDF-007-2011/12
Date of meeting: 19 December 2011

Portfolio: Planning & Technology

Subject: Annual Monitoring Report 2010/11

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Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) To note the content of the draft 2010/11 Annual Monitoring Report, and to approve it for submission to the Secretary of State and publication on the EFDC website.

Executive Summary:

Government requires that a monitoring report is prepared and submitted at least once a year. This document should report on activity within the previous financial year, including housing completions, employment land provision, and the protection of areas of natural conservation value. This report is the main vehicle through which progress with the Local Plan is measured.

The Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) brought to Members covers the 2010/11 financial year, i.e. the period 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011. Performance against housing targets, which has historically been the Government's highest priority, is shown to be good, as previously.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To ensure that a robust and clear AMR is published.

Other Options for Action:

Not to submit and publish an AMR. However, this option would conflict with the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and the Localism Act 2011.

Report:

1. The draft Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) under consideration reports on the 2010/11 financial year.
2. The AMR is divided into 6 main sections, as follows.

Introduction

3. This explains the role of the AMR within the preparation of the Local Plan, and includes a note on the (changing) status of the East of England Plan since the end of the

2010/11 financial year, following the enactment of the Localism Act in November 2011.

Key Information on the District

4. This part of the document gives headline data on several issues, including population estimates, house prices, travel, deprivation and unemployment. Data for EFDC is compared with the Eastern region and England & Wales. Since last year's AMR, the data shows another increase in population estimate (700 persons), a slight rise (overall) in average house prices (see Appendix 1 of the AMR for detailed data), and a small rise (overall) in the proportion of people claiming unemployment benefit within the monitoring period (this mirrored the national situation, see Appendix 2 of the AMR). The remainder of the data in this section is only available from the Census, and so cannot be updated until the 2011 Census data is published (anticipated in 2013 onwards).

Contextual Indicators

5. This section lists data from the most recent Indices of Deprivation (2010, an update on those reported on last year), and highlights the least and most deprived Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA – a sub-Ward area) in the district overall (through the Index of Multiple Deprivation) and by individual topic: income, employment, health, barriers to housing/services, crime and disorder, living environment, income deprivation affecting children, and income deprivation affecting older people.

Local Plan

6. This part of the AMR formerly measured the production of Local Development Framework documents against the current Local Development Scheme. However, now that a new accelerated Local Plan timetable has been agreed, it was thought prudent to set this out instead. Key milestones for the new timetable are listed, as well as supporting Evidence Base documents, split into those completed, in progress, and planned for the future. Brief details of the Community Visioning exercise (completed in the monitoring period) are also given.

Core Output Indicators

7. This section reports on the main indicators against which Government measures performance within the AMR, comprising:

(a) Business Development: permission for a net gain of 0.358 ha employment floor space overall (all B class uses) is recorded (an improvement on last year's net loss of 0.206ha). Permission for a net gain of 0.914ha floor space was given for town centre uses (all A and D class uses, again an improvement on last year's net gain of 0.602ha;

(b) Housing: a net gain of 368 new housing units is reported for the financial year 2010/11, more than double last year's figure (176), representing continuing good performance against the East of England Plan target. This incorporates 119 (gross) affordable units, an increase from last year's figure of 66. The housing trajectory, showing anticipated future completions for the next 5 years (sourced from the updated 5 year assessment of land supply) is given, detailing a 136.01% supply of land for housing from 2012/13-2016/17. This means that the Council can show that permission has been given for 136% of the housing required for the next 5 year period by the EEP (i.e. 5 times the residual target, which takes into account what has already been built), again representing good performance. This figure is slightly lower than the 144.00% from last year; this is partly because many of the larger housing schemes, such as the St Margaret's Hospital site, are reaching completion, and so no longer appear in the future trajectory. Permission for 17 pitches (plus a permission for '3 additional caravans') for Gypsy and Traveller pitches is

detailed;

(c) Transport: Over 85% of residential development completed within the monitoring year is shown to be within 30 minutes travel time on public transport for 5 out of 6 key services (most are not within this distance/time of a hospital with an A&E department), showing that, in the main, development is being permitted in sustainable locations;

(d) Local Services: The sole development falling into the 'large (1000m²) retail / office / leisure' category is described. Open spaces within the district which have 'green flag' status are listed, and an update on the Audit of Open Space, Sports and Recreation Facilities, and the next stage of this process, the Assessment, is given;

(e) Flood protection: It is shown that no planning applications were granted contrary to Environment Agency advice;

(f) Biodiversity: Areas of natural conservation value within the district are recorded, covering Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Local Nature Reserves etc. No important areas were lost within the monitoring period. It is noted that the Countrycare team achieved their target to have 73 Local Wildlife Sites in positive conservation management by the end of March 2011;

(g) Renewable Energy: Details of the 4 applications involving energy generation which were permitted are given; and

(h) Gypsies and Travellers: Details of the additional pitches granted permission are given.

Local Indicators

8. This section covers 4 'voluntary' indicators, monitoring potential issues which are important locally and/or specific to EFDC, and which may need to be addressed through new or amended policy. These are: town centres (the non-retail/retail balance in key frontage); the development of horticultural glasshouses; Locally Listed buildings; and bungalows (specifically their loss).

9. In general, the AMR reports good performance against the various targets set for the Council throughout the East of England Plan, but also highlights some issues which need resolving, such as the balance of retail and non-retail units within the town centres. These issues will need to be addressed through the Local Plan. Close monitoring of the objectives and targets to be set within the Local Plan will be key; the AMR will be the main mechanism to report on this in future.

10. The Localism Act (November 2011) directs that along with a yearly monitoring report, local authorities should publish selected data more frequently, as considered appropriate '*in the interests of transparency*'. To this end, Forward Planning officers suggest that it would be most appropriate to publish a base set of data on the website quarterly, following the end of each financial quarter. This base set would comprise:

- (a) Housing completions;
- (b) Permissions for Employment/Town Centre uses;
- (c) Gypsy and Traveller pitches granted; and
- (d) Progress against the new Local Plan timetable.

11. This data would be collated and published online, but without the commentary etc which appears in the AMR, as this would be too resource intensive to complete every quarter. These quarterly updates would not be reported to Local Development Framework Cabinet Committee, for the same reason.

Resource Implications:

The AMR is prepared annually by the Forward Planning officers, within existing budgets. The Localism Act 2011 directs that more basic data releases are made in between AMRs, as appropriate. This will require further work from the Information & Technical Officer.

Legal and Governance Implications:

Section 35 of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and Section 113 of the Localism Act 2011, requires that an AMR is produced annually, and that further information updates are published as appropriate.

The preparation of the AMR also supports the following Corporate Plan Key Objective nos:

- (6) To maximise the provision of affordable housing within the district
- (8) To deliver a sound Core Planning Strategy [*Local Plan*], to guide development in the district up to 2031...
- (8a) To agree a revised timetable for the preparation of the Core Planning Strategy [*Local Plan*], taking account of the publication of the Localism Bill in December 2010
- (8b) To determine the level of future housing growth within the district, taking into account evidence already collected, the results of the community visioning exercise, the scale of the Council's housing register, relevant environmental constraints and the degree to which co-operation can be achieved with Harlow and Uttlesford District Councils;
- (8c) To complete Stage 2 (Issues and Options) of the Core Strategy consultation exercise.

It also helps to deliver the following Sustainable Community Strategy Key Objective nos:

- (3) Ensure that the protection of the Green Belt and the unique character of the district, together with capital infrastructure and carbon reduction improvements to promote greener travel options and reduce congestion, are major priorities in the Local Development Framework [*Local Plan*] and a green strategy is produced which enhances environmental education and joint action between the partners.
- (5) Together support the provision of a range of affordable, innovative and environmentally friendly, lifetime housing including higher density homes in appropriate locations.

The completion of the AMR is also a target within the Planning & Economic Development Business Plan 2011/12.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

The AMR is essential to the production of the Local Plan, which is charged with delivering sustainable development. This is in accord with the aims of the Safer, Cleaner and Greener agenda.

Consultation Undertaken:

Officers within Forward Planning have had much input into the AMR. Several members of staff in the Planning and Economic Development Directorate have contributed to data within the report, and advised on individual developments and planning applications.

Background Papers:

Annual Monitoring Report, 2011
5 Year Assessment of Land Supply 2012/13-2016/17

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

The preparation of a monitoring report to Government, at least annually, is a statutory requirement. The Council is required to show how it has progressed in producing its Local Plan. If progress against, for example, housing targets, is not accurately monitored, the Council could risk under provision of housing, and thus be vulnerable to less appropriate housing schemes being granted on appeal by the Planning Inspectorate.

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 and submission of the AMR may actually impact positively on equality issues, specifically under the 'socioeconomic duty'. This is because the AMR monitors, for example the provision of affordable housing, and the existence and ranking, of areas of deprivation in the district (under the 2010 Multiple Indices of Deprivation). The provision of affordable housing has the potential to 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. Analysis of the areas of deprivation could help the Council to identify areas in which to plan schemes for improvement, thus improving the quality of life for people in those areas also.

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 schemes to improve areas of deprivation would benefit all those living, working, and visiting there.