

ST ALBANS CITY AND DISTRICT COUNCIL

<u>REPORT TO :</u>	Planning Policy Committee
<u>DATE :</u>	13 March 2018
<u>REPORT TITLE :</u>	Local Plan - Development Strategy and Draft Strategic Site Selection Process
<u>WARDS :</u>	All
<u>PORTFOLIO HOLDER:</u>	Councillor Maynard, Portfolio Holder for Planning
<u>CONTACT OFFICER :</u>	Tracy Harvey, Head of Planning & Building Control

1. Purpose Of Report

- 1.1 To agree a strategic site selection process to assist with progressing the draft Local Plan.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Head of Planning and Building Control (HoPBC) moves forward with the process outlined in this report, taking into account any comments made by the committee. This includes any comments made by email to the HoPBC before Monday 19 March.

3. Background Information

- 3.1 The Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation and 'Call for sites' are now complete. The Council has committed in its published Local Development Scheme and in response to the Intervention Letter from the Secretary of State to make swift progress with its Local Plan.
- 3.2 There is evidence already available already to allow the committee to make progress and further evidence will come in reports to the committee in April. One key area where progress is now needed is the consideration of potential strategic scale (circa minimum 500 homes or 14 hectares of developable land) development sites.
- 3.3 The committee has already started to consider the issue of strategic site evaluation and selection process in recent months. Reports considered by the committee have set out:

Planning Policy Committee (PPC) Jan 2018

Call for sites

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The next step in the consideration of sites put forward will be a review of options for meeting development requirements, including:

making effective use of suitable brownfield sites and the opportunities offered by estate regeneration;

the potential offered by land which is currently underused, including surplus public sector land where appropriate;

optimising the proposed density of development;

and exploring whether other authorities can help to meet some of the identified development requirement.

It is likely that to meet development requirements consideration will need to be given to releasing land from the Green Belt. As set out in previous Planning Policy Committee reports, by definition, as not being part of the identified 8 locations identified as causing 'least damage' to Green Belt purposes, any other locations would cause a higher degree of damage to Green Belt purposes.

The Council, once the details of the new sites have been received, will need to consider if there are any unique opportunities that might be provided in association with any sites put forward that might override the additional level of damage to Green Belt purposes. Including (for these and the 8 sites identified in the Green Belt Review) how the impact is to be offset by compensatory improvements to the environmental quality or accessibility of remaining Green Belt land. This could, for example, include community forests, nature reserves or allotments. As set out in previous Planning Policy Committee reports, other factors to consider might be:

1 - Unique contribution to improve public services and facilities, eg public transport

2 - Unique contribution to enhancing local high quality job opportunities and the aspirations of the Hertfordshire Local Economic Partnership / Hertfordshire EnviroTech Enterprise Zone

3 - Unique contribution to other infrastructure provision or community benefits

The Housing White Paper is suggesting that local planning authorities should look first at using any Green Belt land which has been previously developed and/or which surrounds transport hubs.

PPC Nov 2017

Where do we build to meet our need for new homes?

...

This would inevitably use Green Belt that would cause a greater level of harm to Green Belt purposes than the 8 'Broad Locations'. To offset this damage, any development would need to:

1. Improve public services and facilities, eg public transport

2. *Enhance local high quality job opportunities and meet the aspirations of the Hertfordshire Local Economic Partnership / Hertfordshire Enviro-Tech Enterprise Zone*

3. *Provide other infrastructure or deliver community benefits*

4. **Analysis and Findings**

- 4.1 A significant number of responses to the 'Call for sites' for potential strategic scale sites have been received (see also a report elsewhere on this Agenda). A process of evaluation now needs to be undertaken.

Strategic Site Selection - Evaluation Method

- 4.2 This evaluation will be of potential strategic scale sites only. These are sites capable of accommodating residential development of a minimum of circa 500 dwellings or 14 Hectares of developable land.
- 4.3 For the Strategic Sites, site area and indicative site capacity will be calculated and recorded for all such sites. This will generally be on the basis of the method set out in the Council's Green Belt Review (GBR) (60% of the available land area assumed to be available for residential development. Net residential density on this area calculated on the basis of 40 dwellings per hectare).
- 4.4 The evaluation covers responses to 2018 'Call for sites' and previous Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment submissions in the above category.
- 4.5 The evaluation uses the criteria below, based on the approach in PPC reports mentioned above (and as similarly set out in the Call for sites and Local Plan regulation 18 consultation background materials).

Stage 1

1. *Green Belt Review evaluation* will be undertaken on the basis of a judgement of impact on (i.e. 'damage' to) Green Belt purposes (taking account of the purposes defined in and considered in the relevant parcel assessment in the GBR). Sites are rated as 'higher impact', 'medium impact' or 'lower impact' (set out as Red Amber Green (RAG)). It is important to remember that the independent Green Belt Review set out that "All strategic parcels in the Green Belt, at least in part, clearly perform a key role". The assessment is a comparative one in the context of understanding relative impacts on the Green Belt. To achieve 'further consideration for development' the site must be evaluated as lower or medium impact (Green or Amber). Any Red rating (higher impact) will rule a site out for further consideration.

Stage 2

2. *Suitability* will set out as (Red Amber Green) if there are any issues which are overriding constraints to development – eg Access, Transport, Heritage, Biodiversity, Flood Risk. Any Red rating will rule a site out for further consideration.

3. *Availability* will set out as (Red Amber Green) if there are any issues which are overriding constraints to development in terms of land ownership, restrictive covenants etc. Any Red rating will rule a site out for further consideration.

Stage 3

4. *Unique contribution to improve public services and facilities*, e.g. public transport - (set out as Red Amber Green). Any Green rating is considered to be potentially significantly positive at a District wide (or even wider) scale

5. *Unique contribution to enhancing local high quality job opportunities* and the aspirations of the Hertfordshire Local Economic Partnership / Hertfordshire EnviroTech Enterprise Zone - (set out as Green Amber Red). Any Green rating is considered to be potentially significantly positive at a District wide (or even wider) scale.

6. *Unique contribution to other infrastructure provision or community benefits* - (set out as Red Amber Green). Any Green rating is considered to be potentially significantly positive at a District wide (or even wider) scale

7. *Deliverable / Achievable* is there is a reasonable prospect that the development, including all key aspects (including viability) being assessed as part of the overall 'package' proposed, is viable and deliverable (set out as Red Amber Green). Any Red rating will rule a site out for further consideration.

8. *An overall evaluation* judgement will be recorded (set out as Red Amber Green) as how the site is evaluated for further consideration for development in the Plan.

4.6 As mentioned in section 3 above, it is important to note that the Local Development Scheme was reported to and agreed at PPC in November 2017, then published by the Head of Planning and Building Control. The timeframe for a September 2018 Regulation 19 Local Plan publication set out in that agreed LDS requires a focussed and concise evaluation method and process for sites in order to meet that timetable. The importance of timely progress is emphasised by the Secretary of State's Intervention letter and SADC's response that committed to progressing the Plan swiftly.

4.7 As also indicated in section 3 above, it is also important to note that the process set out in this evaluation method is clearly and directly based on reports to PPC since November 2017.

- 4.8 Further, it is important to bear in mind that when considering potential Green Belt release in due course, the principles set out in the *Calverton* and *Gallagher* cases regarding Exceptional Circumstances will be important. The *Calverton* and *Gallagher* cases have been considered on several occasions at PPC, including in reports in June 2015 and June 2016. These cases and issues will be addressed in PPC reports in coming months.
- 4.9 The evaluation is proposed to be recorded in a simple and transparent matrix as set out in Appendix 1. Individual templates setting out the detailed considerations for each potential strategic scale site will be set out as in the template at Appendix 2.

Next Steps

- 4.10 If the evaluation stages set out above are agreed by Planning Policy Committee, the next steps will be:-
- 1 - Three stage evaluation process of potential Strategic Sites
 - 2 - Draft Evaluation Outcomes to be presented to 22nd May PPC
 - 3 - Developers of sites passing step 8 of the Evaluation Process be invited to present their schemes to an Evaluation Validation Panel of the Chair of PPC and up to three Councillors selected from PPC, on 23-24 May
 - 4 - Final Evaluation Outcomes to be presented to 12th June PPC

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation and 'Call for sites' are now complete. The Council has committed in its published Local Development Scheme and in response to the Intervention Letter from the Secretary of State to make swift progress with its Local Plan. The draft strategic site selection process, including any comments made by the committee, will assist with progress with the draft Local Plan.

6. Implications

This table provides a short statement of the impact of the recommendations in this report and/or a reference to the relevant paragraph/s in the report.

Will this report affect any of the following?	Yes/No	Impact/Reference
Vision and Priorities		Whole report relates to planning for the future. However there are no direct implications from this report because decisions are not required at this point.
Policy		As for Visions and Priorities above

Financial		As for Visions and Priorities above
Impact on the community		As for Visions and Priorities above
Legal and Property		As for Visions and Priorities above
HR/Workforce		As for Visions and Priorities above
Risk Assessment		As for Visions and Priorities above
Environmental Sustainability		As for Visions and Priorities above
Health and Wellbeing		As for Visions and Priorities above

7. **Further Information/Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Draft Strategic Site Selection Process - Draft Evaluation Matrix

Appendix 2 – Draft Strategic Site Selection Process - Draft Evaluation Template

8. **Background Papers - Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**