

STRATEGIC HOUSING LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT (SHLAA) AND ECONOMIC LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT (ELAA) - PROGRESS REPORT

Planning Advisory Committee - 19 April 2016

Report of Chief Planning Officer

Status: For Consideration

Also considered by: N/A

Key Decision: No

Portfolio Holder Cllr Piper

Contact Officer Emma Boshell, Senior Planning Officer Ext.7358

Recommendation to Planning Advisory Committee:

To consider progress on the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and the Economic Land Availability Assessment (ELAA).

Reason for recommendation: In order to enable discussion and advice on progress with the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and the Economic Land Availability Assessment (ELAA).

Introduction and Background

- 1 Following consideration of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) by this committee on 13 October 2015, and by Cabinet on 5 November 2015, the evidence base study was approved. The SHMA is based on the Government's latest population and household projections and identifies the objectively assessed housing need across the District. However, the objectively assessed need is an **unconstrained figure** and is **not the District's housing target**. The SHMA will be used as a starting point for developing the new Local Plan.
- 2 Subsequently, there are a number of steps we must take to arrive at a robust and deliverable housing target for the District - these steps were discussed and agreed by this committee on 7 July 2015 (attached at Appendix A).
- 3 The second of these steps is to assess the supply of land in the District to establish how much of the identified need can be realistically delivered over the plan period. This study is known as a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). A similar process for employment land is also being undertaken, known as an Economic Land Availability Assessment (ELAA).

These studies are a requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 159).

SHLAA and ELAA Progress

- 4 At the last committee meeting on 2 February 2016 it was confirmed that approximately 250 sites had been submitted across the District through the call for sites. At this point officers had just begun their site visits and hoped to complete them by the end of March 2016. I am now pleased to report that officers met this deadline and all sites have been visited. Officers have now begun writing up their assessments which are based on the suitability, availability and achievability of each site, ensuring consistency across the assessments.
- 5 In addition to the call for sites, and as explained at the last committee meeting on 2 February, the District Council is required to explore other elements of supply in addition to the call for sites in order to boost the supply of housing. Such elements to be explored include (but are not limited to):
 - Existing housing and economic development allocations without detailed planning permission / with unimplemented planning permission;
 - Planning applications that have been refused or withdrawn;
 - Land owned by the District Council including surplus / likely to become surplus council land;
 - Vacant and derelict land and buildings;
 - Additional opportunities e.g. making productive use of under-utilised facilities;
 - Business aspirations within the District;
 - Large scale redevelopment in urban areas.
- 6 Officers are making good progress in identifying opportunities for development from these sources, particularly ensuring that brownfield opportunities in existing settlements are maximised. This piece of work is ongoing and will form part of the SHLAA and ELAA when it's published.

Member Engagement

- 7 The list of sites remains confidential until all corresponding site assessments are complete, and this information will be published in advance of the Planning Advisory Committee on 21 June 2016. However, we recognise the importance of engaging with local members early on about sites in their areas. The following opportunities have been arranged to engage members in the SHLAA and ELAA process:

- A ‘**bus tour**’ of the SHLAA and ELAA sites has been arranged for members of the Planning Advisory Committee on **Friday 13 May 2016**. This will provide committee members with an opportunity to visit the key sites ahead of their consideration at this committee on 21 June 2016.
- **Two evening sessions** have been arranged for all ward members on **Monday 16 May 2016** and **Wednesday 18 May 2016**. These will provide members with an opportunity to discuss, with officers, their views on the sites submitted in their areas ahead of the list being published.

8 Invitations to these events will be sent out shortly. For the two sessions on 16 and 18 May it is likely that officers will operate an appointment system to ensure that there is adequate time to meet with members from all wards.

Timescales and Future Work

- 9 Following member engagement and completion of the site assessments, the list of sites and their accompanying assessments will be brought to this committee on 21 June 2016 for consideration.
- 10 The SHLAA and ELAA will provide evidence on the suitability, availability and achievability of land to inform the local plan strategy, however this is only one piece of evidence. Other evidence base studies are being undertaken - such as the Economic Needs Study, the Open Space, Sport and Leisure Study and the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment - which will provide additional detail that may affect the suitability, availability and achievability of the SHLAA and ELAA sites. Therefore, to ensure that the site assessments are as up to date and robust as possible, it is likely that they will be updated when this further evidence becomes available.
- 11 Given the District’s significant constraints, it is highly unlikely that the objectively assessed need will be met through identifying sites in the SHLAA and ELAA. This has been explained in paragraphs 1 and 2 above. Therefore following completion of the SHLAA and ELAA, and once the shortfall is understood (step 3), we must move onto the next step towards arriving at a robust and deliverable housing target for the District by undertaking a Green Belt assessment. Duty to cooperate discussions will also be ongoing at this stage.
- 12 An assessment of the District’s Green Belt is step 4 of the process discussed and agreed by this committee on 7 July 2015 (attached at Appendix A). Parcels of land will be assessed against the five purposes of the Green Belt, as set out in national policy. A thorough assessment will not only help to identify if there are any areas of land that could be considered further for potential development as part of the new local plan, but just as importantly, will provide strong evidence for justifying the retention of well-performing Green Belt in the longer term.

Other Options Considered and/or Rejected

- 13 The preparation of a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and Economic Land Availability Assessment (ELAA) is required by Government and provide key evidence to support the new Local Plan. Not preparing these studies would risk the Local Plan being found unsound at examination and is not recommended.

Key Implications

Financial

The production of the SHLAA and ELAA will be funded from the LDF budget.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

Preparation of a Local Plan is a statutory requirement. There are defined legal requirements that must be met in plan making which are considered when the plan is examined by a Government Planning Inspector. Risks associated with local plan making are set out in the Local Development Scheme.

Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Appendices

Appendix A - Agreed process for addressing housing need in the Local Plan

Background Papers:

Report to Planning Advisory Committee - 7 July 2015 - Local Plan work programme

Richard Morris
Chief Planning Officer

Appendix A

Agreed process for addressing housing need in the Local Plan

<p>Step 1 Understanding Need</p> <p>Undertake Strategic Housing Market Assessment with Tunbridge Wells BC (SHMA)</p> <p>Understand other adjacent authorities need via Duty to Cooperate discussions</p>	
<p>Step 2 Maximising supply</p> <p>Undertake Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) including a call for Sites*</p> <p>Explore potential for increased site densities</p> <p>Explore potential for focussed increased site densities such as near railway stations</p> <p>Assess quantum of under-utilised employment land</p> <p>Assess potential contribution of windfalls</p> <p>Assess potential contribution of empty properties</p> <p>Assess potential contribution of office conversions</p> <p>Discuss supply options in other authority areas under the Duty to Cooperate</p>	
<p>Step 3 Understanding shortfall</p> <p>Match steps 1 and 2 findings for need and supply to understand level of any shortfall</p>	
<p>Step 4 Assessment of Green Belt Options</p> <p>Undertake full Green Belt Review of the District- assess parcels of land against the five purposes of Green Belt designation. Undertake detailed assessment at settlement boundaries and broad level assessment elsewhere</p>	
<p>Step 5 Other considerations</p> <p>Assess potential land options against other criteria, including:</p> <p>Category 1 constraints (national/international) e.g. Green Belt, AONB, flood risk</p> <p>Category 2 constraints (county/district) e.g. Conservation area, local wildlife sites</p> <p>Landscape Character</p> <p>Assessments undertaken in neighbouring authorities</p>	
<p>Step 6 Identification of land options for further consideration</p>	
<p>Step 7 Housing target identified</p>	

*note at 1 April 2014 total housing supply for the current Core Strategy plan period 2006-26 was 4,732 (including 450 at Fort Halstead)