

## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **RECORD OF DECISION OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION**

Decision Made: 30 July 2009

#### **Core Strategy : Housing Sites Assessment**

##### **Issue for Decision**

To consider whether to appoint consultants Baker Associates to undertake an assessment of the housing sites identified in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), in order to facilitate the allocation of strategic housing sites in the Core Strategy. The Housing Sites Assessment (HSA) will examine identified SHLAA sites in more detail and will be subject to sustainability appraisal.

##### **Decision Made**

That the commission of Baker Associates to undertake a Housing Sites Assessment, which is a follow on study to the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, be authorised.

##### **Reasons for Decision**

The Council can currently demonstrate a minimum 6-year supply of housing sites to 2015. However, to be in a position to satisfy the ongoing requirement for a rolling 5-year housing land supply, strategic housing sites will need to be delivered as part of the Core Strategy to meet a medium term shortfall so that the Council is not in a position of having to react to proposals, but can approach housing provision in a planned manner.

It is therefore necessary to undertake an analysis of sites that would be acceptable for this purpose. This work is an extension of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment ("SHLAA") and will require a more detailed assessment, including sustainability appraisal of the sites identified in the SHLAA.

The SHLAA sites to be considered are:

- Greenfield local plan allocations that have not been released for development
- Previously developed land (PDL) adjacent to settlement boundaries
- Greenfield sites adjacent to settlement boundaries

It is recommended that Baker Associates carry out the Housing Sites Assessment ("HAS") for two primary reasons:

- i. Baker Associates, who undertook the SHLAA for the Council, have local knowledge of Maidstone and are familiar with the identified SHLAA sites. The methodology of the HSA should be a natural continuation of that set out in the SHLAA. Additionally Baker Associates are undertaking other work for the Council allocating gypsy and traveller sites, so it is envisaged that they could make efficiency savings as part of this work.
- ii. The minimum number of sites to be assessed is 53, with the potential for a few more depending on other considerations. For the Council to undertake this work in-house would require significant resource allocation at a time when staff resources are focused on producing other strands of evidence to meet the Core Strategy programme.

Preparing the HSA this way will ensure an objective viewpoint towards sites that are most sustainable and suitable, allowing the Council to consider an outside perspective.

### **Alternatives considered and why rejected**

The alternative action is to undertake the HSA in-house, although this is not recommended for reasons of resource. Additionally Baker Associates already have the expertise and experience with the SHLAA sites and can apply a developed methodology to this study.

If the study were not undertaken, the Council risks being unable to fulfil the requirement for a five year supply of housing land. If this were deemed to be the case, inappropriate housing developments could be permitted as the need for new housing becomes a principal factor in deciding applications. Furthermore, if the Council cannot demonstrate how it will deliver its housing targets through the Core Strategy it will most likely be found unsound at Examination.

### **Background Papers**

Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call in form signed by any two Non-Executive Members to the Scrutiny Manager by: xxxxxxxxxx.
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