

## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING, TRANSPORT AND DEVELOPMENT**

### **REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHANGE, PLANNING AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Report prepared by Michael Murphy**

**Date Issued:**

#### **1. PRO FORMA FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SITES**

##### 1.1 Key Issue for Decision

1.1.1 To consider the criteria set out in the pro forma that will be used for the assessment of potential development sites.

##### 1.2 Recommendation of Director of Change, Planning and the Environment

1.2.1 That Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development approves the criteria for the assessment of potential development sites for housing, economic development and for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople accommodation as set out in the pro forma (attached at Appendix A).

##### 1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessments (SHLAA/SEDLAA) are an important component of the local plan evidence base, and in demonstrating a deliverable supply of land for the plan period.

1.3.2 A recent Call for Sites (7<sup>th</sup> Dec 2012 – 25<sup>th</sup> Jan 2013) invited the development industry, landowners and public to submit sites for assessment and subsequent inclusion in the SHLAA/SEDLAA<sup>1</sup>. This process takes all sites submitted through the call for sites through a series of assessment steps intended to test their suitability, availability and overall deliverability.

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<sup>1</sup> The SHLAA assesses housing and Gypsy and Traveller sites, and the SEDLAA assesses office, industry, warehousing, retail and mixed uses. Three pro formas are used for the assessments as follows:

1. Housing
2. Economic Development (offices, retail etc)
3. Gypsy, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

- 1.3.3 Using the SHLAA/SEDLAA and Gypsy and Traveller site pro forma, sites are assessed equally and progress through all the stages, including independent sustainability appraisal, to a decision on whether to accept or reject a site to go forward to form the basis for local plan allocations. This involves the use of a broad range of planning assessment criteria.
- 1.3.4 In July, 2007, the Government produced a step by step good practice guide for local authorities on the preparation of SHLAAs. The Kent Planning Policy Forum followed this Guidance in 2008, when they prepared a protocol for undertaking SHLAAs in Kent to ensure consistency in the interpretation of the Practice Guidance and to help in the preparation of a sound evidence base for subsequent local plan documents. This protocol took into account both the then extant PPS3: Housing and the Practice Guidance as well as advice provided by the Planning Advisory Service in its document, "Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments and Development Plan Preparation".
- 1.3.5 The NPPF states that a local authority must prepare a SHLAA to establish realistic assumptions about the availability, suitability and the likely economic viability of land to meet the identified need for housing over the plan period. For the SEDLAA, it recommends that reviews of land available for economic development should be undertaken at the same time as, or combined with the SHLAA. From March local planning authorities are also required to demonstrate a 5 year supply of Gypsy and Traveller sites and the identification and assessment of such sites is therefore also required.
- 1.3.6 However, the NPPF does not refer to any guidance on how this should be achieved. It is assumed therefore that the national good practice guidance is still extant and local authorities are able to develop their own methodology using this guidance. The approach developed by Kent districts remains a robust method to the development of SHLAA/SEDLAA documents. As a result, the pro formas closely follow the Kent Protocol but are tailored, where appropriate, to local circumstances.
- 1.3.7 The assessment criteria in the SHLAA/SEDLAA pro formas include:
- Site information (e.g. site, location, site area, landowner etc.)
  - Site Suitability (e.g. is site in a sustainable location, policy constraints, physical and infrastructure constraints)
  - Site availability (e.g. existing uses, willing developer etc.)
  - Site achievability (e.g. identification of any abnormal costs or other constraints to development)
- 1.3.8 Extensive stakeholder consultation with service providers and other bodies, including environmental groups, will be required in order to

comprehensively gauge the overall suitability of a site for development. Initial information is being gathered at present and officer site assessments are due to be completed in April 2013.

1.3.9 The SHLAA/SEDLAA pro forma ensure that sites are assessed in a transparent and consistent manner. Once site assessments are completed, potential sites for new housing and employment will be further tested through an independent Sustainability Appraisal, which will help the Council to determine the most suitable sites to propose for allocation in the local plan. Informal consultations with stakeholders, including the development industry, Members and parish councils, will add value to this process, which will be completed during the summer in time for a Cabinet date in September, prior to public consultation on new local plan land allocations in October. At this point, approval of the criteria used to undertake site assessments is being sought.

#### 1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.4.1 It is important to agree the criteria used to assess SHLAA/SEDLAA sites to ensure that assessments are undertaken in a consistent manner. Questioning of the criteria at a later date could result in delays to the local plan timetable.

#### 1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessments (SHLAA/SEDLAA) are an important component of the local plan evidence base, and in demonstrating a deliverable supply of land for at least the next 5 years. The Maidstone Borough Local Plan itself will assist in delivering the spatial objectives of the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Strategic Plan and will have regard to council strategies such as the Housing Strategy and Economic Development Strategy.

#### 1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 The allocation of all sites to meet the housing and employment targets that will ultimately be set out in the Maidstone Borough Local Plan will provide clarity for the development industry, Members, officers and the public. The use of pro forma minimises the risk of challenge at local plan examination because all sites will have been assessed consistently; an up-to-date SHLAA/SEDLAA will support a sound local plan.

#### 1.7 Other Implications

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