

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION

**REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT AND
COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

Report prepared by Darren Bridgett

Date Issued: 30th July 2009

1. Core Strategy: Housing Sites Assessment

1.1 Issue for Decision

- 1.1.1 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.

1.2 Recommendation of Assistant Director of Development and Community Strategy

- 1.2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Regeneration authorises the commission of Baker Associates to undertake a Housing Sites Assessment, which is a follow on study to the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

- 1.3.1 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.
- 1.3.2 It is therefore necessary to undertake an analysis of sites that would be acceptable for this purpose. This work is an extension of the SHLAA and will require a more detailed assessment, including sustainability appraisal of the sites identified in the SHLAA.
- 1.3.3 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

1.3.4 It is recommended that Baker Associates carry out the HSA for two primary reasons:

- 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.
- 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.

1.3.5 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.

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.4.1 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.

1.4.2 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.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 The LDF sets the policy framework for the Council so all LDF documents and their evidence base aims to meet the corporate

objectives set out in the Strategic Plan and the Sustainable Community Strategy, in particular, the delivery of market housing and affordable homes.

1.6 Risk Management

- 1.6.1 The HSA is necessary to inform the Core Strategy, and allow for further co-ordination/production of the LDF evidence base. Careful management of the study is required to ensure that the full range of issues are considered, producing a robust evidence base; and to ensure that the work is delivered on time.

1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1

1.	Financial	X
2.	Staffing	X
3.	Legal	
4.	Equality Impact Needs Assessment	
5.	Environmental/Sustainable Development	X
6.	Community Safety	
7.	Human Rights Act	
8.	Procurement	X
9.	Asset Management	

- 1.7.2 Financial: The cost of the HSA will be in the region of £46,000, which can be accommodated within the LDF budget. However, since the Council would not be inviting quotations from other consultants for this piece of work, it is important to ensure that the Council receives value for money from Baker Associates. When comparing quotations received from Baker Associates and other consultants to undertake the SHLAA, which is an analogous piece of work, the estimate for the HSA is comparable. This is particularly the case given the number of days required for the HSA and the seniority of staff involved in the assessment. However, with a more detailed cost proposal based on a brief, this fee could be reduced.

- 1.7.3 Staffing: The management of consultants can be undertaken within existing staff resources.
- 1.7.4 Environmental/Sustainable Development: The HSA will be prepared with strong regard to environmental and sustainability considerations.
- 1.7.5 Procurement: This report seeks approval to appoint Baker Associates to undertake the HSA, rather than seeking quotations for this work from a number of consultants, for the reasons set out in this report.

1.8 Background Documents

- 1.8.1 Maidstone Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment
http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/planning_building_control/local_development_framework.aspx

NO REPORT WILL BE ACCEPTED WITHOUT THIS BOX BEING COMPLETED

Is this a Key Decision?

Yes

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No

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If yes, when did it appear in the Forward Plan? _____

Is this an Urgent Key Decision?

Yes

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No

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Reason for Urgency

How to Comment

Should you have any comments on the issue that is being considered please contact either the relevant Officer or the Member of the Executive who will be taking the decision.

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