

STRATEGIC HOUSING LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT

Report By: Forward Planning Manager

1 Wards Affected

County-wide

2 Purpose

- 2.1 To receive and agree for further technical assessment, emerging findings of an initial study of land with potential for housing development within Herefordshire.

3 Financial Implications

- 3.1 Costs of undertaking the assessment as part of evidence base work required for the Local Development Framework (LDF) is being met from approved budgets.

4 Background

- 4.1 The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) is a study of the potential availability of land for future housing development within Herefordshire for the period up to 2026. The requirement to produce such an assessment is contained within PPS3 Housing with accompanying practice guidance (July 2007). Its purpose is to demonstrate that the future housing requirement identified in the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) can be fulfilled.
- 4.2 The study is a key component of the Local Development Framework's evidence base and contributes to the preparation of the Core Strategy. The study's initial report will be made available as an evidence based background paper for the Core Strategy options which is proposed to be published for consultation in June. It will help to establish whether the Core Strategy options for possible broad directions of growth are feasible by indicating whether sufficient land is potentially available to achieve the levels of growth suggested. The assessment will also inform the Hereford Action Area Plan and any other development plan documents. Land identified will contribute to overall RSS requirements including those for affordable housing.
- 4.3 The technical information contained within the assessment will therefore inform policy. However it is important to emphasise that the identification of any site does not indicate that it will successfully obtain planning permission or will be allocated for housing development. Consequently it is also important to note that not all the sites identified will be either necessary or acceptable. It is not the role of the study to make final judgements about individual sites.
- 4.4 Finally, it needs to be noted that the assessment is currently being undertaken with the knowledge that the housing figures proposed in the current review of

the Regional Spatial Strategy have been challenged by the Government as being too low. Any addition to the future housing provision for Herefordshire will need to be considered further within the context of the Core Strategy and consequently this assessment.

5 The Assessment

- 5.1 In accordance with the practice guidance and as agreed with stakeholders, a Methodology Statement sets out the context and the scope of the assessment. For Herefordshire, the study is to cover Hereford, the five market towns and the main villages/smaller settlements as identified within the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan. These represent the areas where the vast majority of housing development is expected to be focussed.
- 5.2 The assessment is not yet complete. The initial study has considered land in/around Hereford and the market towns where plans have been compiled and are attached. These will also be on display at Committee. The initial report will include plans of each settlement and all land assessed along with a more detailed schedule of each sites potential for future housing development. This will set out a site description and known constraints. All land assessed within the initial report will then be the subject of a further technical assessment.
- 5.3 Assessments of land in the rural areas are to be completed. As the Core Strategy moves towards its preferred option stage the assessment will provide similar information for the rural areas.

5.4 Sources of supply

- i) completions and commitments

The RSS/Core Strategy plan period is 2006 – 2026. Data from the 2006/7 Housing Land Study establishes that as at 2007 around 4,900 houses were either completed or committed and could therefore be deducted from the RSS requirement of 16,600. Based upon the RSS preferred option this has left a residual amount of around 11,700 dwellings to be found for the period up to 2026 with sites for around 6200 dwellings being required within Hereford, and the remainder of 5500 being sought in the market towns and the rural areas.

- ii) comprehensive site surveys

Given the above, then potential sites need to be identified which are reasonable candidates to enable a delivery of housing sites to meet the residual 11,700 dwellings and so demonstrate a potential supply of housing land. This will initially identify more land for consideration than is necessary to meet the residual amount. This acknowledges and allows for some sites being eliminated as a result of the technical assessment and ultimately to enable an eventual choice to be made through the plan making process.

- 5.5 Desk top site identification, together with a request for sites to be made known to the local planning authority in 2007, has led to comprehensive site surveys within Hereford and the Market Towns and settlements in the rural areas. Most sites around settlement boundaries have been assessed as well as any remaining potential sites within the settlement itself.

- 5.6 When surveying, information was sought to establish whether sites were developable and deliverable. To be considered developable a site should be in a suitable location for housing development and available at the appropriate time. To be considered deliverable a site should be:
- Available – the site is available now;
 - Suitable – the site offers a suitable location for development and would contribute to the creation of sustainable, mixed communities;
 - Achievable – there is a reasonable prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within 5 years and beyond within the timescale of the Plan ie by 2026.
- 5.7 The initial assessment has categorised land and sites as either land with no potential, land with significant constraints or land with minor constraints. All previous Unitary Development Plan urban capacity sites have been included and reviewed, which took account of many brownfield opportunities. Notwithstanding this, the study has also identified large amounts of greenfield land that could offer an urban /settlement extension. Most of these sites are with significant inherent constraints. Further examination is likely to rule out some or parts of these sites.

6 Timetable of Assessment

- 6.1 The SHLAA is an important part of the emerging evidence base for the LDF. Overall, the work will provide an early indication of possible housing land and broad locations of growth to support the options stage of the Core Strategy, which is proposed to be published for consultation purposes in June.
- 6.2 Identified sites within Hereford and the Market Towns will be subject to a technical consultation in early summer to further assess their suitability for development and to identify any mitigation measures where necessary and appropriate. As previously stated this will likely result in currently identified sites being deleted from the assessment. In addition all remaining sites will also be subject to a viability assessment.
- 6.3 Following further consideration of this proposed approach by Cabinet on May 29, an initial technical report will be completed to provide further information for the sites identified on the attached maps, in particular in respect of factual information on constraints. This will be subject to the approval of the Cabinet Member (Environment and Strategic Housing) prior to publication. As the study progresses additional sites may become available and so the initial report will not be definitive.
- 6.4 Alongside this, further work will also be undertaken in the rural areas where identified sites will also be subject to the same assessment. Site details for the rural areas will be made available as the Core Strategy moves towards its preferred options stage.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT

1. the processes undertaken to date in compiling the SHLAA be noted and supported; and
2. it be recommended to the Cabinet Member (Environment and Strategic Housing) that Cabinet approve the initial mapped survey findings of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment in respect of Hereford and the market towns as a basis for further technical work in support of the Local Development Framework, with publication of initial survey findings being carried out alongside the Core Strategy options consultation.

Background papers

Regional Spatial Strategy Phase 2 Revision Preferred Option (Dec. 2007)
Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments: practice guidance (July 2007)
Herefordshire's Housing Land Availability Assessment – Methodology Statement (August 2007)
Herefordshire Housing Land Study (2007)