

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**MONDAY 19 FEBRUARY 2018 AT 2.00PM**

**ST ALBANS CITY AND DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN CALL FOR  
SITES CONSULTATION (JAN/FEB 2018)**

Report of the Director of Resources

Report Authors: Andrea Gilmour, Interim Head of Development  
Services 01992 556477  
Dick Bowler, Estates Manager 01992 556223

Executive Member: David Williams, Leader of the Council (as  
responsible for Resources, Property & the  
Economy)

Local Members: John Hale, Colney Heath and Marshalswick  
David Williams, Harpenden North East  
Annie Brewster, Harpenden Rural  
Teresa Heritage, Harpenden South West  
Dreda Gordon, London Colney  
Chris White, St Albans Central  
Anthony Rowlands, St Albans East  
Charlotte Hogg, St Albans North  
Sandy Walkington, St Alban's South  
Sue Featherstone, St Stephen's

**1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the landowner representations to be submitted by Property (Development Services) officers to the current St Albans City and District Council Local Plan Call for Sites consultation, attached at Appendix A to the report.
- 1.2 To invite Cabinet to reconsider its policy regarding land at the former Radlett Airfield and to seek agreement of the proposed landowner representations for that site.

**2. Summary**

- 2.1 The County Council has been consulted on the St Albans City and District Council (SACDC) Issues and Options Local Plan consultation, which will show what can be built, and where, up to 2036. The draft Local Plan has an annual housing target of 913 homes. This will mean 9,000 to 10,000 homes will have to be built in the Green Belt. Growth for employment and other purposes is proposed too. The consultation includes a Call for Sites. It is clear from the consultation papers that

SCADC will need to look for additional green belt land releases in order to accommodate the scale of growth now required. The deadline for submission of responses to these consultations is 21 February 2018.

- 2.2 As part of the deliverability testing of sites that will be chosen by SACDC at the Preferred Options stage of their plan making process, and at later stages of examination of a submitted plan, it is important that site owners have advised that sites proposed for development will be made available to meet the growth requirements. The County Council has a number of sites that are potentially suitable for development for the growth needs of the District.
- 2.3 In September 2017, in response to the Draft Brownfield Register (BLR) and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) call for sites the County Council submitted 15 sites within its ownership. The sites are ones that are now, or may be expected to become within the period of the plan, surplus to the County Council's requirements.
- 2.4 This list has now been reviewed and officers are proposing to continue to promote a total of eight sites in the ownership of the County Council from the original 15 sites previously submitted through the current consultation for consideration by SACDC for inclusion in the Local Plan to assist the District Council in achieving its housing and employment land requirements. Attached at Appendix B to this report is a table showing what feasibility work has been undertaken to date and what needs to be carried out in respect of each site in order to confirm deliverability.
- 2.5 This work is usually carried out under Chief Officer delegations, with officers from the Development Services team responding to Call for Sites consultations on behalf of the County Council as a landowner.

### **3. Recommendations**

- 3.1 The Resources, Property and the Economy Cabinet Panel will consider a report on this item of business at its meeting on 14 February 2018. The Panel will be invited to recommend to Cabinet that:-
  - i) The County Council supports the promotion of the eight sites referred to in the report through the Local Plan process to assist St Albans City and District Council in achieving its housing and employment land requirements; and
  - ii) The inclusion of the Former Radlett Airfield in this process is authorised to enable the site to be considered by St Albans City and District Council for inclusion in the Local Plan.
- 3.2 The Cabinet Panel's recommendation/s to Cabinet will be reported orally at the Cabinet meeting and circulated to Members in the Order of Business sheet.

## **4. Background**

- 4.1 A summary of each of the eight sites being considered is given below, with the attached Appendix B table highlighting both the feasibility work undertaken to date and that required to support the promotion. All of the sites are located within the Green Belt.

### **Site 1 Land South of Napsbury**

- 4.2 Part of this landholding has been identified in the current SACDC Local Plan Consultation as a broad location for development (Land at London Colney). Detailed technical feasibility work undertaken in 2007/2009 indicates that the site could accommodate around 447 dwellings. This feasibility work would need to be refreshed.
- 4.3 The land south of Napsbury Park has been the subject of extensive technical investigations which informed the preparation of a master plan. This work confirms the suitability, deliverability and availability of the site, prior to any further consideration.
- 4.4 The technical investigations concluded that there were no significant impediments to development and that up to a maximum of 447 dwellings could be accommodated on land south of Napsbury; with community benefits including the potential provision of a local community centre with facilities as required, enhanced public access and landscape improvements.
- 4.5 It is also considered that the wider landholding offers the opportunity to provide additional community facilities, including schools, if these are required. However, further feasibility and technical investigations would need to be undertaken.

### **Site 2 Land North of Napsbury**

- 4.6 Detailed technical feasibility work undertaken in 2007/2009 indicates that the site could accommodate around 149 dwellings and a two form entry primary school. This work would need to be refreshed.
- 4.7 The land north of Napsbury Park has been the subject of extensive technical investigations which informed the preparation of a master plan. This work confirms the suitability, deliverability and availability of the site, prior to any further consideration. The technical investigations concluded that there were no significant impediments to development and that a maximum of 149 dwellings could be accommodated on land north of Napsbury.

### **Site 3 Land East of Kay Walk, St Albans**

- 4.8 This site forms part of a larger area identified in the current SACDC Local Plan Consultation as a broad location for development (East St Albans). The larger area has previously been identified by SACDC for up to 1,000 homes. Detailed feasibility is required to determine the

quantum of development that could be achieved on the land in the County Council's ownership.

**Site 4 Land at Stephens Way and Flamsteadbury Lane, Redbourn**

- 4.9 This site is currently leased as open space to the parish council. It is anticipated that it only has potential for development if there were to be a wider green belt release at this location, which could retain the play area within it and see development on the other component the County Council's land. The site could potentially provide between 25 and 30 dwellings. No feasibility work has been undertaken.

**Site 5 Land at Waterdell, adjacent to Mount Pleasant JMI**

- 4.10 This site lies to the south west of Bricket Wood on the boundary between SACDC and Watford. No feasibility has been undertaken but it is anticipated that it could accommodate between 30 and 40 dwellings.

**Site 6 Land at Highfield Farm, Tyttenhanger**

- 4.11 Planning applications for the residential redevelopment of the existing farm buildings at Highfield Farm are to be submitted outside of the Local Plan process. Feasibility work has been prepared for the development of the site around the farm buildings. This would need to be extended.

**Site 7 Former Radlett Airfield, Radlett**

- 4.12 This site forms the major part of land bounded by the M25 Motorway to the south, the Midland Main Line railway to the east, the A414 principal road to the north and the urban edge of Park Street to the east. It is located only three miles to the south of St Albans. It is a 'self-contained' block of land, with long term defensible boundaries, where the County Council is the majority land owner, and the remaining minor part is in a single ownership. See on the plan attached at Appendix C to the report, HP2959, and the County Council's land is shown edged red.

- 4.13 This site already has outline planning permission, granted by the Secretary of State, for development as a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI), to meet a north of London regional transport infrastructure need. It is anticipated that full detailed planning permission will be agreed by SACDC, at its Committee on 5 March 2018. Once reserved matters are approved and all conditions precedent have been satisfied, the development of the SRFI scheme can be lawfully begun and if that occurs the planning permission will then enure permanently for the benefit of the site. The County Council has not been approached to make its land available but if it is it will have to make its decision in light of the decision to grant planning permission for an SRFI and in accordance with public law principles.

- 4.14 Cabinet at its meeting on 11 July 2016 confirmed the County Council's strong preference not to see a change in the current green belt status

of this land or to dispose of it. Since that decision, the need for the much higher levels of growth in the District has become clear.

- 4.15 The purpose of submitting this site now to the Call for Sites process is to enable SACDC to consider it as a possible site for a Garden Village. SACDC can only do this if the County Council as landowner includes it in response to the Call for Sites. The work undertaken by two large housing developers in 2016 in response to the County Council's invitation of 'expressions of interest' showed proposals for development of the County Council's land a Garden Village. Their separate submissions made clear that there is a major opportunity to create a mixed use development of exceptional design quality and potential to integrate a wide range of sustainability measures. Contributions of about 2000 dwellings, employment land and all necessary social infrastructure, to include a high proportion of affordable housing, would be possible.
- 4.16 If SACDC were to decide to remove this land from the green belt and allocate it for a housing led development this would be a material consideration for Cabinet as and when the County Council receives an offer to purchase its land. A housing led scheme would be less damaging to the Hertfordshire environment, be more valuable in meeting Hertfordshire's need for additional housing and have a higher land value than the permitted SRFI scheme.
- 4.17 This site is considered to be a suitable and sustainable location for a Garden Village, which would include both housing and employment land. It has sustainable transport links due to its adjacency to the Abbey Line railway and has the potential to include a 'park and ride' facility to access the railway line. It is also of sufficient size to accommodate the necessary infrastructure, including a by-pass for Park Street, a local centre, a secondary school, several primary schools, recreation and open space facilities, which would be required to support the 2,000+ dwelling community that could be provided.
- 4.18 The development would provide a very major boost to the patronage of the Abbey Line and help to provide the impetus for a passing loop to significantly enhance train frequency on the Line. Opportunities for alternative alignments to the Abbey Line to directly serve the site could also be explored as would the potential for a new station (at Napsbury) on the Midland Mainline, offering further direct access to London and to Luton, Bedford, Leicester, Manchester, Leeds, etc.

**Site 8 Carpenter's Nursery, Sandridge**

- 4.19 There has been no feasibility undertaken on this site which forms part of a larger County Council land holding. An archaeological assessment would be required to inform the developable area as the northern area lies within an Archaeological site.

## **5. Town Planning**

- 5.1 The SACDC Call for Sites forms part of the SACDC's process to prepare a local plan.

## **6. Property Implications.**

- 6.1 The County Council as landowner seeks to assist Local Planning Authorities in their plan making processes by ensuring that any of its land that may be suitable, available and deliverable to meet growth requirements is identified and can be considered by them against the appropriate planning criteria for site allocation.
- 6.2 It is clear from the SACDC papers that there is 'exceptional circumstances' justification for removal of additional lands from the green belt, in suitable locations, to meet the higher growth needs of the area. On that basis officers have looked at the County Council's landholdings that may be capable of meeting the growth needs and the planning criteria for site selection.
- 6.3 Should any of the sites be allocated in an adopted local plan for housing and/or employment use the County Council would then be able to contribute important land supply to assist meeting the growth and infrastructure needs. Additionally it may be expected that very significant latent capital can be unlocked as the land values associated with urban land uses are many multiples of rural land use values.
- 6.4 Where sites are currently in service use for the purposes of the Rural Estate it would be necessary to re-provide or to close the individual service use.

## **7. Financial Implications.**

- 7.1 The successful promotion of these sites through the local plan process to achieve an allocation for alternative development would result in very significant increases in value of these County Council landholdings.
- 7.2 Should it be necessary to terminate Rural Estate service use holdings there may be compensation payable to tenants. These sums are modest in relation to the increase in land value, once planning permission has been granted.

## **8. Equality Act Implications.**

- 8.1 When considering proposals placed before Members it is important that they are fully aware of, and have themselves rigorously considered the Equality implications of the decision that they are making.

- 8.2 Rigorous consideration will ensure that proper appreciation of any potential impact of that decision on the County Council's statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. As a minimum this requires decision makers to read and carefully consider the content of any Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) produced by officers.
- 8.3 The Equality Act 2010 requires the County Council when exercising its functions to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 8.4 It is considered that there are no equalities implications arising from this report, the matter will however be kept under review.

**Background Information**

*July 2016 Cabinet Minutes*

<https://cmis.hertfordshire.gov.uk/hertfordshire/Calendarofcouncilmeetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/346/Committee/8/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx>