

Committee: Planning Policy Working Group

Agenda Item

Date: 23 March 2016

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Title: Green Belt Review report

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Summary

1. The council commissioned a review of the Metropolitan Green Belt which falls within its boundary as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan.
2. Phase 1 of the study was completed and presented to the Working Group on 16 December 2015.
3. The final study has now been completed and submitted to the Council by the consultants.

Recommendations

4. That the Working Group note the published report, Uttlesford Green Belt Review February 2016, and its adoption into the Local Plan evidence base.

Financial Implications

5. Costs of the document were met from existing budgets.

Background Papers

6. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

None

Impact

- 7.

Communication/Consultation	The document has been published on the website.
Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	The policy documents which will be prepared are subject to separate equalities impact assessments.
Health and Safety	N/A
Human Rights/Legal	N/A

Implications	
Sustainability	The policy documents which will be prepared are subject to separate equalities impact assessments.
Ward-specific impacts	All
Workforce/Workplace	Existing staff resources.

Situation

8. The Green Belt Review has provided an independent and objective appraisal of all existing Green Belt land in Uttlesford, as well as land outside the Green Belt boundaries which may be designated (if appropriate).
9. This report has been undertaken in accordance with the Brief, which sets out the main aim of the study *'to prepare an assessment of the District's Green Belt against these five purposes [the NPPF purposes], in sufficient detail to enable the Council to make informed decisions, should it decide to amend\ the Green Belt through its new Local Plan. The study should clarify what is meant by each of the five purposes, and how they will be applied in practice'*.
10. The NPPF advocates openness and permanence as essential characteristics of the Green Belt stating that *'the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open'* (paragraph 79). The NPPF details five purposes of the Green Belt:
 1. *'To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
 2. *To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
 3. *To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
 4. *To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
 5. *To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land'*. (paragraph 80)
11. The report has split the Green Belt into smaller parcels of land and then assessed them against the five purposes of the Green Belt. Each parcel has then been graded against the five purposes and then a final collective grade produced. The grading is summarised on colour coded maps.
12. The reports concludes that:

Collectively, the areas of land in the north extent of the Uttlesford Green Belt play an important strategic role in keeping the land permanently open. Four of the five large built-up areas identified in Map 4.4 are located in the north half of the Uttlesford Green Belt designation where the Green Belt has an enhanced role to prevent sprawl. This is particularly seen around the large built-up areas of Bishop's Stortford, Stansted Mountfitchet and

Stansted Airport which would be at risk of merging as a result of sprawl in the northern part of the Green Belt. The scale of the gaps are narrower and sprawl would result in the actual or perceived distance between the large built-up areas being significantly reduced, and potentially lost altogether. Large built-up areas are able to extend into open countryside where it is not bound by Green Belt policy, however the Uttlesford Green Belt is important in maintaining the distinct settlement patterns in the Green Belt and in keeping them as separate large built-up areas. There are fewer large built-up areas in the southern extent of the Green Belt designation, which are also at a greater scale apart. The Green Belt plays less of an important strategic role in keeping land permanently open in the south extent.

13. The report recommends some minor boundary changes in section 6.2. These boundary change suggestions relate to the area north of the A1060 in areas 24, 25, 26 and 29; a change in area 21 and a change in area 4 relating to Elms Farm in Stansted.
14. These suggested changes will be taken forward and considered as part of the Local Plan making process and are not for decision at this meeting.

Conclusion

15. The published report is an independent and objective appraisal of the Metropolitan Green belt falling within Uttlesford. The findings are that the Green Belt plays an important strategic role in preventing the coalescence of settlements and, with a few minor exceptions, should be retained in its current formal.
16. The Working Group is asked to note the report and its adoption in to the evidence base for the Local Plan.

Risk Analysis

17.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
The plan maybe found unsound because the plan has not been prepared in accordance with up to date and robust evidence	1. The production of robust evidence using experience consultants reduces the risk of impact.	3.If the plan is found unsound this will cause delay and uncertainty	Ensure that the evidence base is kept up to date and refreshed as necessary.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.