

# Item no.



District of **easington.**

**Report to:** Executive  
**Date:** 14<sup>th</sup> June 2005  
**Report of:** Executive Member for the Environment  
**Subject:** Commissioning of Two Studies as part of the Evidence Base for Local Development Framework for Easington District  
**Ward:** All

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to appoint consultants to undertake two studies identified as key aspects of the evidence base required to prepare policies in the Local Development Framework for the District (LDF).

## **2. Consultation**

- 2.1 The Management Team and Heads of Regeneration and Partnerships, Housing Strategy, Asset and Property Manager, Cultural Development and Environmental Services have all been consulted during preparation of this report.

## **3. Background**

- 3.1 Following the introduction of Local Development Frameworks in the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, the Council is required to prepare and maintain an up-to-date information base on key aspects of the social, economic and environmental characteristics of the area, to enable the preparation of sound policies for inclusion in the LDF.

- 3.2 In considering significant issues for this District, two specific information gaps have to date been identified where further work is required to develop a sound evidence base to underpin future policies:

i.) green space strategy

ii.) affordable housing needs

Green Space Strategy

- 3.3 Following approval of a report in November 2004, consultants are undertaking an open space audit in the District and are due to report later this month. This will assess the quantity, quality, distribution and accessibility of all our recreation and amenity open spaces. It was commissioned to support the Liveability programme in determining investment potential for environmental improvements, and to inform planning policy on the protection and provision of open space.
- 3.4 A Playing Pitch Strategy was prepared and adopted by the Council in 2004. This considered the provision, quality and use of sports pitches in the District.

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- 3.5 These two documents will provide the basis to establish an overarching Green Space Strategy. To be effective, the Strategy should address local community needs, should redress quantitative and qualitative deficiencies in open space and recreation provision, and should set a comprehensive policy framework to maintain, protect, enhance or relocate existing provision and to provide for future need.

## Affordable Housing Needs

- 3.6 Affordable housing needs have become apparent in the District as the market housing sector has become more buoyant and the supply of housing for social rent has diminished. The need has been quantified in the Housing Needs Survey revised by consultants earlier this year and appropriate means to deliver affordable housing through planning policy now need to be explored.
- 3.7 There is no Local Plan policy on affordable housing as it was not considered necessary when the plan was adopted in 2001. The recently published draft Planning Policy Statement 3, Planning for Mixed Communities (PPS3) proposes that local authorities should prepare and interpret an evidence base on the nature and level of local housing demand to provide for a mix of housing and create sustainable communities. Local authorities should consider policies to address affordable housing needs, whether social-rented or market, which should be balanced against the likely development potential of sites.

## 4. Position Statement and Option Appraisal

### Green Space Strategy

- 4.1 Cass Associates have undertaken detailed site surveys across the District to prepare the open space audit. This audit will be the foundation for development of a overarching Strategy which will propose a green space framework to provide for community needs, set a local standard of provision and maintenance to improve the environment, and evaluate options to protect existing and secure future provision through planning policy in the LDF.
- 4.2 Due to other work commitments in the Planning Service, and the self contained and cross- service implications of a green space strategy, it is proposed that Cass Associates be retained to prepare the Strategy. They have the expertise to undertake a specialist project of this nature, and were the only consultancy to respond positively of the four invited to tender to prepare the open space audit. They now also have detailed local knowledge of the District and are undertaking the audit satisfactorily to time and within budget.

### Affordable Housing Needs

- 4.3 An affordable housing study will build on the evidence already accumulated through the Housing Needs Study, Housing Market Assessment, monitoring reports on housing activity, and the District's Urban Capacity Study. The study will determine a policy on affordable housing and an appropriate definition in terms of social rented and market provision in the economic context of Easington, the different types of provision, and how and where these could be delivered in the District. In setting any targets this will need to be based on evidence related to housing needs as well as income levels required to access market housing. The Study will also consider, and evaluate the economic impacts of this form of housing provision in terms of land receipts and the wider implications for housing and planning policy.
- 4.4 Again, due to other work commitments it is proposed to commission external support from suitable experienced consultants to prepare the proposed affordable housing study.

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## 5. Implications

### Financial

- 5.1 It is proposed that both these studies will be funded through the use of Planning Delivery Grant monies received for 2004/05. The consultants will be engaged in accordance with Council's Constitution.

### Legal

- 5.2 There are no legal implications

### Policy

- 5.3 There are no policy implications

### Risk

- 5.4 As these are technical studies, there would be no risk.

### Communications

- 5.5 Consultants reports and policy recommendations will be reported back to the Executive for further consideration.

## 6. Corporate Implications

### Corporate Plan and Priorities

- 6.1 The two studies will address corporate priorities with regard to the environment and housing

### Equality and Diversity

- 6.2 There are no equality or diversity issues

### E-Government

- 6.3 There are no e-government implications

### Procurement

- 6.4 Consultants will be engaged in accordance with the Council's Constitution

## 7. Recommendations

- 7.1 The Executive is recommended to

- Approve the proposal to extend the contract with Cass Associates to enable them to prepare a Green Space Strategy on completion of the open space audit.
- Approve the engagement of appropriate consultants to undertake a study into affordable housing provision.

## Background Papers/Documents referred to

Play Pitch Strategy  
PPS3, Planning for Mixed Communities