

21 October 2019

Report of	Assistant Director of Policy and Corporate	Author	Sean Tofts ☎ 508639
Title	Brownfield Land Register Update		
Wards affected	All		

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council has produced and maintained a Brownfield Land Register (BLR) since December 2017. Prior to this Colchester was part of a pilot scheme. and the Council is fully committed to redevelopment of suitable brownfield land within the Borough.
- 1.2 The Council maintains an open register which can be updated whenever new sites are submitted that meet the criteria. Sites can be submitted to the Council throughout the year although since the initial publication of the BLR no further sites have been submitted for consideration. This report provides recommendations for the committee's consideration to encourage further sites to come forward for possible inclusion in the BLR.

## 2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 To agree the actions outlined within the report to increase public awareness of the BLR and to suggest additional actions if appropriate.

## 3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 To enhance awareness of the BLR and seek to bring forward suitable brownfield sites that have not yet been considered. This is intended to increase the ability of the Council to make the most effective use of land in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

## 4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 The committee could choose to take no further action than already in place or suggest an alternative scheme of publicising the BLR and its purpose.

## 5. Background Information

- 5.1 The Town and Country Planning (Brownfield Land Register) Regulations places a responsibility on the Council to prepare and maintain a register of brownfield sites. The Regulations state that the Council's Register must have been published by 31st December 2017 and that the Register must be in two parts:
  - Part 1 - all sites which are 'suitable', 'available', and 'achievable' for residential development which could be delivered within 15 years. This, however, does not affect a site's status; in other words, for any development to take place, planning permission would still need to be granted.

- Part 2 - any sites which are given 'permission in principle'. Inclusion on Part 2 grants planning permission in principle for residential development (the scale is determined by the Council) and the land owner/developer will have to apply for 'technical details consent' before any development can commence.

5.2 The Council participated in a pilot scheme for brownfield land registers and has used the data from the pilot to inform the current updated register; taking into account the change in planning status of sites within the Borough, completions and commencement of sites and changes to the regulations since the pilot scheme was undertaken. No sites currently within the register are being considered for entry into Part 2 of the register, reflecting the need for further clarification from the government in relation to the requirements for supporting environmental and health assessment work. Further information on the background of the BLR report was published on the 18<sup>th</sup> of December 2018.

5.3 Brownfield Land (otherwise known as previously developed land) is defined within the NPPF Glossary;

*“Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or was last occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill, where provision for restoration has been made through development management procedures; land in built-up areas such as residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape.”*

5.4 As noted in the executive summary the Council has received no submissions for possible sites to be included within the BLR within the last year. This could be partially due to the large proportion of suitable brownfield land within Colchester already being included on the BLR as well as the fact that large areas of brownfield land have already been successfully redeveloped.

5.5 However, there is a perception that there is still plenty of brownfield land within the borough that should be developed before releasing/allocating greenfield sites. As none of these sites have been put forward despite the ongoing call for brownfield land, it is proposed to run a targeted campaign. This will run over the 6-week period 24 October – 4 December and is intended to increase awareness of the register. The campaign would include the following elements;

5.6 Enhanced visibility on the website - The BLR currently has its own page on the Council website. 'Colchester brownfield' also shows the correct CBC page as the top result when using leading web search engines. Though the page has a clear and concise layout and enables the submission process to be as simple as possible the page could be better linked to other pages. The Brownfield Register page could be included within the side bar of other planning pages to aid publicising the BLR more effectively on the CBC website. Notwithstanding this the website is not considered to be a significant issue in the publicising of the BLR by officers.

5.7 Social Media Marketing – Officers plan to increase awareness of the BLR by producing content for various social media sites in collaboration with the communications team. Content could be shared passively through 'share functions' or promoted through

targeted advertising within the Colchester Borough however the latter does have financial implications.

- 5.8 Press - The Council will produce a press release highlighting the drive for further submissions to the BLR. Information within the press release could elaborate upon the historic use of brownfield land within the Borough and highlight the Council's historic reuse of sites such as the Garrison and areas of the Hythe.
- 5.9 Parish Councils have a wealth of localised knowledge and may have more up to date information than other sources in relation to the availability of new sites. Officers believe that sending emails to Parish Councils requesting any information on the availability of brownfield land could be beneficial.
- 5.10 Officers will report an update alongside the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) which will include information on any new sites submitted for inclusion of the BLR and any changes in permissions granted or sites completed on the current BLR.

## **6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications**

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared for the Local Plan, and is available to view by clicking on this link: -  
<https://cbccrmdata.blob.core.windows.net/noteattachment/Equality%20Impact%20Assessment%20June%202017.pdf>

## **7. Strategic Plan References**

- 7.1 The Strategic Plan is relevant in particular in contributing towards priorities under the themes Responsibility, Opportunity and Wellbeing;  
**Responsibility**- Promote responsible citizenship by encouraging residents to get involved in their communities and to identify solutions to local issues;  
**Opportunity**- Ensure a good supply of land available for new homes through our Local Plan;  
**Wellbeing**- Encourage belonging, involvement and responsibility in all the borough's communities.

## **8. Consultation**

- 8.1 Consultation will be undertaken as set out above and any site submitted will be considered for inclusion in the register.

## **9. Publicity Considerations**

- 9.1 As set out above.

## **10. Financial implications**

- 10.1 The actions have no financial implications beyond the requirement of officer time unless the use of paid targeted advertising is pursued but this is not considered necessary.

## **11. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety; Health and Safety and Risk Management Implications**

- 11.1 None