

Meeting Notes
Welwyn Hatfield Emerging Core Strategy
East Herts District Plan Part 1: Strategy

Date: Friday 30th November, 2012

Venue: Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council offices, Welwyn Garden City

Attendees

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (WHBC):

- Cllr Mandy Perkins, Executive Member for Planning and Business
- Sue Tiley, Planning Policy and Implementation Manager
- Paul Everard, Principal Planning Officer

East Herts District Council (EHDC):

- Cllr Linda Haysey, Executive Member for Health, Housing, and Community Support
- Bryan Thomsett, Planning Policy Manager
- Martin Paine, Senior Planning Officer

These notes have been agreed by all attendees as a true reflection of the meeting, and have been agreed for publication on either/both Councils' websites.

Meeting Notes

1. It was discussed that some joint technical work had already been undertaken, but as the plans of both districts advance it was felt to be important that there be political engagement at this stage.
2. Cllr Haysey explained that Cllr Carver is unwell and therefore she had been asked to stand in for him at this meeting. Cllr Haysey is a Member of the Executive (i.e. Cabinet) with responsibility for Housing, and one of two Members of the District Planning Executive Panel (along with Councillor Carver, who chairs the Panel).
3. Cllr Haysey declared that she is also local Ward Member for Hertford Rural South, and therefore has a local interest in the area east of Welwyn Garden City indicated as an area of Potential Expansion (PE) in Welwyn Hatfield's emerging Core Strategy.
4. Cllr Perkins explained that she is the Executive Member for Planning and Business and she represents Welwyn West Ward in the north of Welwyn Hatfield Borough.
5. Welwyn Hatfield's broad locations for growth were reviewed, as shown on the Key Diagram within the Emerging Core Strategy. Sue Tiley explained that due to

NPPF requirements urban extensions/Green Belt release would be necessary, although it would not be possible to meet objectively assessed needs as set out in the Housing Background Paper Part One.

6. It was explained that there had been very strong representations to earlier consultations by WHBC to avoid development in the villages. This, combined with the greater advantages of concentrating growth in the towns with better opportunities for proximity of housing to jobs, services and facilities, had led to a strategy focused on Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City.
7. The WHBC Emerging Core Strategy area of Proposed Expansion (PE) east of Welwyn Garden City within East Herts was discussed. It was acknowledged that although WHBC cannot propose this land, and that the decision of whether or not to bring forward the land lies with EHDC as Local Planning Authority for the area, WHBC would support a decision by EHDC to do so.
8. In the Emerging Core Strategy Panshanger Aerodrome is proposed for 700 dwellings, plus 15 Gypsy and Traveller pitches. To the south, the landowners Lafarge have not been able to give Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council any confidence that land south of Birchall Lane could be developed for housing in a coherent form, perhaps because of the implications of decontamination.
9. EHDC District Plan options were explained. 69 initial 'areas of search' at all settlements had been carefully assessed, and a shortlist of options, including the area East of Welwyn Garden City, and other significant options such as Harlow North, had been agreed by the Council for further testing and assessment. However, although East Herts is a larger district, the technical work to date had demonstrated that, like Welwyn Hatfield, there are many constraints to development, and the number of reasonable development options is limited. It is proposed to bring forward a draft Preferred Strategy to the District Planning Executive Panel meeting on 21st February, and 12 weeks consultation in April-July 2013.
10. It was discussed that area PE is relatively unconstrained, well located in relation to Welwyn Garden City and Moneyhole Park, has spare capacity in the sewerage network, has low flood risk, is well screened by tree belts, and has good access to the A414.
11. The potential for area PE to accommodate a new secondary school was discussed. The area is relatively flat and therefore suitable for school playing fields. This could help to alleviate the pressure on school places within the town, and provide capacity for development at Panshanger also.

12. The employment potential of area PE was discussed. DTZ had recently completed a technical study for EHDC, which suggested that given proximity to the A414, a small employment allocation could be feasible, although in reality the majority of residents would be likely to seek work in the wider travel to work area, in Welwyn Garden City Employment Area or perhaps at Hatfield Business Park nearby. The possibility of business incubator units was discussed. It was acknowledged that the main strength of East Herts lies in the SME sector, and there are no intentions to change that emphasis to attract bigger businesses.
13. WHBC's approach to housing is set out in two background papers. In Part 1, WHBC decided the housing requirement based on consideration of a balance of different projections including migration and economic development. Part 2 then looked at housing distribution options to meet that target. EHDC's approach to housing is to identify a range of housing options (10,000-17,000 dwellings) and then test the capacity of the district and the ability to deliver at both ends of the range.
14. Within the Emerging Core Strategy, the figure of 400 dwellings within area PE is based on a) the need to meet the identified Borough-wide housing need of 400 dwellings per year and b) acknowledgement that, given the need to extract the underlying mineral deposits prior to development, some of the development would occur after the end of the plan period. It was observed that without the numbers shown in the housing trajectory within East Herts, the actual proposed housing target for WHBC is 378 dwellings per annum.
15. Transport was discussed. The Inter-Urban Route Strategy (IURS) led by the County Council is acknowledged to require further input from all the Districts, particularly as the details of their emerging strategies become available. Transport modelling has been undertaken and the results are being shared between WHBC and EHDC, the County Council in its function as Transport authority and the Highways Agency.
16. The following issues were raised as needing further joint consideration, if EHDC bring forward this option:
 - funding arrangements, for example in relation to Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), and how the money would be apportioned fairly to relevant service providers;
 - a suitable policy vehicle will be needed for more detailed work towards a high quality urban design framework;
 - consideration of requirement to demonstrate agreement at Examination in Public, perhaps involving a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU);
 - Co-operation on planning for Gypsy and Traveller sites;
 - Joint discussion of school provision with the County Council;

- Hertfordshire-wide position statement on the housing numbers set out in CLG/ONS projections – could LEP endorse this?

17. It was noted that the Emerging Core Strategy consultation ends on January 18th. EHDC will agree an official response through a Non-Key report before submission to WHBC.

18. It was agreed that there should be a further meeting after the end of Welwyn Hatfield Borough council's consultation on their Emerging Core Strategy and associated documents, but before East Hertfordshire District Council's District Plan consultation starts.

END.

Post Meeting Note: Since this meeting took place the consultation period has been extended to 31st January 2013.