

**East Herts District Council – Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
Draft Meeting Notes**

Day/time: Wednesday 4th December 2013, 2pm

Venue: Hertford Council Offices, Pegs Lane, Hertford

Attendees:

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

Cllr Mandy Perkins (CllrMP), Cabinet Member for Planning and Business

Tracy Harvey (TH), Head of Planning

Sue Tiley (ST), Planning Policy and Implementation Manager

East Herts District Council

Cllr Mike Carver (CllrMC), Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport

Bryan Thomsett (BT), Planning Policy Manager

Martin Paine (MP), Senior Planning Officer

Meeting Notes

1. BT explained that East Herts was producing a single local plan to be known as the District Plan including a development strategy, topic-based policies, development management policies and site-specific policies and allocations. A decision to consult was expected at Full Council on 29th January 2014, followed by 12 weeks consultation starting in mid February. Today's meeting was the first of the 'second round' of Member-level meetings with adjoining authorities.
2. TH explained that Welwyn Hatfield was considering whether to continue with a Core Strategy or whether to produce a single Local Plan. A further consultation was planned, starting in September 2014.

Site availability

3. TH explained that the land at Panshanger Aerodrome included in the current Local Plan as safeguarded land (Area of Special Restraint) has received an objection from Sport England on the grounds that it was a strategic facility for airports. The council are reviewing the evidence on this and there was a question as to whether the site could be developed for housing.
4. ST stated that Lafarge Tarmac was promoting a substantial, but smaller development than the proposal within East Herts, as an urban extension to Welwyn Garden City on land within the Borough. However, the proposals were complicated by the need for a buffer to the Burnside waste treatment facility and also the issue of contaminated land which restrict the amount of developable land. The Lafarge proposals for the area would need to be studied closely and work is ongoing but it has not yet been demonstrated that the full extent of the Lafarge proposals could be brought forward.

5. Cllr MP stated that the Borough Council would have to review the site options around the Borough's villages as well as the towns. ST explained that a Part 2 Green Belt Review would be looking at smaller non-strategic parcels of land but there was a possibility that this might not yield sufficient land to meet the objective assessment which is currently under review as the SHMA is in the process of being updated.
6. ST advised that the SHLAA is currently being updated. In addition further transport modelling was taking place but it was clear that there are capacity issues from the results of the earlier Diamond modelling work. Taking all these considerations together, there was limited suitable site availability within the Borough.
7. MP explained that the situation in East Herts was not dissimilar. Although East Herts had plenty of open countryside, within the plan period there were relatively few sustainable and deliverable options. Therefore a number of sites would have to be brought forward through the East Herts District Plan which were not ideal when judged individually. However, there was no alternative but to bring such sites forward in order to meet nationally imposed requirements in terms of housing land supply to meet the District's own needs.

Transport

8. MP explained that East Herts Council had received a Transport Update report from Hertfordshire County Council. The Update states that there is a risk that no solution may be found to increased traffic congestion on the A414, but that a County-led study on this matter was scheduled to report in February. This could have implications for the deliverability of plans in both Welwyn Hatfield and East Herts.
9. ATLAS had advised East Herts Council that it may not be possible to resolve at plan-making stage whether or not the traffic impacts would be severe. Even at planning application stage, emerging definitions of 'severe' impact by County and the Highways Agency were increasingly based on an assessment of highways safety (such as queuing onto motorway slip roads) rather than on traffic congestion.
10. The County Council's Protocol for working with Boroughs and Districts, required 'confirmation that proposed measures mitigate against severe harm' at pre-submission stage. MP suggested that in light of the advice from ATLAS, it was uncertain whether this requirement was in fact achievable.
11. TH suggested that an officer level meeting with County should be arranged to scrutinise the A414 study before it is finalised. Cllr MP suggested that it would be helpful to consider the impact along the whole length of the A414.

ACTION: TH to arrange meeting with officers from County and both local planning authorities to review the A414 study and approach to 'severe impacts'.

Policy Approaches

12. CllrMC stated that there were potential deliverability issues at each of the three strategic-scale options identified within East Herts, including North of Harlow, North and East of Ware, and East of Welwyn Garden City. For this reason it was not anticipated that any development here would be able to commence before 2021.
13. BT explained that the concept of a Broad Location combined with a Development Plan Document (DPD) enabled further assessment and testing, to enable control and safeguard against development coming forward until a robust delivery plan could be put in place.
14. MP added that the concept of a Broad Location had been discussed at a recent meeting with transport officers from Hertfordshire County Council, and was in part a response to address their concerns about strategic-scale developments and loss of control over a highway network which was reaching capacity. The further DPD would introduce a clear process for the transport and planning authorities to work with developers and scrutinise their masterplans and their proposed transport solutions.
15. MP explained that there was the potential to expand the Broad Location to include the adjoining land within Welwyn Hatfield Borough, should the Borough Council wish to bring forward the Lafarge land. If the Borough Council didn't wish to bring forward the adjoining land, but East Herts Council were to bring forward the land in East Herts, then a DPD would be prepared by East Herts Council with input from Welwyn Hatfield Council. However, if both Councils were to seek to bring forward adjoining land on both sides of the boundary then a joint DPD may be the appropriate planning policy vehicle.
16. CllrMC stated that a co-ordinated approach was desirable. TH agreed that a co-ordinated approach to management of the area on both sides of the administrative boundary was sensible, and should also include a comprehensive approach to the provision of Green Infrastructure with the potential to link Stanbrough Park and the Lee valley with Panshanger Park.

Land east of Welwyn Garden City within East Herts

17. BT distributed the section on land east of Welwyn Garden City from Chapter 6 of the District Plan Supporting Document. He explained that this suggested a total housing figure within East Herts of 1,700 dwellings, based on around 60 hectares of land controlled by Lafarge Tarmac and 20 hectares controlled by the Gascgoyne Cecil Estates. Owing to the need for prior mineral extraction, it was anticipated that only 450

dwellings would be needed prior to 2031, with the remaining 1,250 after 2031.

18. ST explained that both landowners also had adjoining interests in Welwyn Hatfield Borough. It was agreed that early indications were that the landowners appeared to be willing to work closely together to bring forward a comprehensive scheme.
19. BT stated that ATLAS had been engaged and had meetings with both Lafarge and Gasgoyne Cecil Estates in order to obtain sufficient information on deliverability for this stage in the plan-making process. Landowner submissions from both landowners to East Herts Council, including notes of the meetings with ATLAS, are available online at www.eastherts.gov.uk/developerinfo under area 61.
20. MP distributed the draft East Herts Key Diagram inset map for East of Welwyn Garden City. It was explained that the proposed approach to dealing with uncertainty in delivery was to identify East of Welwyn Garden City, North and East of Ware, as Broad Locations for Development, shown as an orange star.
21. CllrMP stated that local residents in Welwyn Garden City would be concerned to ensure that development should not be too dense. MP stated that the figure of 1,700 dwellings in East Herts was an early estimate based on the available land area and inclusion of a secondary school site. The total number of dwellings would need to be subject to confirmation through masterplanning as part of the Broad Locations DPD process once it was clearer what the expectations were in terms of mix of uses.
22. TH confirmed that Welwyn Hatfield officers would be satisfied with the approach to a Broad Location to the area within East Herts, and this was consistent with the Borough Council's position in the Emerging Core Strategy consultation in November 2013.
23. The proposed Panshanger County Park shown on the Key Diagram was discussed and it was agreed that this would be appropriate.

Housing Needs

24. BT stated that by combining the Edge Analytics work with recent 2013 CLG Household Projections, the District Council had estimated that East Herts objectively assessed need was around 750 dwellings per annum for East Herts. ST explained that Edge Analytics had been contracted to provide a range of demographic projections to inform the SHMA.

ST continued that there was a possibility that the borough would not be able to meet all its needs within the borough and would therefore need to explore

through the Duty to Co-operate the potential for other authorities to meet any shortfall as is required in the NPPF.

25. CllrMC explained that it looked as though East Herts was able to meet its own housing needs, but only if it included some strategic scale long-term locations as part of its development strategy. As previously discussed, deliverability in these locations was far from certain. It was therefore unclear at this stage whether or how far East Herts would be able to assist other authorities in addressing their housing needs.
26. MP stated that Edge Analytics had recently undertaken work for East Herts Council looking at Sub-District Population Projections. This study indicated housing needs for Hertford amounting to over 3,500 dwellings to 2031. Given the heavily constrained nature of Hertford, due to the river network and other constraints, the nearest available location to meet this need was east of Welwyn Garden City. MP continued that although the housing market areas mapped in the SHMA follow the A1(M) and the A10, the SHMA recognised the fluidity of the mapped areas. Given the proximity of Hertford to the area east of Welwyn Garden City along the A414, it seemed a logical destination for Hertford's unmet need. The Broad Location at Ware would be sufficient to meet Ware's need.
27. It was agreed that further consideration would need to be given to the issue of housing needs prior to submission of the respective plans.

Employment

28. TH stated that, based on early work emerging from the Economy Study, Welwyn Hatfield may need to provide a for an expansion in employment floorspace. She asked whether there was any potential for East Herts to take any of Welwyn Hatfield's unmet need for employment.
29. MP explained that the Key Diagram suggested an employment allocation east of Welwyn Garden City, this was likely to be quite small. The Broad Locations DPD would need to look into this issue further, and was probably not an issue which the District Plan could resolve. Other potential new employment areas proposed for earlier in the plan period were at a considerable distance from Welwyn Hatfield Borough and were not in the same functional economic area.
30. Cllr MP drew attention to the importance of the main roads including the A10 and the A414 in terms of employment. BT explained that East Herts Council's Strategic Employment Advice drew attention to the role of East Herts in terms of the sub-regional labour market, providing a net outflow of workers to larger employment centres outside the District. Cllr MC added that with the exception of Hertfordshire County Council and GSK Ware, the majority of East Herts businesses were in the SME sector.

Gypsies and Travellers

31. ST stated that Welwyn Hatfield had an immediate need for 25 pitches and a potential future need for a further 29 pitches. However the advice received by Welwyn Hatfield suggests that an overview of the evidence emerging from all the Hertfordshire needs assessments be carried out to establish a more strategic overview of the evidence base and to explore the potential for any double counting for example the same family moving between different unauthorised developments within the county.
32. ST continued that the Borough Council had been advised that, following a sequential approach, it would be appropriate to enquire whether neighbouring authorities had any non Green Belt land which could accommodate additional pitches to meet the Borough Council's need, before the Borough Council identified Green Belt sites. Furthermore the scale of the need for transit provision means that this issue needs to be considered on a wider than district basis.
33. BT stated that East Herts Council had commissioned consultants to undertake a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment. This matter would be considered further as part of that study.

Outcomes

It was agreed that the provision of housing within both Welwyn Hatfield's Housing Market Area and the East Herts Housing Market Areas is a strategic issue

The provision of sufficient employment land in the Welwyn Hatfield Functional Economic Market Area is potentially a strategic issue although this would depend on the findings of the Economy Study.

Joint working between the two authorities and the county council needs to take place on highway capacity issues with regards to A414 and is another strategic issue

In respect of land to the East and South-East of Welwyn Garden City it was agreed that a co-ordinated approach to management of the area on both sides of the administrative boundary was sensible, and should also include a comprehensive approach to the provision of Green Infrastructure with the potential to link Stanbrough Park and the Lee valley with Panshanger Park

The needs for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation to be explored at a county level to ensure that cross boundary issues are properly understood. The sequential approach with regards to the provision of pitches in the Green Belt means that those authorities which are tightly constrained will need to explore opportunities with adjoining authorities before considering allocating sites within the Green Belt,

The meeting closed at 4pm.