

East Herts District Council – Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
To discuss land east of Welwyn Garden City
Meeting Notes

Date: 17th July 2014

Venue: East Herts Council Offices, Hertford

Attendees:

East Herts District Council

Cllr Mike Carver – Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport

Jenny Pierce – Senior Planning Officer

Martin Paine – Senior Planning Officer

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

Cllr Roger Trigg – Executive Member for Planning, Housing, and Community

Colin Haigh – Head of Planning

Sue Tiley – Planning Policy and Implementation Manager

Context

A variety of sites have been promoted for development to the east and south of Welwyn Garden City on land that lies within both Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and East Herts District Council administrative areas. A joint masterplan approach is considered to be the most appropriate way of appraising and, if favoured, allocating and releasing the land from the green belt in respective local plans.

Meeting Notes

1. East Herts Council's Preferred Options consultation closed in May. Representations from Welwyn Hatfield had been received and would be considered. A further Regulation 18 consultation was proposed later in the year which would address any material amendments to the District Plan prior to submission (Regulation 19).
2. Welwyn Hatfield would be undertaking a Regulation 18 consultation on a new Local Plan containing significant changes to strategic policies, site allocations and a list of development management policies, probably for 9 weeks over the Christmas period.

Policy Approach

3. CH/ST suggested that some form of co-ordinated approach would be needed, although whether a separate DPD was the most suitable vehicle would need to be considered further. One consideration was the need to satisfy national requirements in terms of the five year housing land supply, and this would need to be kept under review. MC stated that he didn't have any objections to a co-ordinated policy approach.

4. MP explained that one of the main reasons for proposing a DPD rather than an allocation was the concerns raised by the County Council as Local Highways Authority about the A414 capacity. However if it was possible to resolve these concerns then it should be possible to allocate the land, given the firm Green Belt boundaries, subject to a co-ordinated approach to masterplanning by both landowners.
5. It was agreed that there would be close co-operation around the drafting of policies for the area, in the event that further testing suggested that development was deliverable.

Viability/Infrastructure Planning Work

6. MC stated that East Herts Council wanted to ensure that the necessary infrastructure would be provided to support growth. He would not want to take forward a plan which was not deliverable.
7. MP explained that East Herts Council would be commissioning consultants to undertake work on a Delivery Study, which would include viability and infrastructure planning tasks, and would be likely to address cross-boundary issues including in the A414 corridor.
8. ST explained that BNP Paribas were undertaking viability work for Welwyn Hatfield Council and it would be sensible for the consultants for both authorities to discuss viability issues of a cross-boundary nature.

Cross-boundary housing issues

9. ST explained that a new SHMA was being prepared which was likely to suggest new housing market area boundaries. Whilst Welwyn Hatfield had previously sought 450 dwellings in East Herts, this would need to be kept under review. CH suggested that Housing Market Areas should be used as a guideline with some flexibility as a starting point for discussions.
10. It was agreed that, should development south and east of the town be deliverable, then it would be necessary to discuss how this would be apportioned between the local planning authorities. Based on the way the Planning Inspectorate was interpreting this in the context of the Duty to Co-Operate, the most likely scenario would be agreement to share the housing numbers. Further discussions on this would be required.

Site Promoters

11. The concerns of both Councils were discussed in respect of the apparent lack of joint working between Lafarge and Gascoyne Cecil as

the two landowners for the site. The Lafarge proposals did not appear to take account of the Gascoyne Cecil land. ST understands that Gascoyne Cecil had concerns about the proposed masterplan by Lafarge.

ACTION: joint meeting with both Local Planning Authorities and both site promoters to be arranged.

Memorandum of Understanding

12. There was some discussion of the need for a formal Memorandum of Understanding between the authorities, in the context of the Duty to Co-Operate. It was discussed that the Hertfordshire MoU was too general in nature and a specific MoU between the two authorities would be needed.
13. The MoU would need to be agreed by the Full Council of both East Herts Council and Welwyn Hatfield District Council.

ACTION: JP to draft initial MoU for circulation and agreement to take forward.

The meeting ended at 11.30.