

**Land East of Welwyn Garden City Broad Location
and West of Hertford Proposed Allocation**

**Initial Partnership Group Meeting
Friday 16th May, 10:00-13:00
East Herts Council Offices, Wallfields, Hertford SG13 8EQ**

Attendees:

Kay Mead (KM)	East Herts Council – Planning Policy Team
Laura Pattison (LP)	East Herts Council – Planning Policy Team
Jenny Pierce (JP)	East Herts Council – Planning Policy Team
Simon Chivers (SC)	Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council – Planning Policy Team
Paul Chappell (PC)	Herts County Council – Highways
Ben Caspani (BC)	Herts County Council – Transport Modelling
Sue Jackson (SJ)	Herts County Council – Transport Modelling
Neil French (NF)	Herts County Council – Passenger Transport
Andrea Gilmour (AG)	Herts County Council – Property
Bethan Clemence (BCI)	Herts County Council – Primary Schools
Julie Greaves (JG)	Herts County Council – Minerals and Waste
Richard Reeve (RR)	Thames Water
Laura Griggs (LG)	NHS England / NHS Hertfordshire
Paul Atton (PA)	JB Planning Associates
Jonathan Dixon (JD)	JB Planning Associates
John Duffield (JDu)	Lafarge Tarmac
Anthony Downs (AD)	Gascoyne Cecil Estates
Allison Meigh (AM)	Savills
Sarah Phillips (SP)	David Lock Associates
Joseph Thomas (JT)	David Lock Associates
Simon Tucker (ST)	DTA Transportation
Duncan Wardrop (DW)	Wardrop Minerals Management
Katherine Munro (KMU)	Savills
Geoffrey Springer (GS)	London & Regional
Jeremy Woolf (JW)	Woolf Bond Planning

Apologies:

Kate Ma	Herts County Council – Secondary Schools
Carol Lodge	HMWT

Meeting Notes

1. JP welcomed all to the meeting and explained that it was intended to continue to maintain maximum transparency and that the meeting notes would be published along with any material received which might have a bearing on the decision-making process, first through the District Planning Executive Panel and then on the Council's website.
2. East Herts Council had established the District Plan on the basis of independent technical studies, the Landowner/Developer Questionnaires in Summer 2012, and follow-up meetings with ATLAS during 2013, but

there had been no direct contact between planning officers and any landowners or developers up to this point. However, it was considered necessary to engage with site promoters now in order to enable continued testing of the feasibility of the District Plan and the site allocations and Broad Locations. Ensuring that the Plan met National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requirements in terms of deliverability was essential.

3. KM and JP explained the rationale behind the development strategy for the district. The Draft District Plan suggested that the site allocation to the west of Hertford (Draft District Plan Policy HERT3) could accommodate 550 homes in the period 2016-2021 across two sites north and south of Welwyn Road, and this allocation had been made to contribute to the housing need generated from within Hertford. The identification of a Broad Location for Development (BLD) on land east of Welwyn Garden City (Draft District Plan Policy EWEL1) for approximately 1,700 homes had been made to meet the unmet housing need from Hertford and part of the rural area.
4. The BLD east of Welwyn Garden City would be subject to the production of a further Development Plan Document (DPD) – effectively a mini-District Plan – which would enable more detailed technical work and testing to take place. The location would remain in the Green Belt until adoption of the DPD, estimated in 2021.

G&T and Travelling Showpeople

5. KM explained that, in order to comply with statutory requirements and 'Planning policy for traveller sites', the District Council was currently undertaking a 2-stage approach to meeting the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople. KM explained that work had been commissioned by the Council for two separate firms of consultants to carry out work relating to meeting the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. The first study is concerned with the level of need arising in the district and this is being followed by a site scoping study to ensure that enough pitches and plots would be available to meet that identified need throughout the plan period. The meeting was informed that the consultants (Peter Brett Associates) are currently carrying out the Identification of Potential Sites Study. All the emerging site allocations and Broad Locations were being considered as potential options and therefore promoters should expect that contact might be made regarding this issue and seeking access to their sites. A consultation on the proposed locations would be undertaken later in 2014.

Delivery Study

6. JP explained that the Council would be appointing consultants to undertake a Delivery Study over the summer. This study would require the main items of infrastructure and funding sources to be identified and

to understand the level of contributions which could be expected from site promoters. The aim of the Delivery Study would be to show that the development strategy in the District Plan has a realistic prospect of delivery and to help ensure compliance with the NPPF.

7. JP explained that the Delivery Study would require inputs from sites promoters to the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) to allow for a comprehensive analysis of the overall scale of costs of development. These inputs would be verified by the infrastructure providers and the appointed consultants. JP requested site promoters to advise the Council of any commercially sensitive information that could not be made public.
8. KM introduced the proposal to complete a Site Investigation Sheet for each site allocation/broad location for development and there was a consensus from those present that this would be a useful exercise to undertake. However, as it is possible that some of this work could be duplicated or superseded by information submitted for the Delivery Study, the Site Investigation Sheets are not likely to be provided within the short term both because of this and due to resource constraints within Planning Policy team.

Cross Boundary Issues

9. JP stated that the Council would need to work alongside Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council with regard to further testing of the BLD east of Welwyn Garden City. Information submitted to either planning authority by the site promoters would be shared and considered to assist the plan-making process. East Herts and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council are already engaged in meetings in line with the Duty to Co-operate but further discussions would be needed to agree a Memorandum of Understanding regarding the DPD approach.
10. SC commented that Welwyn Hatfield were slightly behind East Herts in the plan-making process. They have decided to move to the single document approach, producing a Local Plan, and are anticipating going out to public consultation in the autumn, with consultation on a final draft in late 2015 and submission early in 2016.
11. JP commented that East Herts would be carrying out further public consultation in the autumn on minor amendments to the Draft District Plan so there is the potential for the two planning authorities' timelines to re-align. Because a DPD approach would sit slightly outside plan production this would not delay plan preparation and vice versa.

Education

12. With regard to HERT3, BCI confirmed that at primary level all schools in Hertford were at capacity. Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) had implemented a number of temporary expansions in primary schools

across the town and is currently supporting Simon Balle secondary school to become an all-through school from September 2015. This additional provision would be to meet the forecast need from the existing community and therefore any further development in Hertford would be expected to support the pupil yield that it would generate. Therefore development of 550 homes to the west of Hertford would generate a need for an additional 1FE. HCC had identified a school in the vicinity of the proposed development that could be expanded to meet this need and HCC would expect this expansion to be fully funded by the developers.

13. At secondary level, the school planning area consists of both Hertford and Ware so development across the two towns would be considered when calculating future need. Current forecasts show that there is no capacity at secondary level beyond 2017.
14. In terms of development east of Welwyn Garden City, BCI explained that although the BLD had been identified as accommodating 1,700 homes, future development within Welwyn Hatfield's boundary would also need to be taken into account. Development would be expected to support the pupil yield that it would generate. SC confirmed that there were other sites being considered for development in the vicinity of the BLD by Welwyn Hatfield Council which would also generate additional need. BCI stressed that the phasing of development in this location would be critical and that a greater understanding of the scale of development proposed and phasing would be needed. As an example, BCI stated that development of 2,500 homes would generate the need for 1 secondary school and 2 primary schools.

Other community facilities

15. AG explained that S106 contributions would be sought towards childcare, nurseries, libraries and youth services and that it would be expected that development east of Welwyn Garden City would provide some community facilities on-site.

Healthcare

16. LG explained that healthcare had not previously been at the forefront of infrastructure provision. However, the existing GP surgeries in Hertford were approaching capacity and NHS England would be seeking contributions to provide additional capacity; either in the form of financial contributions or provision of a new health facility.
17. LG explained that development of 2,500 homes east of Welwyn Garden City could require provision of a new healthcare facility. As additional capacity would need to be planned in advance of development, site promoters should hold discussions with NHS England GP Premises Team and the East and North Herts Clinical Commissioning Group via local authorities, rather than direct with individual practices. Any

contributions will be requested following consultation between the joint estates group, comprising NHS England, the CCG and individual practices. It should also be noted that healthcare provision is generally moving away from single GP practices towards healthcare hubs.

Minerals and Waste

18. JG explained that, in relation to east of Welwyn Garden City HCC would seek to prevent underlying minerals from being sterilised. Minerals would need to be extracted prior to development. DW commented that they were further ahead with extraction and plans for further extraction within Welwyn Hatfield's land than within East Herts' land. JP queried whether work was being carried out on phasing and extraction. JT explained that they required a meeting to discuss different scenarios. SP said that a meeting would be needed quite soon. It was agreed that a meeting would be held with relevant officers to discuss matters of mineral extraction and delivery as soon as possible. In terms of Hertford, the mineral deposits had already been worked out and there would be no further requirement to extract.

Highways

19. PC explained that the key highways issue was the impact of development on the A414 corridor and that this was applicable to both the BLD east of Welwyn Garden City and the site allocations west of Hertford. The current position is that the A414 is close to capacity and also has a declared AQMA in Hertford. The highway authority is currently in the process of having consultants finalise a study to investigate the capability of adding additional capacity to the route through online improvements. However, it was to be noted that the A414 study has only tested current traffic flows to date and a future run would need to be completed which would factor in future growth.
20. SJ explained further that the study involves a paramics model of the A414 in Hertford and the testing of a package of online improvements. Some of these improvements, such as additional lanes and improvements to roundabouts, would free up some additional capacity but SJ stressed that there was no magic solution and that the route would still experience congestion. It was important to ensure that any potential solutions for individual junctions would not have a negative knock-on effect elsewhere. While work was on-going to find the best solution at the local level (which may involve additional modelling), it was also important to continue looking at wider options for east-west travel.
21. SJ explained that a Saturn model had been developed for Welwyn Garden City, which had identified key junctions of concern along the A414 as well as junction 4 of A1(M). Initial design options had been devised and these were currently being tested within the model. Results would be available in the next few weeks.

22. SJ explained that HCC would expect development east of Welwyn Garden City to be modelled by the developers.
23. JP stated that a separate meeting would need to be held on highways issues. ST confirmed that DTA were acting for LaFarge and AD confirmed that WSP had been instructed to act on behalf of Gascoyne Cecil Estates. JDu stated that there was further work to be done between the two sites, including the assumptions that had been made about the level of development on the site in the A414 study. SJ acknowledged that the A414 study had been completed based on current flow levels rather than future levels with fairly generic assumptions on future levels of development being used. These could be further refined as plans progress and masterplans are developed.
24. ST queried when the A414 study would be published. PC stated that as the report had only just been received from the consultants, there was not yet a confirmed date for publication.
25. NF explained that there was an existing local bus network in the area, but that there may be the possibility that service diversions could be required as a result of the development. The current services are run on a commercial basis. KM raised the issue of the potential for developers to share the costs of providing facilities, e.g. bus stops. A shared meeting could be held to discuss how costs should be shared between the two sites. NF stated that this would be useful. He also said that that adequate service provision should be made and that this should be self-supporting. Some services should feed into Hertford North Station. Any bus stop facilities should have real time passenger information (RTPI).

Passenger Transport

26. In terms of rail provision, additional capacity is due to be provided on Hertford loop services from Hertford North station as a result of the introduction of Thameslink. This will mean that pressures on Hertford North will be less severe than currently and may be more services. However, there are still capacity issues due to demand south of Gordon Hill.
27. Current service provision east of Welwyn Garden City is limited within the area. Development would be expected to fund new service provision. Bus priority measures should be considered as appropriate, particularly on east-west routes. NF explained that any new services have to be self-financing as HCC have no funds to subsidise any services. It was expected that the majority of trips associated with the development would be directed towards Welwyn Garden City and the A1(M) rather than towards Hertford. JP commented that 'travel to work' data from the 2011 census should be released later this year, which would clarify this position.

28. NF stated that new cycling routes should be provided, particularly to local railway stations. It was emphasised that site promoters should consider the context outside of their sites to ensure that alternatives to the car are readily available to new residents.

Waste Water

29. RR explained that the sites would drain to Rye Meads Sewage Treatment Works (STW) which currently serves a population catchment of over 400,000 people in the wider area.
30. The Water Cycle Study that was undertaken in 2008/9 forecast growth and the consequential impact on Rye Meads STW; however, the growth was not realised due to the downturn in housing development. The predicted capacity limitation dates within the study will effectively move forward; however, ongoing works to change the way the sewage is treated have provided a further period of relief to between 2021 and 2026. After that time it is likely that additional capacity provision will need to be made. Additional tanks could be provided without any extension of the Treatment Works site and without any encroachment into the adjacent SSSI. However, it is important to note that the overall impact and treatment requirement cannot be fully predicted at this time as the cumulative effects of development from all the adjacent local authority areas also served by Rye Meads is not fully defined.
31. RR continued by discussing site specifics and explained that in terms of connections to the sewerage network, the site allocations to the west of Hertford were located on the extremities of the existing network and the capacity was unlikely to be able to support the demand from new development. The best option for the sites to connect to the existing network would be for a new sewer connection to be constructed to the south, towards the River Mimram, to connect to the trunk sewer in this location. Both site promoters would need to work together in terms of a drainage solution so that they would benefit each other and would not dis-benefit each other if the developments were not programmed to come forward at the same time.
32. In terms of development to the east of Welwyn Garden City, there was work undertaken approximately 10 years ago which provided new storage tanks to the south-east of Welwyn Garden City. RR indicated that there would need to be a targeted connection into this tank which would need to be funded by or carried out by the developers in accordance with relevant standards. Any works carried out would need to ensure that there were no impacts on the sewage network downstream.
33. RR explained that it was likely that Rye Meads Treatment Works would be expanded in the future. Thames Water is not currently planning a new STW. However this would be considered if Thames Water had extensive problems with pipes in the existing network. If there were a new facility, it

would be upstream from Rye Meads, between Stevenage and Hertford as there would be benefits in terms of managing flows from Stevenage alleviating demand on Rye Meads. There is nothing stopping developers from proposing their own works and not connecting to the Thames Water network or Rye Meads STW. This may be a more cost effective solution. Thames Water wouldn't drive that solution but would offer guidance. Developers would be expected to liaise with Thames Water and the Environment Agency. There was a possibility that in the future Thames Water could be asked to manage the works following construction but this does not need to be the case.

Wildlife Sites

34. KM explained that Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust (HMWT) should have made contact with the site promoters to the west of Hertford to initiate the survey of existing designated wildlife sites. Both promoters confirmed that Carol Lodge had been in touch and that site survey work was currently underway.
35. JP stated that GIS layers would need to be shared as East Herts information stops at the district boundary and proper consideration of the impacts on wildlife sites and environmental assets would be necessary going forward, particularly where sites crossed boundaries.

Masterplanning

36. JP stated that while detailed masterplanning would be carried out at the DPD stage, it would be necessary for a high-level concept masterplan/s to be produced to inform the Delivery Study. There would need to be an acknowledgement of cumulative impacts in the wider area and there would be opportunities to discuss more detail over the next few months.

Next Steps

37. KM explained that this initial partnership meeting had been scheduled with multiple site promoters to enable the main issues that would require further testing through the District plan to be identified. It is envisaged that, going forward, smaller meetings would be scheduled to focus on specific issues, as deemed necessary.
38. JP confirmed that she and SC will continue to liaise at officer level but that there was still the need to arrange cross-boundary meetings at a corporate and political level.