

**Partnership Group Meeting: HERT4 North of Hertford
East Herts Council Offices, Wallfields, Hertford SG13 8EQ
15:00-16:20 Monday 9th June**

Attendees:

Kay Mead (KM)	East Herts Council – Planning Policy Team
George Pavey (GP)	East Herts Council – Planning Policy Team
Bethan Clemence (BC)	Herts County Council – Primary Schools
Andrea Gilmour (AG)	Herts County Council – Property
Paul Chappell (PC)	Herts County Council – Transport
Neil French (NF)	Herts County Council – Passenger Transport
Julie Greaves (JG)	Herts County Council – Minerals
Gemma Nicholson (GN)	Herts County Council – Minerals
Major Sheppard (MS)	Landowner – Bengeo Nursery Site
Bob Sellwood (BS)	Sellwood Planning – Ware Park Estate
Gemma Field (GF)	Barton Willmore – Bengeo Nursery Site
Richard Reeve (RR)	Thames Water

Meeting Notes

1. KM welcomed all attendees to the meeting and explained that this meeting was a follow up to the original briefing session in April and was intended to be used to discuss outstanding issues regarding site HERT4 within the group. It would deal with both sites specific matters and, where appropriate, wider strategic issues. KM reminded everyone that consultation on the Draft District Plan had closed on 22nd May and informed the meeting that the Planning Policy Team is currently assessing the comments made and working on responding to the issues which have been raised.

Briefing Session Recap

2. KM gave a recap of the site promoter briefing session, which had been held in April, where it had been explained that meetings would take place with key stakeholders to discuss any pertinent issues and ensure that the Council would be confident going forward in the process that its proposed site allocations would be deliverable in accordance with the policies in the Plan.

Review of Draft District Plan Policy

3. KM provided copies of Draft District Plan Policy HERT4 to aid discussions during the meeting and informed those present that the Preferred Options consultation had concluded on 22nd May. The Planning Policy Team was currently beginning to assess the comments and would be formulating responses to them, which would be reported to the District Planning Executive Panel in due course.

4. A brief overview of Draft District Plan Policy HERT4 was provided, detailing the main areas of discussion for the meeting, which mainly centred on matters relating to education, transport, waste water and minerals.

Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

5. 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, to be considered at the next District Planning Executive Panel, concerns 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) who are currently carrying out the Identification of Potential Sites Study are to examine all proposed Allocated Sites and Broad Locations within the District Plan and therefore promoters should expect that contact might be made regarding this issue and seeking access to their sites.

Delivery Study Inputs

6. Attendees were provided with a copy of the District Plan Delivery Study diagram, which had been part of the presentation to the meeting in April. This outlined the process which the Council intended following to ensure that it would be confident that any sites allocated in the Plan would be deliverable. An email had been sent by Martin Paine (MP) on 23rd May reminding site promoters that the Council is in the process of commissioning consultants to undertake a delivery study over the summer.
7. KM explained that site promoters are being requested to provide inputs to this study by the deadline of the end of July. If any issues arise regarding the requested information, then contact should be made directly with MP (martin.paine@eastherts.gov.uk). It was appreciated that some of the information requested may have already been supplied in responses to the District Plan Preferred Options consultation, but it was important that the consultants working on the Infrastructure Delivery Plan would have the information in the same format from all sites. MP would be able to advise further on the level of detail needed in the study if required.

Site Investigation Sheets

8. KM explained that at the meeting held in April, it had been anticipated that Site Investigation Sheets would be produced to highlight outstanding issues for each site. However, it is likely that much of this work would be duplicated or superseded by information submitted for the Delivery Study. Therefore, 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.

Schools

9. BC explained that Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) has a statutory role in the provision of school places and that, in assessing the likely pupil generation from development, 500 to 850 dwellings would yield one Form of Entry (FE) of 30 pupils. The same calculation applies to both Primary and Secondary Schools.
10. BC described the stress currently being placed on schools within Hertford. In terms of primary school places, there is currently significant pressure for places and this demand is likely to shortly follow on to Secondary Schools (anticipated in about 18 months' time). To accommodate the primary issue in particular, it is being proposed that Simon Balle School should be expanded (pending planning permission etc.). It is expected that a planning application to provide the facilities to enable Simon Balle to become an 'all through' school, to take children from the age of 4/5 to 16+ and sixth form, would be submitted in the next couple of months. It is anticipated that the primary element of the school will open in September 2015.
11. Contributions towards educational provision would therefore be expected from developers. Further feasibility work is required to establish the whether additional places could be provided at Bengeo Primary School. BC further highlighted that the existing Secondary population will be at capacity in the future. BS asked whether land could be made available for school development within the general vicinity, but beyond the boundaries of, the proposed development site within his client's ownership. BC confirmed that she had been notified of the potential for land to become available, but was currently unsure of exact details and that this was an issue for potential consideration going forward.

Transport

12. PC explained that the main concern of the highway authority in respect of road users is the effect on the A414 corridor, both from this individual development area and from other locations in the town. HCC is currently in the process of having consultants finalise a study to investigate the capability of improving the capacity of the A414 westbound, in particular looking at the potential of providing more lanes and improvements to roundabouts. All the HCC modelling work to date has only tested current traffic flows to date and at least one further run would need to be completed which would factor in future growth. However, the funding available to HCC will only allow for one more run with updated input figures in respect of future anticipated development levels. KM expressed the importance of clarifying any housing numbers in advance of the model run and queried what would happen if there was a discrepancy in numbers, as it was noted that the response to the draft

District submitted by BS proposed a doubling of that would exceed the amount stated within the EHDP. PC confirmed that clarification would be sought over numbers used in any future model run and that any further runs beyond that to take into account differences in housing numbers would require funding from developers. Also, PC stated that any necessary mitigation measures and infrastructure work will be required to be funded from developers, proportionate to the level of development proposed.

13. Work would also need to be undertaken beyond the A414 corridor to take into account the effects of development on the road network in the vicinity of the proposed site and the wider area. The Old Cross junction, in particular, was a cause for concern and the response to the draft District Plan consultation appeared to focus on the Hertford and Ware Urban Transport Plan scheme as a solution. However, it was pointed out by PC that this was a concept scheme only and that the details had never been fully investigated. There were particular concerns regarding pedestrian access across this junction and that more detailed work would need to be carried out by the site promoters to ensure that acceptable mitigation works at this junction could be successfully achieved at no detriment to both ambulant and non-ambulant users.

Passenger Transport

14. In respect of passenger transport, NF explained that the 333 bus service runs from Bengeo, through Hertford town to Foxholes and runs approximately every hour. However, particularly at peak times, this service experiences problems with congestion and therefore can be unreliable as a service. To ensure that new residents would be able to access the bus service within a reasonable distance, properties would therefore have to be no further than 400m away from a bus stop.
15. With regard to rail services NF explained that pedestrian or cycling modes would need to be used to access Hertford North Station as no bus service from Bengeo covered that area. It was also noted that car parking facilities at the station currently operate at capacity. Although it wouldn't solve parking capacity issues, new trains are to be introduced to help alleviate some capacity issues for passengers on the trains themselves.
16. In terms of Hertford East Station, situated on the other side of the town, Crossrail 2 is being promoted by TfL, which could increase capacity, but is currently constrained by the line reducing to a single track in the Ware area. As well as this, the general built environment between the site and the station provides a barrier to pedestrians trying to access Hertford East. NF stated that pedestrian access to trains would need to be well thought through.

Working with other Site Promoters

17. BS clarified that both parties are neutral towards each other's aspirations regarding the phasing of delivery of each element of the overall site, and the total size of HERT4, and would therefore have no problem working together. KM asked whether it would be possible to look at the site as a whole rather than as separate sites with the land owners working together. BS noted that there were positives in working together and GF said they would be happy to liaise. This then shifted to focus upon time targets and in particular the need for figures to be retrieved and in turn inputted into the various models. BS asked whether the 150 dwellings in the draft District Plan and the 300 figure proposed as part of the submission on his client's behalf would be compared and contrasted when modelling took place. PC confirmed that this would be agreed, subject to the necessary funding being in place to carry out any additional model runs required. KM explained that timing was critical to ensure that deadlines could be met to ensure submission of the District Plan in a timely manner.

Waste Water

18. RR explained that the site would drain to Rye Meads Sewage Treatment Works (STW) which currently serves a population catchment of over 400,000 people in the wider area.
19. 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.
20. RR continued by discussing site specifics and explained that the sewerage would move down the hill to the River Lea connection where the sewerage system is already stressed. There are some problems near to the river in terms of flooding but in general the existing system would be OK. BS asked if there would be any benefit in the site being able to access two separate sewerage pipes but RR explained that both eventually join together further down the route. Modelling would be required to be undertaken to ascertain what improvements to the system would be required, which itself would be dependent on the level of development proposed for the site.

21. KM questioned who would be responsible for the sewerage modelling that would need to take place and RR confirmed that it would be a developer cost; however, Thames Water would complete the modelling. RR went on to explain that trunk sewer further down the run is currently ok capacity wise but mitigation works would be required to enable a successful connection to that trunk sewer without dis-benefitting existing users. Thames Water also would expect mitigation measures on surface water to be taken by the developers.

Minerals

22. JG said there is a need to safeguard minerals and that this particular site's proximity to the identified preferred area further to the north remains an issue. BS explained that planning application was due to be submitted on the extraction of minerals (expected to be in July) and that there was an agreement in place with the approved contractor for the works to strip, extract and restore the southern part of the minerals site, immediately north of HERT4, by 2020. GF said that if it were possible for a substantial buffer on the site to be confirmed then this might provide the potential to allow the development of the southern part of the overall site to move forward quicker than originally timetabled in the draft District Plan.

Wildlife Sites

23. KM said that site studies were being undertaken by the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, subject to a prioritised programme. Surveys would be undertaken on designated wildlife sites on or in the vicinity of proposed development locations. For the HERT4 site no surveys would be conducted this year, but it is likely that they would be completed in 2015.

Masterplanning Concepts and Other Issues

24. As discussed earlier in the meeting, KM reiterated the benefits of working together to provide a single comprehensive site vision rather than piecemeal development. Figures requested as part of the Delivery Study inputs may potentially be more cost effective to both development parties if undertaken together. Martin Paine should be contacted in respect of any queries on the Delivery Study. BS explained that since the Ware Park Trust is a private landowner and not a developer or housebuilder, it would not be in a position to respond to some of the questions on developers assumptions.

Next Steps

25. While there is currently no intention to hold any further large scale meetings in respect of this location, KM requested that she be copied into any further relevant correspondence and meeting notes held where East Herts staff were not in attendance to ensure that the Council would

be aware of any matters arising that it would not otherwise be aware of. GF agreed to follow up the provision of critical information needed to support the developer's aspiration to bring forward that element of the site at an earlier stage and that this would be provided to Martin Paine with the Delivery Study information.