

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

Date: 16th March 2015

Venue: East Herts Council Offices, Hertford

Attendees:

East Herts District Council

Cllr Mike Carver – Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport
Cllr Linda Haysey – Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support
Jenny Pierce – Senior Planning Officer
Chris Butcher – 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

Meeting Notes

Approach to land East of Welwyn Garden City

1. MC indicated that East Herts Council (EHC) remains supportive of development in this location, subject to the findings of forthcoming technical studies. CH suggested that Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (WHBC) is also broadly supportive and would like to explore the possibility of undertaking a cross boundary masterplanning exercise. MC agreed that this would be a sensible approach.
2. CH commented that one approach to consider was to establish a joint committee. MC indicated that this process might take too long to establish. EHC is currently assessing options around phasing and delivery for this site as part of ongoing work on the District Plan.
3. ST suggested that it might be helpful for the two authorities to sign up to a Memorandum of Understanding in order to establish the way in which they will work together through the preparation of a masterplan. MC agreed and indicated that an MoU would help to demonstrate ongoing co-operation at Examination stage. ST also suggested that the two authorities could also agree suitable policy wording for inclusion within their respective local plans. This approach would look to deal with the principles and objectives for development to the east of Welwyn Garden City. The details of development would be resolved through a jointly prepared masterplan. ST suggested that the period

for preparing a masterplan would extend beyond the Local Plan preparation process.

4. CH indicated that WHBC would also be supportive of preparing a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) which would give a detailed timeline for working towards future planning applications. MC indicated that EHC would be supportive of this approach. It was suggested that it would also be prudent to share costs for procuring advice on issues such as landscaping and design.
5. There was some discussion with regards to how housing completion figures for the site should be divided between the two authorities. It was agreed that the most sensible approach would be for each local authority to count completions within their own administrative areas towards their own respective housing targets.

Local Plan Preparation

6. MC indicated that EHC will be looking at undertaking a Pre-Submission consultation in September 2015 although the timetable is partly dependent on finalising several key technical studies. Of particular importance is the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) which is currently being prepared on behalf of East Herts, Uttlesford, Harlow and Epping Forest Councils.
7. ST suggested that there had been a strong level of response to the local plan consultation. WHBC are hoping to undertake a Pre-Submission consultation by the end of the year. WHBC have identified an objectively assessed housing need figure of 12,500 dwellings. Sites that are considered to be 'more favourable' have a capacity of 10,100 dwellings. The Council therefore has to assess the deliverability of 'marginal sites'. Ongoing transport modelling work, which is assessing potential impacts of growth on Junctions 3 and 4 of the A1(M), may impact on the deliverability of sites in Hatfield as well as others.

Gypsy and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

8. MC commented that making adequate provision for gypsy and travellers and travelling showpeople is a key issue for EHC which needs to be addressed through the plan making process. There are particular concerns with regards to ensuring that the need within the first five years of the plan period is met.
9. ST explained that WHBC have identified an urgent need for 25 gypsy and traveller pitches which would be extremely difficult to achieve. There is a need to look at making provision within the strategic locations and that this would need to be considered as part of the ongoing work on land East of Welwyn Garden City. Further discussions will be needed in due course on a complimentary approach to this issue.

Employment

10. MC indicated that EHC's overall approach to employment is unlikely to change and that there would be a continued reliance on neighbouring areas such as Harlow and Stevenage in order to meet the employment needs of East Herts residents. However, a key objective of the District Plan is to maintain the existing offer while providing new employment space in suitable locations. There was a discussion regarding the feasibility of locating new employment space on land East of Welwyn Garden City. ST suggested that this probably wasn't a suitable location for such uses and that consideration should be given to the fact that some employment generating uses, such as retail and health facilities, would be located within the new development.

Evidence Base

11. JP mentioned that a Green Belt Review is being undertaken and that this will be considered by East Herts Members in due course. ST requested that WHBC be consulted on the findings of the Green Belt Review. EHC is also in the process of preparing a Delivery Study which will be a key part of the evidence base for the District Plan and, among other things, will advise on the overall viability of the broad locations for growth.
12. There was discussion around SHMAs and the fact that Stevenage and North Herts District Council are preparing a joint SHMA. It is anticipated that the assessment will include land in both EHC and WHBC and that there will be a need for involvement in this assessment in due course.
13. There was a discussion over other evidence matters that will be necessary to progress the masterplan. ST explained that they have been advised by the Environment Agency that they have a significant delay in responding to requests for advice on the former landfill use in this area and its potential impact on developable land.
14. JP advised that there will be a need to assess a range of scenarios for mineral extraction and land restoration on the part of the site within EHC. A meeting will be established with interested parties to discuss this issue and agree next steps. JP advised that EHC has an agreement with Hertfordshire Ecology to undertake assessments of environmental assets with funding being sought by the relevant landowners. This process can be extended to cover the necessary areas. Highways, passenger transport, health and education are key social issues that will need to be incorporated in the masterplanning process.