

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

DISTRICT PLANNING EXECUTIVE PANEL – 3 DECEMBER 2013  
EXECUTIVE – 9 DECEMBER 2013

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING  
AND TRANSPORT

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TRANSPORT UPDATE REPORT AND MODELLING RESULTS

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

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**Purpose/Summary of Report**

- This report presents the November 2013 Transport Update prepared by Hertfordshire County Council as part of the evidence base to inform the emerging East Herts District Plan
- It explains that further transport assessment will be needed following agreement of the Draft District Plan, to assess the feasibility and viability of transport and highways mitigation measures.
- It sets out ATLAS advice that the extended process of evidence-gathering will go beyond the District Plan itself and into further plan-making and planning application stages of the end-to-end development process.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISTRICT PLANNING EXECUTIVE**  
**PANEL AND EXECUTIVE: That:**

<b>(A)</b>	<b>Hertfordshire County Council's Transport Update November 2013, informed by transport modelling, be noted and supported as part of the technical evidence base to inform the preparation of the District Plan.</b>
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**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNCIL: That:**

<b>(A)</b>	<b>Hertfordshire County Council's Transport Update November 2013, informed by transport modelling, be noted and agreed as part of the technical evidence base to inform the preparation of the District Plan.</b>
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## 1.0 Background

- 1.1 Consideration of the potential transport impacts of development options has been a central part of the site selection process for the District Plan. East Herts Officers have been working closely with specialist Officers from Hertfordshire County Council, Essex County Council and the Highways Agency to assess the transport impacts of development at the areas of search for the District Plan. High-level specialist input was used to assist in narrowing down the initial 69 areas of search to the shortlisted options agreed for further testing in summer 2012.
- 1.2 Based on the shortlisted options, and working with specialist guidance from Hertfordshire County Council, East Herts Council commissioned Aecom to undertake high-level transport modelling work using a spreadsheet model called DIAMOND to assist in the options sifting process. The DIAMOND results were presented in the Transport Modelling Update report on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2013.
- 1.3 Paragraph 32 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that *“development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe.”* The 21<sup>st</sup> February Report pointed out that there is no accepted definition of ‘severe’ transport impacts at present. A definition may emerge over time through practice, interpretation and decisions by the Planning Inspectorate, through the appeals system or in the courts.
- 1.4 Paragraph 32, whilst significant in terms of planning applications and Transport Assessments, has not as yet been a significant feature of Local Plan Examinations.
- 1.5 The 21<sup>st</sup> February Report also highlighted delays with modelling work using the cross-boundary strategic assessment using the Harlow-Stansted-Gateway-Transport-Model (HSGTM), which covers the eastern side of the district and adjoining districts in Essex. The District Plan Update Report of 25<sup>th</sup> July 2013 explained how senior Officers at East Herts Council were taking action to progress this work with Essex County Council and others, mindful of the implications of delay on the ability of the Council to prepare a District Plan and respond to planning applications.

- 1.6 Following this, the HSGTM evidence was reported in tranches, with the latest information received in late October 2013. A link to the technical reports is provided under 'Background Papers' below.
- 1.7 The District Plan Update Report on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2013 explained that in relation to transport, Hertfordshire County Council (in partnership with Essex County Council and the Highways Agency) has been asked to prepare a document which sets out for the purposes of examination in public the impact on the highway network, taking account of new infrastructure provision and other mitigation measures. This report will draw on the extensive transport modelling work undertaken to date.
- 1.8 Before this, Hertfordshire County Council has prepared an interim Update Report on the work necessary for this stage in the plan-making process, and any further work needed. East Herts Council requested that the report provide an assessment of the shortlist of options agreed for further testing in summer 2012, to assist in strategy selection and formulation of draft District Plan policies. The Update report is the subject of this report to the District Planning Executive Panel.
- 1.9 The District Plan Update Report on 3<sup>rd</sup> October also set out the intention to prepare an Infrastructure Topic Paper, which will include a section on transport infrastructure. The report explained that the Infrastructure Topic Paper will form a succinct statement of the prospects for the provision of the main items of capital expenditure to support the plan. It will not contain detailed assessment of funding packages and infrastructure costs, but will review the main messages from the key infrastructure and service providers, and identify the next steps towards examination.
- 1.10 The Topic Paper will be proportionate to NPPF requirements at draft Plan stage. More detail, including on a wider range of infrastructure types, and also including further information on funding and costings will be accumulated as the Topic Paper gradually evolves and expands into a Delivery Plan. The Delivery Plan will be accompanied by an infrastructure schedule for ongoing monitoring and updating throughout the lifetime of the plan.

- 1.11 The District Plan Update Report explained that in order to ensure a sound basis for the Delivery Plan, it is proposed to commission a Delivery Study early in 2014, following the agreement of Full Council to consult on the draft Plan. For transport, the Delivery Study will draw together relevant information from the available technical work, including any additional work such as additional transport modelling or consideration of mitigation schemes. This will be provided through work undertaken by East Herts Council, Hertfordshire and Essex County Councils, and the landowner/developers.
- 1.12 In preparing this report, and in reviewing a draft of the Transport Update, East Herts Council has requested advice from ATLAS. The main strand of the advice received from ATLAS relates to the need to understand planning as an end-to-end process, acknowledging that local plans in themselves cannot resolve all issues, but that they do provide a framework for consideration of future planning stages including planning applications. These issues were discussed in a meeting involving ATLAS and Officers from East Herts and Hertfordshire County Council prior to finalisation of this report and the Transport Update.
- 1.13 The District Plan Update Report on 3rd October also set out advice from ATLAS around the assessment of deliverability as part of plan making, and in particular issues relating to timing (of anticipated development and infrastructure requirements), the level of information available, and likelihood of an element of uncertainty. As such, ATLAS has also advised that it may not be possible to determine conclusively what constitutes a 'severe impact' as part of the plan-making process, as further planning stages would refine and provide greater detail to the specific range of necessary transport mitigation measures. This advice is reflected in the report below.
- 1.14 East Herts Council has also discussed the emerging District Plan and development options with the Highways Agency. A letter from the Highways Agency is attached at **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**. This letter states that the Highways Agency's prime consideration is the continued safe operation of its network.

## 2.0 Report

- 2.1 The report prepared by Hertfordshire County Council is attached at **Essential Reference Paper 'C'**. At this stage it does not

provide advice in relation to whether the impacts of development would be severe in NPPF terms, although it does highlight areas of concern for further assessment before the County Council as Highways Authority is able to reach a view on this matter.

- 2.2 East Herts Council is approaching the Preferred Options in preparation of the District Plan, and is therefore still at a comparatively early stage. Therefore it is not to be expected that the County Council would be able to resolve all the transport issues in the interim Transport Update, although greater clarity will be sought as further work is done through the iterative process of plan preparation.
- 2.3 The County Council's Protocol for Working with Districts and Boroughs during the Local Plan Process (April 2013) sets out Local Plan evidence requirements at each stage of the plan-making process. This is reproduced in Table 1 on Page 8 of the Transport Update. Further work will be needed for pre-submission consultation and subsequent submission in line with the requirements set out in Table 1.
- 2.4 Following advice from Hertfordshire County Council of the need to undertake a further test of development options south of Bishop's Stortford and also at Ware, East Herts Council commissioned a further model run using the HSGTM. These results, along with the HSGTM results for development options north of Harlow, inform the report.
- 2.5 Given the complex and technical nature of both these studies, East Herts Officers have not attempted to directly interpret their conclusions. Hertfordshire County Council's transport modelling specialist has interpreted the conclusions and these comments have been added into the County Council's Transport Update. Some landowner/developers have also submitted transport studies which will need to be taken into account as work progresses. There will need to be an ongoing process to resolve any valid concerns.
- 2.6 Given the specialist nature of the HSGTM work, the Aecom consultancy reports are not included as part of this report, but they are available on the Council's website (see Background Papers below).
- 2.7 The East Herts District Plan potentially has implications for the operation of both the motorway network and also the highway

network in Essex. For this reason, as part of the ongoing process of partnership working, East Herts Council will seek advice from the Highways Agency and Essex County Council, and also from Hertfordshire County Council to inform the pre-submission stage in preparation of the plan.

- 2.8 The key messages from the Transport Update have been taken into account where appropriate in Chapter 6 of the Supporting Document. They will also be used as a basis for the transport section of the Infrastructure Topic Paper.
- 2.9 However, it is clear from the Update that there are concerns about an increase in traffic arising from many of the development options. However, it is understood from discussions with officers at Hertfordshire County Council that they are not recommending that any of the options should be dropped on the basis of the Update Report. To reject options without sufficient evidence would result in the plan being found unsound at examination in public.
- 2.10 Further work in relation to transport will therefore be needed between agreement of the Draft District Plan for consultation and submission to examination in public. The work will need to assess the viability and feasibility of managing traffic impacts through a range of mitigation measures.
- 2.11 This additional evidence will be drawn from the Urban Transport Plan for Bishop's Stortford and Sawbridgeworth (forthcoming), the Urban Transport Plan for Hertford and Ware, the A414 Study, the Inter-Urban Route Strategy and any other technical work. This work will need to be pursued through joint working between East Herts Council, the transport and highways authorities and the landowner/developers to test development scenarios and mitigation measures.
- 2.12 The results of this work will inform the Delivery Study (see Paragraphs 1.11 above) which should provide further information in respect of likely viability taking account of other infrastructure and planning costs.
- 2.13 Following these additional studies the Council will need to secure further advice from Hertfordshire County Council as the Highway Authority, as to whether or not development is acceptable.
- 2.14 Finally, it should also be noted that some of the testing work will go beyond the scope of the plan-making process and will rest on

scrutiny of the Transport Assessments accompanying planning applications at future development sites.

### 3.0 Implications/Consultations

3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

### Background Papers

The HSGTM modelling results (October/November 2013) and the DIAMOND modelling results (January 2013) are available on the Council's website at [www.eastherts.gov.uk/technicalstudies](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/technicalstudies)

Other reports referenced are as follows:

- Transport Modelling Update and DIAMOND Results (21 February 2013)
- District Plan Update Report (25 July 2013)

Both reports may be accessed at:

<http://online.eastherts.gov.uk/moderngov/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=151>

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