

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
DISTRICT PLANNING EXECUTIVE PANEL
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON THURSDAY
3 OCTOBER 2013, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor M Carver (Chairman)
Councillors L Haysey and S Rutland-Barsby.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors P Ballam, E Buckmaster, S Bull,
K Crofton, G Jones, J Jones, G Lawrence,
M McMullen, P Moore, M Newman, T Page,
M Pope, P Ruffles, N Symonds and J Wing.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Martin Ibrahim	- Democratic Services Team Leader
Kay Mead	- Senior Planning Officer
Martin Paine	- Senior Planning Officer
Laura Pattison	- Assistant Planning Officer
Jenny Pierce	- Senior Planning Officer
Claire Sime	- Planning Policy Team Leader
Katie Simpson	- Planning Policy Officer
Brendan Starkey	- Assistant Planning Officer
Kevin Steptoe	- Head of Planning and Building Control Services
Bryan Thomsett	- Planning Policy Manager

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Andrea Gilmour	- Hertfordshire County Council
Jenny Hill	- Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners
Kate Ma	- Hertfordshire County Council

**10 RETAIL AND TOWN CENTRES STUDY UPDATE REPORT
(SEPTEMBER 2013)**

The Panel considered a report summarising the findings of the East Herts Retail and Town Centres Study Update, September 2013, which sought endorsement to use the Study to inform the preparation of the East Herts District Plan.

In 2008, the Council had commissioned Chase and Partners Consultants to undertake a Retail and Town Centres Study to audit the amount and type of retail across the District and to provide recommendations for an approach to planning for retail needs for the emerging Plan period. However, this Study had been undertaken just before the economic recession and had used a 2006 baseline when undertaking forecast calculations. As such, it no longer reflected the latest economic situation. Therefore, the 2013 Study Update, prepared by consultants Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners, provided an updated assessment of the current economic circumstances, using up-to-date baseline and expenditure evidence from which to provide more accurate forecasts.

The Panel noted that the full report was not yet available and therefore, was requested to consider an amended recommendation, whereby support for the Study Update to inform the preparation of the East Herts District Plan be delegated to the Head of Planning and Building Control Services, in consultation with the Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport.

Jenny Hill of Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners gave a presentation on the findings of the Study Update and answered Members' questions. Various comments were made in respect of the current economic vitality of town centres in the District and the recent national policy amendments permitting changes to any Use Class for two years.

The Panel supported the recommendation as now amended.

RECOMMENDED – that support for the East Herts Retail and Town Centres Study Update Report, September 2013, being used as part of the evidence base to inform and support the East Herts District Plan and for Development Management purposes in the determination of planning applications, be delegated to the Head of Planning and Building Control Services, in consultation with the Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport.

11 **STRATEGIC HOUSING MARKET ASSESSMENT UPDATE 2012 (MARCH 2013): LONDON COMMUTER BELT EAST SUB-REGION**

The Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport submitted a report setting out the key findings of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) Update 2012 (March 2013) technical study for the London Commuter Belt East Sub-Region, prepared by Opinion Research Services (ORS). He also sought approval to the study forming part of the evidence base to inform and support the preparation of the District Plan, and for housing strategy purposes.

The Panel was reminded that the purpose of the SHMA was to assess current and future housing demand and need across the plan area. It also needed to consider future demographic trends and identify the accommodation requirements of specific groups.

Importantly, the SHMA would also be used to inform decisions relating to affordable housing, tenure mix and the type and mix of houses that should be built in East Herts.

In 2008 East Herts Council had joined with Brentwood, Broxbourne, Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford Councils, to form the London Commuter Belt East/M11 Sub Region partnership, and had appointed ORS to undertake a SHMA for the sub-region. The final SHMA report had been published in January 2010 and agreed by the Council in February 2010. As the original 2008 SHMA had covered the period 2007 - 2026, it was in need of updating to cover the plan periods of local authority partners, and changes in demographic and economic information and circumstances.

Various Members commented on the Council's affordable housing targets and the issue of viability for developers.

The Panel supported the recommendation as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that the Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update 2012 (March 2013): London Commuter Belt East Sub-Region, be supported as part of the evidence base to inform and support the preparation of the District Plan, and for housing strategy purposes.

12 **DISTRICT-WIDE GREEN BELT REVIEW PART 1 (2013)**

The Panel considered a report summarising the findings of the East Herts District-Wide Green Belt Review – Part 1 (September 2013), which sought endorsement to use the Review to inform the preparation of the East Herts District Plan. The purpose of the Review was:

- to address whether the District's objectively assessed need for development can be accommodated within the constraints created by

- the Green Belt; and
- to inform the strategy selection process of the District Plan.

Councillor G Jones questioned the traffic light assessment and whether some of the features cited as checking urban sprawl could be considered spurious, e.g. an administrative boundary. He also suggested that more vigour was needed in defining the difference between contribution and significant contribution. Officers undertook to take these comments on board in preparing Part 2 of the Review, which would be submitted to a later Panel meeting.

The Panel supported the recommendation as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that the East Herts District-Wide Green Belt Review – Part 1, September 2013, be supported as part of the evidence base to inform and support the East Herts District Plan.

13 **DISTRICT PLAN – UPDATE REPORT**

Consideration was given to a report setting out the progress towards finalisation of a development strategy for the District. The report provided an update to the Stepped Approach as set out in Essential Reference Paper 'B' of the report now submitted. The Panel also noted the updates in relation to Infrastructure, ATLAS and Planning Practice Guidance.

Kate Ma and Andrea Gilmour of Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) were in attendance to answer questions on HCC's response to demand for primary and secondary school places in the District.

Kate Ma reminded Members that, in respect of admissions, HCC's role was a commissioning one and could not direct admissions. She outlined the current position regarding schools provision in Bishop's

Stortford and the significant work undertaken on the potential for expansion on existing sites as well as potential future sites. The Panel noted that all the secondary schools in Bishop's Stortford managed their own admissions. She commented that the task was challenging, especially given the lack of capital to fund new places.

Various Members commented on the unsatisfactory information coming forward in respect of schools provision in Bishop's Stortford. The uncertainty relating to the Bishop's Stortford North applications was also discussed. The Panel Chairman emphasised the need for any housing development that might come forward in any part of the District to be sustainable.

In respect of Essential Reference Paper 'C' of the report submitted, the Panel noted that the reference to "safeguarded" dwellings in the Buntingford section should be deleted. Councillor S Bull questioned the narrative in this section and commented that a robust Town Plan existed.

In response to Members' comments and questions on funding, Kate Ma referred to the Primary Expansion Programme and the importance of Section 106 funds. However, total funding was insufficient to achieve everything that was needed.

Whilst acknowledging HCC's difficulties, Members expressed concern that key infrastructure could not be delivered, thus impacting on the District Council's ability to progress its District Plan. The Panel Chairman summed up the District Council's view as looking to HCC urgently to provide a more robust position.

The Panel was requested to consider an amended recommendation (A) to reflect an urgent ongoing commitment to joint working with HCC.

The Panel supported the recommendations as now

detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the latest evidence supplied by Hertfordshire County Council in relation to schools planning, be noted, and an ongoing commitment to urgent joint working be supported;

(B) the proposed approach to the preparation of an Infrastructure Topic Paper, followed by an Infrastructure Delivery Plan based on a specially commissioned delivery study, be supported; and

(C) the latest national guidance, including that in relation to the importance of meeting housing needs within each housing market area, be noted.

14 **DEVELOPER/LANDOWNER QUESTIONNAIRES AND ATLAS MEETINGS**

The Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport submitted a report setting out actions taken to date to obtain pertinent information from relevant landowners/ developers/ agents with an interest in land in the shortlisted Areas of Search to establish deliverability. It also sought approval for the information received forming part of the evidence base to inform and support the preparation of the District Plan.

Details of the questionnaire responses were set out at Essential Reference Paper 'B' of the report submitted. In respect of the meetings between ATLAS and representatives of land submissions at various locations detailed at paragraph 2.12 of the report submitted, Officers advised that in respect of part of Area of Search 61, Hatfield Estate (26/004), the seeking of additional information had previously been anticipated to be undertaken via a telephone conversation, but would now be subject to a meeting. The notes of the meeting would be added to the website in due course.

The Panel supported the recommendation as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that the responses to the Developer Questionnaires (including subsequent information supplied), and the meeting notes between ATLAS and developers and/or their representatives, be supported as part of the evidence base to inform and support the preparation of the District Plan.

15 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Panel Chairman welcomed press, public and Members to the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was being webcast.

He reiterated the role of the Panel in the District Plan process and emphasised that only Council could agree the final District Plan. He referred to the ongoing progress of the informal Member working group and advised that Members would receive communication in the next week on individual topic headings, which would be considered at the next Panel meeting on 18 November 2013.

The Panel Chairman provided a further reminder of the all day workshop session on 24 October 2013 being facilitated by the Planning Advisory Service and urged those Members who had yet to do so, to advise Officers to confirm their attendance.

16 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Panel meeting held on 25 July 2013, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

17 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

The Panel Chairman asked Members to note that he was the Chairman of Hertford Regional College and a board member

of South Anglia Housing Association.

Councillor T Page asked the Panel to note that his wife was a member of Bishop’s Stortford Golf Club.

18 DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

RESOLVED – that the dates of meetings to be held on 18 November and 3 December 2013, be noted.

The meeting closed at 9.22 pm

Chairman
Date