

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
DISTRICT PLANNING EXECUTIVE PANEL
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 28 NOVEMBER 2012, AT
7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor A Jackson (Chairman)
Councillor L Haysey.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors W Ashley, S Basra,
E Buckmaster, S Bull, Mrs R Cheswright,
G Jones, G Lawrence, M McMullen,
P Moore, M Newman, T Page, J Ranger,
P Ruffles, S Rutland-Barsby, N Symonds,
G Williamson and J Wing.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

John Careford	- Senior Planning Officer
Martin Ibrahim	- Democratic Services Team Leader
Lorraine Kirk	- Senior Communications Officer
Kay Mead	- Senior Planning Officer
Martin Paine	- Senior Planning Officer
Jenny Pierce	- Senior Planning Officer
Claire Sime	- Planning Policy Team Leader
Katie Simpson	- Assistant Planning Officer
Kevin Steptoe	- Head of Planning and Building

Bryan Thomsett
Control Services
- Planning Policy
Manager

10 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader welcomed the press and public to the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was being webcast.

He explained that in view of Councillor M Carver's illness, he had assumed responsibility for Councillor Carver's portfolio on a temporary basis, including chairing this meeting.

The Leader referred to this being John Careford's last meeting before leaving the Authority and on behalf of all Members, thanked him for his service.

11 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor M Carver.

12 SUB-DISTRICT POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLD FORECASTS - PARISH GROUPINGS AND TOWNS: PHASES 1 AND 2 (OCTOBER 2012)

The Panel considered a report on the findings of the Sub-District Population and Household Forecasts technical work (Phases 1 and 2) that would form part of the evidence base for generating an appropriate district-wide housing target for East Herts to 2031, and to inform the preparation of the District Plan. It also provided benchmark demographic information at parish grouping and town level.

Councillor G Jones referred to concerns he had raised at the previous meeting and expressed support for the supply-led forecasts that had been included in the various scenarios. In response to a concern that the migration-led scenario had only used a five year

historical average, Officers explained that this issue had been picked up elsewhere.

The Panel supported the recommendation now detailed.

RECOMMENDED - that the Sub-District 'Population and Household Forecasts - Parish Groupings and Towns: Phases 1 and 2' (October 2012) technical study at Essential Reference Paper 'B' to the report submitted, be supported as part of the evidence base to inform and support the East Herts District Plan.

13 **STRATEGIC LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT (SLAA) - ROUND 2 INITIAL REPORT AND WINDFALL ANALYSIS (OCTOBER 2012)**

The Panel gave consideration to a report presenting the initial technical report of Rounds 1 and 2 of the Council's ongoing Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA), which also included analysis in respect of 'windfall' development to inform the housing requirement in the District Plan.

The Panel supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the Officer responses to the feedback received from stakeholders as part of Round 2: Stakeholder Engagement of the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA), be supported;

(B) the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) Technical Study: Initial Report - Rounds 1 and 2 (October 2012), be supported as technical work to inform the preparation of the East Herts District Plan and for housing supply purposes;

(C) the district-wide SLAA Round 2 capacity of 2,350 dwellings be supported for informing

ongoing work in developing the District Plan: Part 1; and

(D) the 'windfall' allowance of 1,700 dwellings be supported for informing ongoing work in developing the District Plan: Part 1.

14 **EMPLOYMENT FORECASTS AND STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVICE (OCTOBER 2012)**

The Panel considered a report outlining the technical advice prepared for the Council by DTZ containing employment forecasts and strategic advice on planning for economic development in the District. The report considered the future pattern of employment growth in East Herts and the surrounding area in order to inform the preparation of the East Herts District Plan: Part 1 – Strategy.

In response to questions and comments of various Members, Officers advised that DTZ had looked at employment trends and changes beyond the District's boundaries and that this was a requirement of the new planning system. In respect of residential development being driven by employment growth, it would be necessary to achieve a balance and to make reasoned judgements. Officers expressed full confidence in the research findings and reminded Members that the full report was available on the Council's website.

The Panel supported the recommendation as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that the Employment Forecasts and Strategic Economic Development Advice (October 2012) be supported and published as technical advice, forming part of the evidence base to inform and support the East Herts District Plan.

15 **DISTRICT PLAN: EVIDENCE BASE - TECHNICAL STUDIES 2011/12, 2012/13 AND 2013/14**

The Panel was updated on progress in respect of completed and ongoing District Plan evidence base related technical studies from 2011/12 and considered whether to support those underway or proposed to be undertaken during 2012/13 and 2013/14.

The Panel supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) it be noted, or as appropriate supported, that the technical studies listed in Essential Reference Paper ‘B’ to this report, which are due for completion, already underway or proposed to be undertaken during 2012/13, contribute to the District Plan Evidence Base; and

(B) the technical studies referred in (A) above be completed or undertaken by means of:

(i) seeking competitive quotes or tenders, as appropriate, to engage consultants, with the costs being met from the 2012/13 or 2013/14 Planning Policy related budgets for such purposes; and/or

(ii) partnership working where appropriate, with neighbouring authorities and other relevant partners; and

(C) the Head of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport, be given authority to approve funding, within the limits of the 2012/13 and 2013/14 Planning Policy budgets, for such other relevant planning policy studies, as may be deemed appropriate.

16 **THE DUTY TO CO-OPERATE AND EAST HERTS
DISTRICT PLAN**

The Panel considered a report on the Duty to Co-Operate, which was a requirement contained within the Localism Act 2011. The Panel noted the significance of this in terms of cross-boundary strategic priorities, particularly in relation to housing. Officers advised that it was considered crucial for East Herts Council to adhere to the agreed strategy selection process in order to seek to avoid a situation where the Planning Inspectorate intervened on the basis of failure to comply with the Duty to Co-Operate. Finally, it was proposed that an Executive Member be authorised to represent East Herts Council in meetings with the relevant Member(s) from neighbouring local planning authorities, Hertfordshire and Essex County Councils, and other relevant bodies.

In response to Members' questions and comments, Officers confirmed that although the Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport had engaged with neighbouring authorities and other external agencies in recent years, under the Localism Act 2011, it was deemed appropriate to demonstrate formally, that an Executive Member had been delegated authority to do so. The Leader believed that the Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport would be prepared to engage with local Members on relevant matters when discussing cross-boundary issues with external agencies.

The Panel supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) an approach to the Duty to Co-Operate based on a clearly defined plan-making process, objective assessment, positive preparation, and serious consideration of cross-boundary strategic matters, be supported as the basis for continued work on the District Plan; and

(B) the Executive Member for Strategic Planning

and Transport, or other nominated Executive Member, be authorised to attend meetings with Members from local planning authorities, Hertfordshire and Essex County Councils, and other relevant bodies as necessary, to demonstrate compliance with the Duty and further progress the District Plan.

17 **DISTRICT PLAN PART 1 - STRATEGY SUPPORTING DOCUMENT: MEMBER COMMENTS**

The Panel considered a report detailing the issues raised in the responses made by Members following the District Planning Executive Panel meeting held on 26 July 2012, in respect of the feedback period agreed regarding agenda items 8, 9 and 10, together with additional matters raised regarding agenda items 6 and 7 and other general issues.

Councillor M Newman expressed his gratitude to Officers for their comprehensive consideration of the comments made.

The Panel supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the responses made by Members in respect of agenda items 6 to 10 of the District Planning Executive Panel on 26 July 2012 be noted; and

(B) the Officer responses to the comments made and any consequent amendments to the District Plan: Part 1 - Strategy Supporting Document be supported.

18 **DISTRICT PLAN PART 1 - STRATEGY SUPPORTING DOCUMENT: UPDATE REPORT**

The Panel considered an update on progress with the District Plan Part 1 – Strategy. It explained the main issues impacting on the timeline for finalisation of the Draft District Plan for consultation and Members' attention was drawn to the revised stepped approach detailed at Essential Reference Paper 'C' of the report submitted.

The Panel was also presented with a draft of the early sections of Chapter 5 of the Supporting Document. Finally, the report detailed further opportunities for District Members to get directly involved in the plan-making process.

Members were reminded that the next workshop had been scheduled for 17 January 2013 the details for which would be sent out in due course.

In respect of the draft Chapter 5, Councillor S Bull expressed concerns which he undertook to forward to Officers in writing. Members were advised that an amendment to recommendation (B) was being proposed, the effect of which would be to allow a further period of Member consultation until 21 December 2012 for any factual errors. Any comments made would be reported back to the next Panel meeting.

In response to a question from Councillor S Rutland-Barsby on the exceptional circumstances in which the green belt might be altered, the Leader commented that such alteration should only be a last resort. He explained the purpose of the green belt and its importance in safeguarding identities and preventing settlements merging. He suggested that in light of the need to provide an adequate supply of land and to enhance the quality of life, some edge of settlement areas might be less crucial. It was important for the Council to show leadership in order to prevent developer-led growth that

would be unsustainable.

In response to a question from Councillor S Rutland-Barsby on economic development, the Leader referred to the DTZ report considered earlier (Minute 14 refers) and the need to consider the wider context. Employment growth tended to gravitate towards the better transport links, which in East Herts, was the Bishop's Stortford area. He believed that small and medium enterprises formed the backbone of employment opportunities in the District and that the focus should be on refurbishing existing employment locations.

In response to a question from Councillor M Newman, Officers clarified the proposed changes to the stepped approach and that there would not be a third sieving process.

Councillor Mrs R Cheswright referred to highways issues and how sustainable transport measures would be considered. Officers explained that the sieving process in the topic assessments had resulted in some potential sites being excluded because of unsustainable transport.

Councillor J Ranger commented on employment areas in the Buntingford area and was invited to submit his comments formally in writing.

The Panel supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the proposed approach to the remainder of the strategy selection process for the District Plan, as illustrated in Essential Reference Paper 'C' of the report submitted, be supported; and

(B) Essential Reference Paper 'D' of the report submitted, including the first three sections of Chapter 5: Options Refinement, be supported, subject to a period of Member comment in respect

of factual content until 21 December 2012.

19 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Panel meeting held on 26 July 2012, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The meeting closed at 8.34 pm

Chairman
Date