



East Herts Council
Wallfields, Pegs Lane
Hertford, Herts
SG13 8EQ
Tel: 01279 655261

John Wood
Chief Executive and Director of
Environment
Hertfordshire County Council
County Hall
Pegs Lane
Hertford
SG13 8DQ

Your contact: George A Robertson
Telephone 01992 531650
Fax: 01992 531441
Our ref:
Date: 12 March 2013

Dear John

Ref : East Herts District Plan – PROGRESS AND DELAYS

I need to share with you some concerns our Council has around delays to the preparation of our District Plan and ask if you are able to assist us in any way.

We are experiencing delays to this extensive and important piece of work principally due to external factors. Two of these key factors relate to schools and transport planning. As a result, the Council has recently agreed a further delay to the finalisation of and consultation on the District Plan Part 1: Strategy, until such time as a resolution to the outstanding strategic issues can be found. The consequences of not having an up-to-date plan in place are likely to be felt in the short and medium term by both the District Council and the County Council.

Given the housing requirements of national planning policy, prolonged delay to the District Plan is likely to significantly weaken East Herts Council's ability as Local Planning Authority to control development in the form of speculative planning applications, whether large or small. It could also likely burden the District Council with appeal costs. Perhaps more importantly, 'planning by appeal' is also likely to result in uncoordinated development which will hamper the ability of infrastructure and service providers, notably the County Council, to plan for, and quite possibly also to provide for, effective service delivery.

Schools

Whilst we have received some helpful information on primary schools we are awaiting further detailed assessment on secondary schools.

The secondary schools issue in Bishop's Stortford in particular remains to be resolved. Whilst various options are under consideration by the schools and the County Council, at present it is unclear whether these options are feasible or could provide sufficient long-term schools capacity in the town to provide for future development needs.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Schools planning in other settlements also remains to be resolved. It is acknowledged that this issue is complicated by recent government reforms, in particular the establishment of Academies and Free Schools programmes, which places many current and future schools outside Local Authority control.

We understand that work on the feasibility of expanding existing secondary schools is being undertaken. Phase 1 (relating to the Bishop's Stortford & Sawbridgeworth School Planning Area and the Buntingford School Planning Area) is currently underway and whilst we expect further information to be available in July, it is not clear at this stage whether this will be sufficiently conclusive or provide confirmation of a way forward. We are also very concerned that there is currently no agreed timescale for Phase 2 of the work, which will include the Hertford & Ware School Planning Area.

Transport

Considerable progress has been made to date, with extensive support from HCC Transport Officers, in respect of transport modelling, using the DIAMOND Model. This has been very helpful in sifting broad development options and providing guidance on likely highway impacts.

Whilst not directly within your responsibility, we are, however, particularly concerned with the delay in relation to work on the Harlow/Stansted Gateway Transport Model (HSGTM). East Herts and HCC Transport Officers have made significant efforts to resolve the issues relating to this work stream. We had originally been promised by Essex County Council that outputs from the model would be available for testing planning options by September 2012. The latest estimate from ECC in respect of completion of this modelling work is June 2013.

The transport authorities have advised that it is not possible to say whether, or how much, feasibility work will be necessary in order to have a robust basis to either include or exclude some large development options, notably north of Harlow, until the HSGTM transport modelling has been completed.

This has major implications for progress on the East Herts District Plan, because in order to meet levels of objectively assessed housing need in the period after 2021, it is becoming clear that one or more large urban extensions requiring significant transport infrastructure will be required.

East Herts Members' concerns are such that at their Full Council last week they agreed the following recommendation from the District Planning Panel and Executive:

East Herts Council implores the relevant transport authorities, including Essex County Council, Hertfordshire County Council, and the Highways Agency to urgently work to identify a pragmatic solution to the evidence base for long-term transport planning issues, to enable East Herts Council to finalise a consultation draft of its District Plan and enable it to comply with its responsibilities as a Local Planning Authority.

EH Officers are exploring ways of progressing the District Plan and re-assessing a realistic timetable for consultation. This will involve working closely with infrastructure and service providers on a way forward. However, absence of data in these areas represents significant barriers for them preparing a District Plan that would be deemed fit for purpose by the Planning Inspectorate.

It would be extremely helpful if you could discuss these issues with your colleagues and give us a firm end date for when we can rely upon having the information we need.

I would be happy to discuss if that would help and if there is anything that we can do to help move matters along, please let me know.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'George'.

George A Robertson
Chief Executive & Director of Customer and Community Services



Chief Executive's Office
Chief Executive & Director of Environment: John Wood

George A Robertson
Chief Executive & Director of Customer and
Community Services
East Herts Council
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Hertfordshire County Council
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Contact: Mr J Wood
My ref: JW/AMH
Your ref:
Date: 28 March 2013

Dear George

Ref: East Herts District Plan – Progress and Delays

Thank you for your letter dated 12 March with regards to the difficulties experienced in progressing the East Herts Local Plan.

I agree with you entirely that it is in everyone's interests for East Herts District to have an up-to-date District Plan in place as soon as possible and reassure you that the County Council will continue to play whatever roll it can in making that happen.

Please find below an overview of current progress relating to the Transport and Education issues that you have raised.

Transport

I share your concerns about the length of time it has taken to develop and undertake the necessary modelling work and understand this has occurred primarily as a result of issues around the calibration of the model and constituent authorities providing valid growth assumptions. I would like to assure you that the County Council continues to press Essex County Council to move the work forward as quickly as possible and the most recent communication from Essex County Council has indicated that work will begin on running the model this week. The first results are expected to be available by the end of April at the latest.

Given the scale of proposed growth within the HGSTM, there is likely to be a need for further model runs to test additional mitigation options. The timescales for these model runs are more uncertain and will depend on the outcomes of the initial model run. However, with an agreed baseline model and the issues relating to the growth assumptions now resolved, I am hopeful that any future model runs could proceed without further delay. Of course, progress may be affected were there to be a significant change in the spatial approach to growth by any of the authorities.

Chief Executive's Office

Chief Executive & Director of Environment: John Wood

Education

The County Council's Children's Services and Development Services team has and continues to work closely with Officers at East Herts District Council to ensure the draft Local Plan and future strategic housing growth is informed by the necessary education infrastructure requirements to ensure long term success of new communities across the District.

Local schools are vital to the sustainability of long term growth and a significant amount of work is being undertaken by the County Council to ensure the demographic impact of future new housing is assessed and appropriate measures are put in place to effectively meet future needs.

As you say, the County Council has already provided East Herts District Council Officers with a detailed analysis of the methodology employed to assess pupil yield from new housing and specific property related information on all existing primary/first school sites in the District, including site capacity, town planning information and an assessment of the physical potential of these schools to expand. Further work is being undertaken at East Herts District Council's request around the impact of different housing growth scenarios on areas across the District which East Herts District Council will receive by the end of April.

Specific circumstances outside the control of the County Council have resulted in delays to the completion of the detailed information for secondary provision across the District. Detailed feasibility work is currently being undertaken in both the Bishop's Stortford/Sawbridgeworth and Buntingford areas to provide the level of detail around the existing secondary/middle/upper schools' capacity to expand in property, town planning and highways terms. Officers have agreed to provide both this and further analysis of secondary provision in other areas of the District by July 2013 in line with East Herts District Council's currently stated timescales.

Progressing the Local Plan

In terms of moving forward with the preparation of the Local Plan, it is likely that once the implications of growth have been assessed and appropriate mitigation identified, there would be sufficient confidence as to the requirements for additional or upgraded infrastructure which would allow progression towards a Preferred Option. Of course there are likely to be outstanding issues relating to feasibility and deliverability for some infrastructure requirements, and these will need to be considered further. However, I am confident that both the County Council and East Herts Officers can continue to work together to ensure that any issues can be resolved prior to the submission of the Local Plan.

Chief Executive's Office

Chief Executive & Director of Environment: John Wood

Once again I would like to reassure you that work is continuing in order to resolve the outstanding issues as quickly as possible, but I am in no doubt that you realise the importance of identifying the potential impact of future development in East Hertfordshire on the existing infrastructure and the importance of ensuring that the necessary improvements can be delivered to mitigate the impact of future growth in the district.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Wood', written in a cursive style.

John Wood

Chief Executive & Director of Environment



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Wallfields, Pegs Lane
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Paul Bird
Director of Highways and Transportation
County Hall
Market Road
Chelmsford
Essex, CM1 1QH

Officer: Simon Drinkwater
Direct Tel: 01992 531404
Fax: 01992 531441
Date: 23 April 2013

Dear Mr Bird

RE: EAST HERTS DISTRICT PLAN: PROGRESS AND DELAYS

As you are aware East Herts Council is in the process of preparing its District Local Plan. My Council is becoming increasingly concerned about delays to the preparation of our District Plan, caused principally by external factors. One of these relates to transport planning. The Council has recently agreed a further delay to the finalisation of and consultation on the District Plan, until such time as a resolution to the outstanding strategic issues can be found.

Considerable progress has been made to date, with extensive support from HCC Transport Officers, in respect of transport modelling, using the Aecom DIAMOND modelling approach, covering the whole of East Herts District. This has been very helpful in sifting broad development options and providing guidance on likely highway impacts.

We are, however, particularly concerned with the delay in relation to work on the Harlow/Stansted Gateway Transport Model (HSGTM). East Herts and HCC Transport Officers have made strenuous efforts to resolve the issues relating to this work stream. We had originally been promised by Essex County Council that outputs from the model would be available for testing planning options by September 2012. The latest estimate from ECC in respect of completion of this modelling work is June 2013.

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This has major implications for progress on the District Plan, because in order to meet levels of objectively assessed housing need in the period after 2021, it is becoming clear that one or more large urban extensions requiring significant transport infrastructure will be required.

I wish to draw your attention to the following resolution recently agreed at an East Herts Full Council meeting:



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Director of Neighbourhood Services: Simon Drinkwater LL.B. Solicitor

East Herts Council implores the relevant transport authorities, including Essex County Council, Hertfordshire County Council, and the Highways Agency, to urgently work to identify a pragmatic solution to the evidence base for long-term transport planning issues, to enable East Herts Council to finalise a consultation draft of its District Plan and enable it to comply with its responsibilities as Local Planning Authority.

I understand positive progress is now being made in respect of model testing using the HSGTM and look forward to the completion of this phase of transport work by June this year. On behalf of my Council I would urge that priority be maintained for this very important work, in order to provide timely evidence to inform and support the Local Plans of East Herts and our neighbouring Essex Districts.

Yours sincerely



Simon Drinkwater
Director of Neighbourhood Services



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Wallfields, Pegs Lane
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Mark Norman
Highways Agency
Woodlands
Manton Industrial Estate
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MK41 7LW

Officer: Simon Drinkwater
Direct Tel: 01992 531404
Fax: 01992 531441
Date: 23 April 2013

Dear Mr Norman

RE: EAST HERTS DISTRICT PLAN: PROGRESS AND DELAYS

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Yours sincerely



Simon Drinkwater
Director of Neighbourhood Services

Essex County Council
Director for Highways & Transportation
PO Box 11
County Hall
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Essex CM1 1LX



Mr Simon Drinkwater
East Herts Council
Wallfields, Pegs Lane
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SG13 8EQ



Dear Mr Drinkwater

Re: East Herts District Plan: Progress and Delays

I refer to your letter of 23 April in respect of the above.

Essex County Council in partnership with Harlow DC, Epping Forest DC, Uttlesford DC, Herts CC, the Highways Agency and yourselves have been making strenuous efforts to ensure delivery of the HSGTM and the testing of the various local plan options, which rely on this model for their delivery.

As you will be aware despite using the Highways Agencies consultants, and more recently their officer contact, delivery of the validation documentation (LMVR) required to sign off the HSGTM has unfortunately for all been a slow process and a final sign off is still to be achieved. However, in order to make progress we considered that the relatively minor final matters in respect of the HGSTM should not hold up the modelling work further and in conjunction with the working group agreed to move forwards from where we are.

In addition it has not been a straightforward process to get individual authorities to agree either the quantum of their developments and even more difficult to locate it due to the political aspects of these for some authorities. Both these latter points could potentially make any runs difficult to defend at future examination in public if different substantive information were to be presented. Officers here, in liaison with individual authorities, have been proactive in taking decisions to overcome this in the knowledge of the impacts of delays on other partner authorities.

We believe that we are now in positive position to deliver the outputs as agreed at the last working group meeting, always being aware that further model runs could be required when the outputs of the next few model runs are known. This is an iterative process that needs to be robust.

We will continue to work in a positive and co-operative environment with all partner authorities to facilitate delivery of all Local Plans across the area.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'PB' followed by a large, horizontal oval stroke.

Paul Bird
Director for Highways & Transportation

Our ref: 690876
Your ref:



Mark Norman

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14 May 2013

Dear Mr Drinkwater

EAST HERTS DISTRICT PLAN: PROGRESS AND DELAYS

Thank you for your letter of the 23 April 2013.

I note your concerns regarding the Harlow Stansted model. We are continuing to work with Essex CC and others to ensure that the model can provide a robust and defensible evidence base.

We have some concerns over the validation of the model which Essex CC are addressing at the moment

Please feel free to contact me for an update on progress at any time

Yours sincerely



Mark Norman
Network Delivery & Development
Email: mark.norman@highways.gsi.gov.uk