

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
DISTRICT PLANNING EXECUTIVE PANEL
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON THURSDAY
17 JULY 2014, AT 7.30 PM

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

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors W Ashley, E Buckmaster, S Bull,
G Cutting, G Jones, G McAndrew,
M McMullen, T Page, M Pope, P Ruffles,
N Symonds, K Warnell, G Williamson,
M Wood and C Woodward.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Chris Butcher	- Senior Planning Officer
Ripple Gupta	- Planning Officer
Isabelle Haddow	- Planning Officer
Martin Ibrahim	- Democratic Services Team Leader
Lorraine Kirk	- Senior Communications Officer
Kay Mead	- Senior Planning Officer
Martin Paine	- Senior Planning Officer
Laura Pattison	- Assistant Planning Officer
George Pavey	- Assistant Planning/Technical Officer
Jenny Pierce	- Senior Planning Officer
Claire Sime	- Planning Policy

Kevin Steptoe Team Leader
- Head of Planning
and Building
Control Services

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Nigel Moore - Opinion Research
Services

1 **EAST HERTS GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS AND
TRAVELLING SHOWPEOPLE ACCOMMODATION NEEDS
ASSESSMENT APRIL 2014**

The Panel considered a report presenting the findings of the East Herts Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Needs Assessment, April 2014, which made recommendations on the amount of provision necessary for both Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople for the period to 2031.

Nigel Moore, Opinion Research Services, gave a presentation on the main findings and responded to various Members' questions. He clarified that the assessment was about identifying needs and not specific sites and whether these needs could be met within the provisions of the emerging District Plan. The next stage would be to undertake the site scoping work that would determine which locations could be selected to meet the identified need. This would be subject to a further report to Members in due course.

Members were advised that this study was confined to identifying needs arising in East Herts only and that issues relating to adjacent sites in neighbouring areas would emerge through both the emerging Identification of Potential Sites Study and through Duty to Co-operate arrangements agreed between Authorities in due course. In respect of stakeholders' comments on site location within the Accommodation Needs Assessment, it was

emphasised that these were personal opinions of respondents and did not represent a policy position.

At this point (8.35 pm), the meeting was adjourned for 5 minutes to enable the technical faults in the microphone system to be addressed. At 8.40 pm, the meeting resumed and the Chairman advised that the webcast had been abandoned as the technical problems could not be resolved.

The Panel supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the East Herts Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Needs Assessment, April 2014, be agreed as part of the evidence base to inform and support the East Herts District Plan; and

(B) the East Herts Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Needs Assessment, April 2014, be agreed to inform Development Management decisions.

2 DISTRICT PLAN UPDATE REPORT

Consideration was given to a report updating Members on progress with the District Plan and activities undertaken in accordance with the agreed consultation strategy. An updated breakdown of the consultation feedback was also tabled, together with an explanation of the next steps in addressing the issues raised. The Panel also considered the evolving situation in relation to the Duty to Co-Operate and noted a letter from the Planning Minister clarifying interpretation of Green Belt policy. Members were also advised on the next steps towards an amendments consultation for the District Plan.

Cllr C Woodward asked whether Officers were aware of the recent appeal decision in relation to the New Barnfield incinerator proposal, and what the implications of this

were for the treatment of Green Belt through the District Plan. Officers replied that the letter from the former Planning Minister made clear the distinction between planning applications such as New Barnfield and plan-making, where there were a number of examples of Local Planning Authorities reviewing their Green Belt in order to meet their housing needs. If East Herts Council was to refuse to release Green Belt where this addressed the national requirement to promote sustainable patterns of development, this would invite nearby Green Belt constrained Authorities to press the Council to address their unmet needs in the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt. From careful study of the reports and letters of the Planning Inspectorate it was clear that the expectation was that Green Belt constrained Authorities would nevertheless be expected to make every effort to meet their development needs.

Cllr G Cutting asked whether it would be possible to mitigate development pressures at ASR5 by instead developing the brownfield sites in the centre of Bishop's Stortford. Officers explained that given the very high levels of housing need in the town the proposed urban extensions to the town would be needed in addition to the brownfield sites.

Cllr K Warnell expressed concern at the level of response to the District Plan consultation. Officers replied that the level of response was equal to or better than those for comparable recent consultations carried out by other Local Planning Authorities. A comprehensive consultation strategy had been agreed by the Council and implemented with the support of Members, Town and Parish Councils, and Civic Societies.

Cllr C Woodward queried the procedure in relation to feedback submitted to the consultation. Officers explained that a six-point procedure was set out on the front page of the Interim Version 2 of the Consultation Responses report presented at the meeting, and which would be posted to the website. All feedback was being

entered to the Consultation Portal. Officers would then review the feedback to identify all the planning issues arising, before deciding whether any additional technical work would be required to address the issues raised. Depending on the outcomes of this process, some amendments to the Preferred Options plan could be required, and these would be the subject of an amendments consultation later in 2014.

Cllr G Cutting asked why only 12 members of the public had attended the Bishop's Stortford drop-in session. Officers replied that all 20 public meetings had been promoted in the same way, with the main variation being the degree of promotion by Town and Parish Councils. Attendance had averaged around 50 members of the public, with significantly higher levels at a number of events. It was therefore unclear why attendance at the Bishop's Stortford drop-in session was below average.

In response to a question about the need for positive engagement with local communities from Cllr G Cutting, Officers explained that the Council had undertaken all reasonable measures to engage, including the public meetings co-ordinated with a number of Town and Parish Councils and Civic Societies. The programme of engagement went significantly beyond the requirements of the Regulations and the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement. Positive engagement needed to be understood not only in relation to the District Council's agreed activities, but also in relation to input from individual Members and other organisations including Town and Parish Councils.

The Panel supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the record of consultation activity, together with the analysis of comments logged, as contained at Essential Reference Papers 'B' and 'C' respectively, be noted; and

(B) explanation of the Duty to Co-Operate, together with the letter from the Planning Minister in relation to Green Belt policy contained at Essential Reference Paper 'D', be noted.

3 DELIVERY STUDY UPDATE REPORT

The Panel considered a report on progress with the Delivery Study, a critical piece of the evidence base for the emerging District Plan. The report also explained the Council's approach to engagement with site promoters (landowners and prospective developers), which would be necessary to ensure that the Council met soundness requirements for Examination in Public.

In response to Members' comments, Officers advised that consultants for undertaking the Study would be appointed shortly and that the timetable had to be robust and realistic.

Cllr G Jones commented that the Delivery Study would be critical to demonstrating that the plan was sound, and asked whether, given the ambitious scope of the work, it was realistic to expect the consultants to report by 10 September as suggested in Paragraph 56 of the specification. Officers replied that the proposed work programme was indeed extremely tight, and that paragraph 57 of the specification asked for an honest assessment of the feasibility of the proposed deadline. This would be taken up with the consultants at the inception meeting.

Cllr G Jones asked whether there could be potential conflicts of interest facing the Delivery Study consultants. Officers replied that given the large number of sites promoted by different developers across the District, and the limited number of consultancy firms competent to undertake work of this nature, there was the possibility of some conflicts. It would be necessary to identify the precise nature of any such conflicts and to ensure that

the consultants avoided working in these specific areas.

The Panel supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the specification for the District Plan Delivery Study contained at Essential Reference Paper ‘B’, be noted; and

(B) the presentations to site promoters and subsequent meeting notes contained at Essential Reference Papers ‘C’ and ‘D’, be noted.

4 **GREATER ESSEX DEMOGRAPHIC FORECASTS 2012 – 2037 PHASE 5 MAIN REPORT – APRIL 2014**

The Panel considered a report setting out the findings of the Greater Essex Demographic Forecasts 2012 - 2037 Phase 5 Main Report technical work, which was intended to form part of the evidence base for generating an appropriate Districtwide housing target for the period 2011 - 2031, and thus inform and support the East Herts District Plan.

Councillor G Jones questioned the use of 2008 household projections which the Government had advised had been replaced by the 2011 projections. He believed that taking an average of both projections overstated the need.

Officers stated that all 9 alternative growth scenarios had been evaluated using both the 2011 and 2008 household projections to provide a range of outcomes that took account of the uncertainties associated with such forecasts. The 2011 based projections were an interim set of data which only covered a 10 year period to 2021. Therefore, they were of limited value for strategic planning purposes in relation to plan periods extending beyond this date. In the absence of a full set of data, Officers had considered it appropriate to have regard to the 2008 based projections which extended beyond 2021.

2012 based population and household projections would be released this year which would form the basis for Phases 6 & 7 of the demographic forecasting work. These forecasts would be considered by the Council in due course. Officers stated that it would be important to keep re-evaluating the objectively assessed need for the District, having regard to the latest household and population projections.

The Panel supported the recommendation as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that the Greater Essex Demographic Forecasts 2012 - 2037 Phase 5 technical study, be agreed as part of the evidence base to inform and support the East Herts District Plan.

At this point (9.50 pm), the Panel agreed to extend the meeting beyond 10.00 pm in order to complete the outstanding business on the agenda.

5 **EAST HERTS EMPLOYMENT LAND REVIEW UPDATE 2013**

Consideration was given to a report summarising the findings of the East Herts Employment Land Review Update 2013, which sought agreement to use the Study to inform the preparation of the East Herts District Plan and to inform Development Management decisions.

The Panel supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the Employment Land Review Update 2013, be agreed as part of the evidence base to inform and support the East Herts District Plan; and

(B) the Employment Land Review Update 2013, be agreed to inform Development Management

decisions.

6 **BUNTINGFORD EMPLOYMENT STUDY 2014**

The Panel considered a report summarising the findings of the Employment Study undertaken for Buntingford, which sought agreement to use the Study to inform the preparation of the East Herts District Plan and to inform Development Management decisions.

Councillor S Bull read a statement on behalf of the Town Council, the local Chambers of Commerce and the Civic Society, which suggested that the findings were flawed and that a maximum of only 2 hectares of land should be retained for employment purposes. Officers referred to the range of assumptions within the Study and the need for a robust evidence base.

The Panel supported the recommendation as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that the Buntingford Employment Study, June 2014, be agreed 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.

7 **STRATEGIC LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT (SLAA)
ROUND 3 UPDATE REPORT**

The Panel considered an update on the progress of Round 3 of the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) technical work that would inform the preparation of the East Herts District Plan and housing trajectory.

The Panel supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the full list of identified sites being assessed through Round 3 of the

SLAA, attached at Essential Reference Paper 'B' of the report submitted, be noted; and

(B) any future call for Sites suggestions be included and assessed as part of the annual monitoring and review of the SLAA.

8 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING UPDATE REPORT

The Panel considered a report which provided an update on Neighbourhood Planning and the roles and responsibilities of the Council under the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The report also updated Members on the growing level of interest in Neighbourhood Planning in the District and provided details about the publication of the Bishop's Stortford Neighbourhood Plan for Silverleys and Meads Wards, together with the next steps.

Officers also advised that a request for Neighbourhood Area designation by Ware Town Council had been submitted.

The Panel supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the roles and responsibilities of the Council in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and outlined in paragraphs 2.1 to 2.13 of this report submitted be noted; and

(B) the growing level of interest in Neighbourhood Planning in the District, together with the requirement to ensure that this area of work is adequately and appropriately resourced, be noted.

9 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Panel Chairman welcomed the press and public to the

meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was being webcast.

The Chairman referred to recent staffing additions in the Planning Policy team and welcomed Chris Butcher, Ripple Gupta, Isabelle Haddow and George Pavey to their first Panel meeting.

The Chairman also wished to place on record his appreciation for the recently-retired Bryan Thomsett, who had provided over 20 years dedicated service to East Herts.

Finally, the Chairman reminded Members that the next Panel meeting had been scheduled for 4 September 2014.

10 MINUTES

In respect of Minute 35 – Interim Development Strategy Report (January 2014), Cllr C Woodward asked whether a threshold would be reached in relation to the scale of Bishop’s Stortford, and if so, what that threshold was. Officers replied that the A1184/A120 bypass had shaped the development of the town. Whilst it was difficult to provide an exact figure, it was already becoming clear that the town was struggling to meet the entirety of its housing need in the longer term, and for that reason, some of the town’s unmet need was being directed towards the Gilston Area in the period beyond 2021.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Panel meeting held on 16 January 2014, be approved as correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The meeting closed at 10.21 pm

Chairman
Date