

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
DISTRICT PLANNING EXECUTIVE PANEL
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON THURSDAY
10 SEPTEMBER 2015, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor L Haysey (Chairman)
Councillors E Buckmaster and G Jones.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors M Allen, R Brunton, I Devonshire,
J Goodeve, J Jones, J Kaye, M McMullen,
P Moore, M Pope, R Standley, N Symonds
and K Warnell.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Chris Butcher	- Principal Planning Officer
Isabelle Hadow	- Senior Planning Officer
Martin Ibrahim	- Democratic Services Team Leader
Kay Mead	- Principal Planning Officer
George Pavey	- Assistant Planning/Technical Officer
Jenny Pierce	- Principal Planning Officer
Claire Sime	- Planning Policy Manager
Kevin Steptoe	- Head of Planning and Building Control Services

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

John Baker - Peter Brett Associates

1 EAST HERTS GREEN BELT REVIEW AUGUST 2015

The Panel considered a report presenting the findings of the Green Belt Review 2015, which sought approval to use the outcome as part of the evidence base to inform and support the preparation of the District Plan.

John Baker, of Peter Brett Associates, gave a presentation on the Review, explaining the purpose, methodology and findings. He explained the assessment of parcels and sub-parcels which had resulted in four locations as having least importance to the fulfilment of Green Belt purposes and as such, had been identified as “Potential Areas of Search” for development locations. Two further parcels were identified as having moderate suitability and had been identified as “Potential longer-term Areas of Search”. These locations were detailed in the report now submitted.

In response to Members’ comments and questions, Mr Baker stated that consideration of any extensions to the Green Belt were not part of the brief of the Review. He clarified the objectivity of the methodology used, especially in relation to the “green wedges” in Bishop’s Stortford and the role of bypasses in defining Green Belt boundaries.

Officers also reminded Members of the progress of the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA).

The Panel supported the recommendation now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that the Green Belt Review 2015 be approved as part of the evidence base to inform and support preparation of the East Herts District Plan.

2 VILLAGE HIERARCHY STUDY STAGE 1 AUGUST 2015

The Panel gave consideration to a report on the findings of the Village Hierarchy Study Stage 1. This was the first

of two stages in providing important evidence to determine the rural strategy in the District Plan. It was noted that no decisions would be made until Stage 2 of the Study had been completed.

The Panel noted that Stage 1 sought to identify the services and facilities available in the villages, together with an assessment of accessibility and public transport provision. Stage 2 would present a final hierarchy after considering unique issues such as policy constraints, environmental constraints and school capacity, etc.

In response to Members' comments and questions, Officers confirmed that it was anticipated that Stage 2 would be completed by the end of 2015.

The Panel supported the recommendation now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that the Village Hierarchy Study Stage 1 August 2015, be approved as part of the evidence base to inform and support preparation of the East Herts District Plan.

3 DUTY TO CO-OPERATE UPDATE REPORT

The Panel received the notes of the latest round of Member-level meetings with adjoining Local Planning Authorities. Members were reminded of the Duty to Co-Operate and the need to engage constructively with a range of bodies throughout the plan-making process.

The Panel supported the recommendation as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that the notes of the Member-level meetings held with neighbouring local authorities be received.

4 BUNTINGFORD TRANSPORT MODEL REPORT AUGUST 2015

The Panel received the findings of the Buntingford Transport Model, comprising a Local Model Validation Report and a Future Scenarios Testing Report. Agreement was sought to receiving the outcome as part of the evidence base to inform and support preparation of the District Plan and for Development Management purposes.

The work had been undertaken by Steer Davies Gleave consultants, who had created a micro-simulation model of the existing operation of the road network in and around Buntingford. The second stage of the work used the model to test the effects of various development scenarios and to determine any mitigation measures if required. This had been extended to undertake further model runs of two mitigation options and to provide indicative scheme design layouts for these two alternative options.

In response to Members' comments and questions, Officers clarified that they were working closely with Hertfordshire County Council colleagues on costing the mitigation measures and identifying how they could be funded. Existing section 106 funds were limited and competing priorities would need to be considered.

The Panel supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the Buntingford Transport Model Report 2015 be approved as part of the evidence base to inform and support preparation of the East Herts District Plan;

(B) the Buntingford Transport Model Report 2015 be approved to inform Development Management decisions; and

(C) the Head of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be authorised to make non-material amendments to the final Buntingford Transport Model Report 2015, prior to publication.

5 AFFORDABLE HOUSING – AMENDMENT TO POLICY

The Panel considered a report outlining the recent changes in national planning policy relating to the provision of affordable housing, and their implications for the Council’s current Affordable Housing policy.

The Panel recalled that in December 2012, the Council had introduced a revised threshold to provide affordable housing and a percentage amount to be sought from development schemes in Category 1 and 2 Villages. This policy had been subsequently amended following new Government policy on the use of section 106 planning obligation agreements.

However, following a recent High Court decision, the details of which were set out in the report submitted, the Government had revoked the changes resulting in local planning authorities being able to formulate their own affordable housing thresholds. Therefore, it was proposed that the Council reverted to the 2012 Affordable Housing Policy (HSG3) position.

The Panel supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the change in national planning policy through the removal of paragraphs in planning policy guidance related to affordable housing thresholds be noted;

(B) the affordable housing thresholds as amended in 2012 under the 2007 Local Plan HSG3 Affordable Housing policy be re-introduced; and

(C) the Starter Homes exemption policy, as introduced by Central Government in March 2015, be included as part of the amended 2012 HSG3 policy, as set out in this report.

6 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

She expressed her gratitude to former Councillor M Carver, for his enormous contribution to planning policy matters over many years and his wealth of knowledge and expertise in leading the Authority's District Plan preparations.

The Chairman referred to the cancellation of the Panel meeting scheduled for July 2015 and explained that the studies commissioned had not been received in time. She reminded Members that decisions would not be made on the findings of a single study, but the overarching evidence obtained.

The Chairman also referred to recent Government statements, which recognised the difficulties Local Authorities faced in dealing with changing parameters in preparing their District Plans. It was hoped that a more pragmatic approach would be taken by the Inspector at the Examination in Public stage.

Finally, the Panel Chairman advised on forthcoming meetings with parish and town councils and the recommencement of the Member policy support discussion groups.

7 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Panel meeting held on 19 March 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The meeting closed at 8.37 pm