

Report to Planning Services Scrutiny Standing Panel

Date of meeting: 11 October 2010

Portfolio: Leader

**Subject: East Hertfordshire District Council Core
Strategy Issues and Options consultation document**

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Committee Secretary: Mark Jenkins (01992 564607)



Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) To consider the potential impacts of the proposals within the East Hertfordshire Core Strategy Issues and Options Consultation Document as set out in the Appendix to this report; and**
- (2) That the Panel agree the draft response to the consultation.**

Report:

Background

1. East Hertfordshire District Council have, over the past few years, amassed a detailed evidence base for their Local Development Framework, including technical studies on topics such as transport, employment, climate change, landscape and housing. East Herts Council has also conducted community stakeholder sessions, designed to engage local people in plans for the future of the District, and to gather local opinion on future planning policy. All of this groundwork has led to the preparation of an Issues and Options stage consultation document for their future Core Strategy, the subject of this report. The consultation period runs from 2 September 2010 to 25 November 2010.
2. Epping Forest District Council, as an adjacent local authority, could be affected by decisions made in the future East Herts Core Strategy, and as such, should respond to the consultation document. The consultation document has thus been brought before the Scrutiny Standing Panel for its consideration.
3. The consultation document addresses the proposed growth of housing and jobs, in East Herts District itself (as set out in the now revoked East of England Plan (EEP)), and also in and around Harlow (as also set out in the revoked EEP) particularly the mooted development to the North of Harlow and urban extensions to the east, south and west of Harlow. Although it is acknowledged within the consultation document that at the time of writing, it seemed that the EEP was likely to be revoked, East Herts Council chose to write the consultation document on the basis of the targets within the EEP which existed at the time, allowing that the document would be revisited following any change in the EEP's status. It should also be noted that Chapter 3 makes reference to Previously Developed Land (PDL), as defined by Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3), but using the old definition which included residential gardens. A revised version of PPS3 was published this year, altering the definition to exclude residential garden land.

4. Several mentions of potential strategic Green Belt Reviews, (particularly to the north of Harlow) are also made in the document. It should be noted that East Herts District Council's area is approximately one third Green Belt; this is mostly in the southern part of the district, lining the borders with Welwyn/Hatfield, Broxbourne, Harlow, Epping Forest and Uttlesford districts.

Suggested response to consultation questions

5. The suggested response to the consultation, prepared by Forward Planning officers, is shown at Appendix 1. The main issues are briefly discussed below, by section. Please refer to the proposed response for more detail.

Background and Context - Questions 1 and 2

6. These questions concern the Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment undertaken on the consultation document. Both are thought to be, in general, adequate, however, the suggested response raises the issue of water infrastructure for any new development to the north of Harlow, and raises a concern regarding the impact of further development at Harlow on the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

Key Issues and Vision - Questions 3 to 21

7. These questions cover the strategic objectives and policy options for each of the themes in the consultation document. For example, for theme 3 'Housing East Herts', strategic objectives such as 'To achieve sustainable mixed communities by ensuring the delivery of sufficient affordable housing, either social rented or intermediate housing' are given, along with policy options to deliver the objectives, such as 'Provision of and approach to affordable housing including tenure split'.
8. The objectives and policy options are thought, in the main, to be appropriate, except for one which still refers to the now-revoked East of England Plan housing target, which should be rewritten. It is also suggested that the objectives covering climate change are amended to encourage renewable energy generation, and that an extra objective is included in the 'Green East Herts' theme, to safeguard existing nationally and internationally important habitats and areas of biodiversity (such as the SAC area of Epping Forest).

Development Strategy - Questions 22 and 23

9. These two questions concern the main options for East Herts' own housing growth. This section is, again, predicated on the now-revoked East of England Plan targets. The suggested response reflects this. Of the six development strategy options offered, the suggested response states a preference for options which locate growth in and around existing urban areas/towns, rather than in more rural areas, where services and infrastructure may be lacking.
10. Six potential housing distribution options are then offered, which, depending on which development strategy is chosen, seek to distribute the total housing needed over the different areas. These range from proportional distribution (allocating an amount of housing based on the existing size of each settlement), to reversed proportional distribution (where the smallest settlements receive the most housing). The suggested response states a preference for proportional distribution, as this allocates the growth to areas which already have local services and infrastructure, and are likely to be sustainable locations.

Bishop's Stortford - Questions 24 to 26

11. These questions relate to proposals for localised development in and directly around Bishop's

Stortford. As this town is some distance from Epping Forest District's borders, it is very unlikely that any choice of one option over another will affect EFDC. Therefore it is suggested that no response is made to these questions.

Buntingford - Questions 27 to 29

12. As above, this town is some distance from Epping Forest District's borders, and so it is suggested that no response is made to these questions.

Hertford - Questions 30 to 32

13. As above, this town is some distance from Epping Forest District's borders, and so it is suggested that no response is made to these questions.

Sawbridgeworth - Questions 33 to 35

14. These questions relate to proposals for localised development in and directly around Bishop's Stortford. Of the options available, the suggested response states a preference for development within the existing settlement or to the south west. It is felt that the other options, to the west and north, and more likely to affect Lower Sheering, which is extremely close by, across the District and County border. Any large scale development nearby could place pressure on services and infrastructure in Lower Sheering. It is also suggested that a preference for higher rather than lower, density development is given, as this should prevent any coalescence of Sawbridgeworth with Lower Sheering.

Ware - Questions 36 to 38

15. These questions relate to proposals for localised development in and directly around Ware. Of the options available, the suggested response states a preference for development to the north or east. It is felt that the other options, to the south east, south west and within the town, are more likely to affect Roydon, which is fairly close by, across the District and County border. Any large scale development nearby could place increased pressure on services and infrastructure in Roydon. It is, again, suggested that a preference for higher rather than lower, density development is given, as this should prevent the need for higher land-take, and thus keep large scale development further from Roydon.

Villages - Questions 39 to 42

16. These questions relate to proposals for localised development in and directly around the remaining, smaller, villages and settlements in East Herts, not covered above. It is suggested that of the options available, a preference for higher density development is given, as this will prevent the coalescence of settlements, protect the Green Belt and protect greenfield land, and encourage sustainable communities.
17. The villages and settlements are then classified into 'Larger Service Villages', 'Smaller Service Villages' and 'Other Villages/Hamlets'. The proposed categories are thought to be reasonable, and correctly applied. It is noted however that the 'Other Villages/Hamlets' are not listed in the consultation document.

North of Harlow - Question 43

18. Given that, again, the revocation of the East of England Plan has rendered the options in this question out of date, it is suggested that a detailed response to each option is not worthwhile. The suggested response advises that the 'Consultants Suggested Approach' (from the Harlow Options Appraisal which was jointly commissioned by East Herts, Harlow and Epping Forest District Councils) should be revisited, and that the evidence leading to the proposals is re-examined in light of the revocation. The suggested response also advocates discussions between senior manager and

Members from the three authorities, to find a way forward. It is understood that such a meeting is being scheduled currently.

19. The final part of this question asks whether the north of Harlow should be considered a suitable location for East Herts' own development, in lieu of the East of England Plan development. The suggested response explains that it is not possible to comment on this issue at present, before representatives from each authority have met to discuss the future of development around Harlow, as above.

Reason for decision:

To respond on the proposals within the consultation document, in order to ensure that Epping Forest District's interests are considered as development proposals are refined.

Options considered and rejected:

Not to respond to the consultation, however, this would risk any potential impacts of the proposed development to Epping Forest District being overlooked by East Herts Council.

Consultation undertaken:

The consultation document has been discussed by Forward Planning officers, and is being brought to the Scrutiny Standing Panel for consultation with Members.

Resource implications:

Budget provision:

It may be necessary to fund joint working arrangements regarding growth around Harlow in future, but this depends upon decisions which Executive Members make on how to proceed following the revocation of the East of England Plan.

Personnel:

Not applicable for the purposes of this report; the consultation document was prepared by East Herts Council staff.

Land:

Potential growth in the district, or near to the district, could potentially affect land owned by the Council, but this cannot be known this early in the consultation process.

Community Plan/BVPP reference:

GU1, HN1, EP3

Relevant statutory powers:

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Spatial Planning

Background papers:

East Hertfordshire DC Core Strategy Issues and Options Consultation Document, 2010

East Hertfordshire DC Local Development Framework Core Strategy Supporting Document, 2010

East of England Plan 2008 [now revoked]

Rye Meads Water Cycle Strategy, 2009

Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Investment Study 2009

Harlow Area Appraisal of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure Options 2010

Report to Local Development Framework Cabinet Committee 17/06/10, LDF-004-2010/11

Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications:

The potential growth discussed in the document could have significant environmental implications, however, these are assessed in the Sustainability Appraisal prepared by East Herts Council, accompanying the consultation document itself.

Key Decision reference: (if required)

Not applicable.