

Elstree Way Corridor Public Meeting – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

These FAQs were accurate at the time of being published in November 2013.

1. What is the Elstree Way Corridor and Area Action Plan?

The Elstree Way Corridor is the gateway into Borehamwood town centre from the A1(M) and runs along Elstree Way to the Tesco roundabout. The Area Action Plan is a type of master plan to help guide future development and regenerate the area for the benefit of the town and local residents.

2. What does the Elstree Way Corridor Area Action Plan say?

The Elstree Way Corridor Area Action Plan is a 30-page document and in short it sets the parameters for future development in the area up to 2027. This includes new homes, a range of community and cultural facilities to meet the needs of the wider community and a reorganisation of public service buildings. A series of new developments have taken place in the last 10 years or so and as land owners review their assets, further development is anticipated and so the council devised the document to coordinate the redevelopment and maximise the area's potential. The plan therefore provides the basis for determining planning applications in the area and allocates uses for certain sites. You can read the document in full online at www.hertsmere.gov.uk/elstreewaycorridor or contact us for a hard copy.

3. What are the advantages of having an Area Action Plan for the Elstree Way Corridor?

Advantages of the Area Action Plan include:

- It establishes a clear strategy and vision for the area.
- It ensures development comes forward in a coordinated manner.
- It plans for necessary infrastructure and ensures mechanisms are in place to secure funding toward supporting infrastructure i.e. section 106 agreements.
- It protects the Green Belt by demonstrating Hertsmere's housing can be delivered within urban areas.
- It allows infrastructure providers to plan accordingly.

However, it should be noted that new regulations introduced by the government allow existing office blocks to be converted to homes without permission, so for instance the council would have no control over the level of off-street parking to be provided and would also be unable to request a percentage of affordable housing from developers or funding towards infrastructure in these circumstances.

4. Why do we need to build more homes in Hertsmere?

At the end of the day, we need to build more homes to help address our local housing needs. There is also a legal requirement for local planning authorities to prepare plans which seek to deliver their future housing needs in response to a nationally increasing population and the rising cost of housing. The Elstree Way Corridor Area Action Plan is in essence a tool to manage and have some control over the inevitable development that is needed in Borehamwood to provide our increasing population with somewhere to live. Given the importance which the local community attaches to the Green Belt, our Local Plan Core Strategy (which is an overall development plan for Hertsmere) seeks to meet the borough's housing needs of at least 266 dwellings a year delivered within existing towns.

5. What about Isopad House – who approved the planning application?

The planning application was determined by the Planning Committee on 15 August 2013 who agreed the granting of planning permission subject to a legal agreement to secure funding towards local infrastructure and services. The legal agreement has now been agreed.

6. What public consultation took place for Isopad House?

The following consultation was carried out:

- 117 nearby residential and commercial properties were notified via a consultation letter sent on 18 June
- A notice was placed on the site on 22 June.
- A public notice was placed in the Borehamwood Times on 14 June.
- The application was included in our weekly planning list which is circulated to local newspapers, uploaded to our website and sent to parties who have requested to receive it.
- All consultees (including neighbours) were sent another letter on 6 August to notify them of the committee date so they could attend to hear the application being discussed.

This consultation was above and beyond our legal requirements set out in national planning policy. In addition, and encouraged by the council and the government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the applicant held a public consultation exhibition on 3 May at Fairway Hall, next to the site. This exhibition was open to all members of the public who could view the proposals and make comments before a formal application was submitted.

7. Can residents appeal the decision for Isopad House?

No, when planning permission is granted there is no right of appeal open to third parties. However there is a right to apply to the High Court to seek a Judicial Review within six weeks of a decision being made but this procedure cannot be used to challenge the merits of a planning decision.

8. Was the impact on traffic assessed on the Isopad House application?

As part of the application submission, the applicant provided an independent transport assessment. This assessment concluded that the development would result in limited additional traffic movement over and above the current use of the site. In addition, as usual with these types of applications, Hertfordshire County Council's Highways department was consulted and concluded that the proposed development would not have a negative impact on the adjacent highway.

9. Was the impact on sunlight / daylight assessed on the Isopad House application?

An independent sunlight and daylight assessment was undertaken in line with national guidance (set out in the Building Research Establishment 2011 " Properties within Eldon Avenue and Fairway Avenue were included as part of this assessment and it was determined that the proposed development would not have a detrimental effect, with regards to sunlight and daylight, on these properties.

10. What about the impact on schools and doctors surgeries etc?

The impact on local infrastructure including schools and doctors surgeries was taken into consideration when determining the Isopad House application, as we do with any such proposed development. Schools come under Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) which was consulted on the application and raised no objection. As part of the section 106 agreement for the site, which ensure developers provide new or improve existing community facilities to offset any impact caused by their development, HCC will have more than £100k as a contribution towards the cost of nursery, primary and secondary education facilities which will serve the locality of the development. (Also see FAQ no. 17)

11. So why are developments going up in our towns?

As per our Local Plan Core Strategy (which is an overall development plan for Hertsmer) new homes will be focused in existing built-up areas to help preserve our Green Belt land. The government continues to require the overall protection of Green Belts around London and other cities. We would always look to make use of brownfield sites (previously developed land) for housing and limit the use of Green Belt land but this becomes increasingly difficult when Hertsmer is 80% Green Belt.

In addition as mentioned above, the government recently introduced regulations which allow offices to be converted into homes without the need for planning permission, making it easier for developers to sidestep the planning authority. Although Hertsmer objected to this policy and sought exemptions from the legislation, we were unsuccessful along with 146 other local authorities.

12. What is the Local Plan Core Strategy?

Every council in England is required by law to produce a Local Plan which sets out the strategic vision for the borough. This is to make sure residents and developers have certainty over what is planned in their local area, and that development needs are met in a clear and transparent way. The Hertsmer Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted by the council in January 2013 following extensive public consultation and a public examination by the Secretary of State. Almost 1,000 responses were received from residents at the outset which identified several issues with the protection of the Green Belt the single, highest priority.

13. Why is there so much development in Borehamwood?

Our Local Plan Core Strategy sets out that up to 60% of our housing target will be delivered in Borehamwood, up to 25% in Bushey and at least 10% in Potters Bar, and a minimum of 5% in other locations. This distribution is based on urban capacity and where potential sites for housing actually are. It also reflects the size of the towns, the type of sites that come forward in different places, the existing services and shops, and the infrastructure capacities of each town. This is bound up by the overall principle that the majority of development should occur within existing towns, without releasing Green Belt land for housing development.

14. How many homes are expected to be built in the Elstree Way Corridor?

The strategic vision (on page 4 of the Elstree Way Corridor Area Action Plan) is to "provide at least 800 residential units and a range of community and cultural facilities for Borehamwood which will contribute to meeting the needs of the wider community." This figure came from a feasibility study in 2010. The council doesn't actually own any sites in the area that would be developed for housing so it all depends on what sites come forward for development from the landowners. Isopad House is outside the core area of housing growth in the Elstree Way Corridor but if you were to include it, the total figure is now around 950.

15. What are the advantages of building new homes in the Elstree Way Corridor?

There are many advantages including:

- It increases the availability of homes and affordable homes in the town.
- It provides protection for the Green Belt by reducing pressure to build on Green Belt sites.
- It means vacant or underused sites are brought into use.
- It supports the vitality of the town centre and will help deliver improvements to the public realm.
- It reduces the need to increase council tax as local authorities receive a grant for increasing the number of new homes through the government's New Homes Bonus.

16. The plan says developers have to provide 35% affordable housing. Why are some developments less than that?

That is the figure in the plan but government rules say that if developers can show that they cannot afford to meet those obligations they can suggest a lower proportion of affordable housing. They need to provide us with proof, which we then have independently tested. However we have claw back agreements, so that money can be paid to us further down the line if circumstances change.

17. What kind of infrastructure improvements are proposed within the Elstree Way Corridor?

The Area Action Plan makes it clear that any development within the Elstree Way Corridor will need to be considered in conjunction with an assessment of the impact that it will have on local infrastructure. The document gives provisions for highway improvements and other infrastructure enhancements and these plans have been prepared in partnership with other organisations including Hertfordshire County Council which is responsible for roads.

Highway plans include the removal of the Shenley Road roundabout (where you access Elstree Studios) and replacement with a signalised junction to improve pedestrian access from Elstree Way into Shenley Road as well as improving crossing facilities and cycleways.

The Area Action Plan also seeks to deliver increased school and doctor capacity through partnership working with health agencies and Hertfordshire County Council which is also responsible for education.

18. What does the Area Action Plan say about Maxwell Park Community Centre and the Winn Everett Girl Guide HQ?

The purpose of the Area Action Plan is to provide guidance to landowners and developers should sites come forward for redevelopment. Should the owners of Maxwell Park Community Centre (Hertfordshire County Council) and the Winn Everett Girl Guide HQ (Hertsmere Borough Council) seek to redevelop the sites, the Area Action Plan would be able to identify the sites as suitable for a new primary school with the requirement that the facility be designed to incorporate facilities that can be used by the wider community.

19. What's happening to Hertswood Academy and The Ark Theatre?

There has been no formal planning application regarding Hertswood Academy but we can confirm that the Governors have had initial discussions about demolishing the upper school site and building a state-of-the-art school for the town. Any plans would include a bigger and better Ark Theatre. There will be no permission if the plans do not include a theatre.

20. Why is there no detailed layout showing the redevelopment in the area?

The Area Action Plan is intended to provide a strategic overview to guide future development. It is not intended as a point by point plan for the redevelopment of the area. It is important to remember that although the Plan sets out the council's planning policies for the area's redevelopment, developers will still need to apply for planning permission and each application will be determined on its own merits having regard to the policies in the plan and other context.

21. What consultation has taken place on the Elstree Way Corridor Area Action Plan?

The redevelopment of the Elstree Way Corridor was identified during the development of our Local Plan Core Strategy. Our Local Plan Core Strategy underwent extensive borough-wide public consultation and a public examination by the Secretary of State. The council also carried out a six-week period of public consultation for the individual draft Elstree Way Corridor Area Action Plan in January 2013. Various interested parties and local residents were consulted including the Elstree and Borehamwood Greenbelt Association, Hertfordshire County Council, and the town council.

The following consultation was carried out for the draft Elstree Way Corridor Area Action Plan:

- Letters and leaflets were sent to more than 500 residents and businesses within the Corridor and immediately adjacent to the area to invite comments and representations.
- Copies of the Area Action Plan and supporting documentation (Sustainability Appraisal and Transport Statement) were made available at local council offices and libraries.
- An exhibition was put up in the reception area of the Civic Offices in Elstree Way.
- Two drop-in sessions were held and publicised at which members of the public could comment on the plans and council officers were available to respond to questions.

22. So when was the Elstree Way Corridor public meeting and how could I have attended?

Two separate meetings took place at the Civic Offices in Borehamwood on the evening of Wednesday 30 October so that as many people could attend as possible, the first from 5.30pm to 7pm and the second from 8pm to 9.30pm. The meeting was also webcast live so that people could watch at home or for up to six months afterwards – <http://www.hertsmere.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

23. What was the meeting all about?

The meeting was organised so that we could share information and listen to public opinion on the emerging Elstree Way Corridor Area Action Plan.

24. How did you publicise the public meeting?

A press release was issued to local media including the Borehamwood Times. The press release and FAQs were published on the homepage of our website. We updated our social media channels – Twitter and Facebook – and left messages on forums that we are aware of. We sent letters to around 1,000 residents and businesses in and around the Elstree Way Corridor to invite them to the meeting and emailed local community groups and interested parties that we have on file. We also notified the lead petitioner for ‘Stop the demolition of Isopad and Hertsmere House’.

25. I live nearby and didn't get a letter, why not?

We sent letters to around 1,000 residents and businesses in and around the Elstree Way Corridor which should have included anyone that would be affected by the Area Action Plan – these letters should have been received by Tuesday 8 October. We also carried out the above publicity to capture a wider audience. If you didn't receive a letter and want to be kept informed of similar issues please contact us at elstreewaycorridor@hertsmere.gov.uk or call 020 8207 7527.