

## **New Local Plan: Engagement on the ‘potential sites for housing and employment’**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

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#### **What is a Local Plan?**

A Local Plan is a document produced by the local planning authority for an area – in this case Hertsmere Borough Council - in consultation with local people and the many other organisations whose activities influence or are affected by what happens in the borough. It identifies the number of new homes and jobs required to meet local needs over the next 15 years and where development should take place to accommodate growth. The plan also identifies areas which need protecting or improving and the factors we will take into account when planning applications for any sort of development are being determined. It is an important document and has as a major influence on how the local area will change, develop, look and feel in the future.

#### **Why does Hertsmere need a new Local Plan?**

The current Local Plan consists of a set of different documents to guide development. It is based on evidence which was produced quite a long time ago and restricts new development to built-up areas. If we were to continue to follow the current plan then we would meet under half of the expected housing need in the borough. This would result in an even more acute shortage of new and affordable homes. It is now time to create a new overarching plan that will help shape the way the borough develops into the 2030s, based on up-to-date, objective evidence.

#### **Why are you consulting people now?**

We will be working on the new Local Plan over the next few years but at each stage – as we do more work and the plan gets more detailed - we want to hear the views of people who live and work in the borough. We are currently at the ‘potential sites’ stage and we want to hear your views on the sites that have been submitted by landowners and developers to potentially be developed for housing or employment.

#### **Why are you considering building in the Green Belt?**

Our approach over several decades has been to focus new development within built up areas through the re-use of brownfield or previously developed land. Figures recently published by the Office for National Statistics and our own technical studies show that we need to be building more than double the number of homes we are currently looking to have built. We also need some additional land for employment development as this will help ensure our areas do not become dormitory towns over time.

There isn't room within our existing towns and villages to provide land for all this growth – and in fact 63 per cent of people responding to the first consultation said that new homes should not be built within the existing larger settlements. The only realistic option for meeting some of Hertsmere's need for new homes, jobs and infrastructure is to plan to build in areas of the borough which are currently undeveloped. This could be on the edge of the existing built up area or in a new settlement altogether. What is important is to ensure that this is achieved in the most sustainable and attractive way possible.

### **What is the purpose of the Green Belt assessment which has been undertaken?**

Government policy states that Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified, through the preparation or updating of plans. Part of this process involves an assessment of how different areas of Green Belt perform against national Green Belt purposes. We commissioned an independent assessment of all Green Belt land across Hertsmere which together with other technical work, such as highways and flood risk assessments, will inform our consideration of potential development sites. The findings of this Green Belt assessment are summarised in our *Potential sites for housing and employment* report but it is important to stress that these are the views of independent consultants. Local Councillors will ultimately be responsible for agreeing which sites should be included in the new Local Plan before it is taken forward for public examination.

### **Didn't household projections recently indicate a reduced level of housing need in Hertsmere?**

The government recently introduced a standard method for calculating local authorities' housing needs, based on national population and household forecasts. The latest forecasts, issued in September 2018, point to a need for 444 homes per year in Hertsmere. However, the government is now consulting on further changes to how all Councils' housing requirements are calculated which could potentially increase this figure further. The government also requires councils to include a buffer of up to 20% more homes on top of the level of housing need identified, to ensure there is sufficient choice in the housing market, to take account of fluctuations in the market and to address historic under-delivery of homes.

Although the basic figure for Hertsmere is currently 25% lower than we indicated in our consultation last year (because of recent changes in national population and household projections), the level of overall housing need across South West Hertfordshire has not changed much. We anticipate a need to plan for at least 500 homes per year, in Hertsmere.

### **What about infrastructure? We need new GP surgeries, schools, public transport, power supplies, drainage.**

The Local Plan is not just about new homes and jobs; we also need infrastructure including schools, GPs, public transport, roads, utilities, parks and leisure facilities to support that growth. The plan will set out clearly what infrastructure provision is needed when new homes are being built. Development will be carefully controlled to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is provided. This is most likely to be possible when larger numbers of homes are being built together as these infrastructure requirements can be planned and delivered as part of the overall development.

We are currently preparing an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP). This will include an assessment of the current provision within the area and, over time, will be extended to provide a fuller assessment of the infrastructure needed to support the development being suggested. The IDP will ensure that infrastructure requirements are fully taken into account in preparing the plan, and ensure that all the necessary infrastructure providers are involved in the plan preparation process.

### **Haven't you already decided which sites to include in the plan?**

No decision has been made about which sites should be included in the new Local Plan.

**Will you need all of the sites shown in the report?**

No, we will not need all of the sites shown in the report to meet Hertsmere's future housing and employment needs. That's one of the reasons we would like your help in deciding which are the most appropriate locations that could be developed.

**Will the sites that are eventually chosen automatically get planning permission?**

No, any planning application to develop a site will still be subject to the relevant planning procedures and assessed accordingly. The purpose of the 'potential sites' process is to focus on whereabouts future development should take place.

**Why is council-owned land such as the former Bushey Country Club site included when the future of those sites have not yet been agreed?**

Our report does not make any recommendations on the future use of the Bushey Country Club site or any other land which we own. Any decisions on how important council-owned assets could be used in the future will only be taken after all options have been reviewed and we have listened to the community. However, it is important that any potential development opportunities are highlighted at this stage as it is harder to introduce sites later on in the process.

**Why do the approaches being considered include a new garden village?**

We need to look at areas beyond existing towns and villages if we are to be able to deliver all the homes, jobs and services that people in the borough need. Nearly half of the people that took part in the first consultation felt that a new settlement should be built. A significant advantage of providing some of the new development needed in this way is that the infrastructure required – including education, health, open space and transport facilities – can be planned and funded as part of the development as a whole. So a garden village may provide an opportunity to create an attractive, sustainable new community within the borough.

We have taken into account all the information that we have currently gathered in identifying these areas of search – in particular the need to avoid the risk of different settlements joining up (coalescing). There may be reasons that we aren't aware of for some of these areas not being suitable for new development: these could include land availability, insufficient infrastructure capacity which it would not be physically possible or financially viable to overcome, or other environmental constraints. Any areas which are eventually selected must be capable of providing attractive, sustainable developments, which also do not impact negatively on neighbouring areas. We will be looking in more detail at these issues as we analyse responses to the consultation and collect more evidence about the area and what is needed to support our future communities.

**How can I find out more?**

Every resident in the borough should receive the third edition of our newsletter called Planning for Growth through their door at the end of October or early November. This gives a summary of the consultation material, how to find out more, and how to make sure you can get your views heard.

A series of drop-in sessions are being held throughout November attended by our staff. At these exhibitions, you can view information about potential sites for housing and employment with the opportunity to ask questions.

We have made a lot of information available online. If you don't have access to the internet you can look at paper copies of all the consultation material at council offices in Borehamwood, Bushey and Potters Bar, public libraries, Shenley and Aldenham Parish Council and Borehamwood Town Council offices during normal opening hours.

<b>Exhibition details</b>	<b>Bushey</b> St Margaret's Sports Centre, Merry Hill Road, WD23 1DT Wednesday 7 November 4pm - 8pm
<b>Potters Bar</b> Wyllyotts Centre, Wyllyotts Place, EN6 2HN Tuesday 13 November 4pm - 8pm	<b>Borehamwood</b> St Teresa's Parish Hall, Shenley Road, WD6 1TG Wednesday 14 November 4pm - 8pm
<b>Shenley</b> Shenley Primary School, London Road, WD7 9DX Wednesday 21 November 4pm - 8pm	<b>Radlett</b> Radlett Centre, Aldenham Avenue, WD7 8HL Thursday 22 November 4pm - 8pm

**How can I find out more about potential sites of less than 250 homes?**

Information on potential sites of less than 250 homes can be found within our land availability assessment. This is available on our website:

<https://www.hertsmere.gov.uk/Planning--Building-Control/Planning-Policy/Local-Plan/Call-for-sites-and-HELAA.aspx>

**What does the new Local Plan mean for any neighbourhood plan currently being produced in my area?**

Neighbourhood planning is part of a Government initiative to devolve decision-making down to local communities, so they have a greater say in issues that affect them. Neighbourhood plans are a statutory plan, which can include general planning policies for the development and use of land in an area, and they can allocate sites for development. Currently, Parish Councils in two local areas – Radlett and Shenley – are preparing neighbourhood plans. These plans need to be consistent with national planning policy as well as the Council's latest adopted plan, which is made up of documents introduced between 2013 and 2016. Our current plan directs growth to locations within the boundary of existing towns and villages, on brownfield sites. This means the scope to allocate housing sites within a neighbourhood plan is currently limited to such locations. Once our new Local

Plan is adopted, there will be scope for neighbourhood plans to be reviewed to reflect our new strategic priorities for the borough.

### **What is the latest situation regarding the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan and the proposed allocation of housing in Little Heath?**

Earlier this year, the Planning Inspector examining the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan requested that Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council carry out additional technical work, having been asked to identify sites for another 4,000 homes. More recently, there has been correspondence between the local authority and the Planning Inspector and this is published on their website. Decisions on where additional growth should be located have not been taken and specific sessions in the public examination regarding individual villages have not yet taken place. However, a Memorandum of Understanding signed by Welwyn Hatfield and Hertsmere Borough Councils recognises that justified infrastructure funding secured for any development in Little Heath should be directed to necessary infrastructure improvements in Potters Bar.

### **I don't use the internet or email – how can I respond to the consultation?**

Ideally we want as many people as possible to use the dedicated consultation portal on our website to respond. We understand that not everyone has access to or is comfortable using the internet. You can fill in a response sheet at one of the drop in sessions or write to the Policy team at the council offices in Borehamwood. If you would like a paper copy of all the questions on which to write your answers and post them back, we can send you one if you call the Policy team on 020 8207 2277.

### **Will you be or have you consulted with neighbouring local authorities about your proposals, because some of them could affect communities living outside the borough?**

We have invited all neighbouring boroughs and parish councils to respond to our sites report and invite as many people as possible to respond to our consultation before it closes on Thursday 20 December, whether you live or work in the borough, or live nearby.

Our *Potential sites for housing and employment* report sets out all the land in the borough that has been submitted for potential development. The report also contains the relevant information regarding the potential impact of each potential site. However, nothing has been decided and this is the chance for everyone, who lives, works or cares about Hertsmere, to really make a difference to the future of the borough.

### **How long is this all going to take?**

Preparing a new Local Plan takes time. Apart from the fact that we need to collect lots of information ('evidence') to justify the proposals and policies that the plan will eventually contain, we need to allow

#### **Local Plan Preparation Stages**



time for local people and other organisations to have their say. There are also government regulations setting out a number of stages and timescales with which we have to comply.

After we have engaged on the potential sites for housing and employment we anticipate that we will have a draft plan ready for consultation by the end of 2019. Currently we anticipate having a final plan that the council will adopt during 2021.

### **What happens next?**

After this consultation closes, we will look carefully at all of the feedback received and summarise this in a consultation report. This consultation report will set out the key issues raised and our response to these. Councillors will then be asked to agree how we will take the new Local Plan forward towards public examination. This is known as the Pre-Submission or 'Publication' stage and will be a full draft plan complete with policies and further detail on the sites we wish to include.

### **Further Questions**

If you have any further questions or comments about this briefing or the process of creating a new Local Plan, please contact us at: [local.plan@hertsmere.gov.uk](mailto:local.plan@hertsmere.gov.uk)