

Hart District Association meeting on 14th July

Report from Hart District Council

Hart District Local Plan: update

We are adjusting the Local Plan timetable to include publication of a fully worked up draft Plan later this summer. This allows infrastructure providers and other partners a greater opportunity to assess the implications of the scale of development that Hart may need to Plan for. We are currently working up a detailed project plan [Chris Dorn's assistance has been gratefully received] to take account of the adjusted timescale.

The potential scale of unmet housing need within the Housing Market Area (HMA) is not definitive but it can readily be quantified for draft Plan making purposes. Rushmoor's current estimate of unmet need is 1,600 homes. This will however, be firmly challenged by Hart through detailed scrutiny of the draft Rushmoor Local Plan. It is not inevitable that Hart will have to pick up all the unmet Rushmoor need but it is likely that there will be a significant shortfall.

No account is being taken at this stage of an unmet housing need within Surrey Heath because much hinges on whether Surrey Heath decides to use its prerogative to review its Green Belt boundaries. However, even at a casual glance through Surrey Heath's SHLAA it is almost inevitable that there will still be a significant element of shortfall even if a Green Belt boundary review were to take place.

To be found sound the Hart Plan must be positively prepared with a clear strategy contained within it to explain how it will meet in full any unmet HMA housing need (specific NPPF requirement on both the test for soundness and also meeting housing need).

Rushmoor's draft plan shows that it will have difficulty in meeting its housing needs from 2024 onwards. The timing of this shortfall, i.e. in the later phase of Rushmoor's plan, suggests that Hart can plan concentrate on meeting only its own needs in the first instance, and to address Rushmoor's potential shortfall at a later date. The Plan would still however, need to show that there are deliverable options to draw on should it be needed, for example, accelerated delivery of a new settlement, or simply selecting additional SHLAA sites. A review mechanism would also enable the big unknown of Surrey Heath's situation to be addressed if need be at that point.

With this possible approach in mind, the following draft policy/strategy statement tries to encapsulate current thinking. This is not to be read as a finished policy, but rather the sort of statement that the local plan could include further down the line if the Council's Preferred Strategy survives the testing process.

The Council will work with its housing market area partners to deliver 24,413 new homes across the Hart/Rushmoor/Surrey Heath Housing Market Area over the period 2011-2032. Hart's proportion of that number is 7,534 [these figures may be subject to change if/when the SHMA is revised].

The Council has identified and allocated sufficient land to meet its needs up until 2024/2025. Thereafter, the bulk of Hart's housing needs will be met through the development of a new settlement centered on the area that comprises Winchfield. The vision for the new settlement will be developed through a master planning exercise and will be the subject of a separate Development Plan Document.

The Council, through its allocations policy, will give priority to directing development to those areas where potential adverse effects can be avoided without the need for mitigation measures (i.e. those areas that lie beyond the Thames Basins Heaths Special Protection Area zone of influence [this is a Policy required of Policy NRM6 of the South East Plan.].

To deliver its housing needs the Council will seek to maximise the potential for brownfield land development where that development is appropriate to the existing character of the area, demonstrates that there is sufficient infrastructure in place to meet the needs arising from that development, and where it does not compromise other objectives, such as protecting amenity, achieving good design, the protection of important heritage assets etc.

Elsewhere, development will be strictly controlled and new development will only be allowed on green field sites where the land has been allocated for development and where it enhances the sustainability of the location, demonstrates that sufficient infrastructure is, or can be put in place, to meet the needs arising from the development, and where the form and pattern of development is integrated into, and is compatible with, its surroundings.

If through Local Plan examination, and subsequent housing delivery monitoring it is demonstrated that Hart's housing market area partners cannot reasonably meet their respective housing needs, the Council will seek to cooperate with its partners to help meet any unmet needs. This will be done through a review of the Local Plan which will assess the potential for accelerated growth of the new settlement centered on Winchfield, or the release of strategic urban extensions at * or *****.***
[Options yet to be determined]

Replacement Hart Leisure Centre

Following the grant of planning permission the Council is now following the separate process of agreeing whether the development is to be built. The total cost of the project is £23million. In addition, a further £1.5 million is being allocated for a refurbishment of Frogmore Leisure Centre. The Council is to make the final decision of the project at its meeting at the end of July with a view to work starting on site in September. Completion is expected in March 2017.