Questions for Hart Council Meeting 30 July 2015

I would like to ask the following questions at council.

## School Places

Much is being made of the need for additional schools in the planning period due to the increase in population and housing. However, the data in the SHMA doesn’t allow for meaningful analysis and some publications suggest there is a surplus of school places.

**Question:** Can you please therefore set out in clear terms, the current and future forecast demand and supply of school places in the district from 2011 to 2031?

The simplest way to set out demand would seem to be to set out the population of children at the start of the plan period by different school age bands, and the forecast population as at 2031 using the two projections methods (PROJ 2 and PROJ 5) in the SHMA.

In terms of supply, it would be helpful for you to set out the current number of school places currently available by the same age bands and the number of school places that are currently in delivery (either being built or being sanctioned for delivery) through school improvements (e.g. Greenfields, Calthorpe, Robert Mays).

We can then compare the surplus/shortfall that we would have in 2031 if no further school improvements were made to the alternative forecast populations in 2031. I have included a table below to assist with this.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2011** | **2031 (PROJ 2)** | **2031 (PROJ 5)** | **Change (PROJ 2)** | **Change (PROJ 5)** |
| **Demand** |  |  |  |  |  |
| Number of Children of Pre-School Age (<5) | a | b | c | b-a | c-a |
| Number of children of Primary School Age (5-11) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Number of children of Secondary School Age (12-16) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Number of children of 6th form age (17-18) |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | **2015** | **In delivery now** | **Capacity in 2031** | **Surplus/ (Shortfall) 2031 (PROJ 2)** | **Surplus/ (Shortfall) 2031 (PROJ 5)** |
| **Supply** |  |  |  |  |  |
| Number of pre-school places | x | y | x+y=z | z-b | z-c |
| Number of Primary School Places |  |  |  |  |  |
| Number of Secondary School Places |  |  |  |  |  |
| Number of 6th form places |  |  |  |  |  |

## Brownfield Sites

The Government has recently released its Productivity Plan which contains many proposals for increasing the amount of development on brownfield sites and increasing housing density in urban commuter hubs, including establishing a register of brownfield sites. The council previously ruled out[[1]](#footnote-1) creating a register of brownfield sites in Hart.

**Question:** Will the Hart Council now seek to establish a register of sites so that it is in compliance with forthcoming legislation?

Back in November, the council estimated that the capacity for housing on brownfield sites up to 2031 would be around 750 dwellings. Since then a number of sites have come forward that were not in the SHLAA which indicate that in just six months the potential capacity has increased to around 2,360 units[[2]](#footnote-2), not including density improvements or Pyestock.

Moreover, planning permission has since been granted on a number of green field sites, so the residual requirement of 4,000 dwellings has fallen. Therefore, it now looks like it is entirely feasible for the remaining housing requirement could be met from brownfield development.

**Question:** Will the council now formally consider and evaluate brownfield strategy as a potential realistic suitable alternative to the proposed new town by considering the following 5 point plan[[3]](#footnote-3):

**1.  Create a Medium Growth Scenario**

We need to work on creating a reasonable, alternative “medium growth” scenario to go alongside the current “high growth” scenario. We have posted earlier about why we believe the SHMA is flawed (as shown [here](http://wehearthart.co.uk/2015/01/whats-wrong-with-the-housing-target/) and [here](http://wehearthart.co.uk/2015/06/hart-is-being-asked-to-build-too-many-houses/)) and is forcing us to build too much –  7,534 houses in Hart plus [3,100 extra from Surrey Heath and Rushmoor](http://wehearthart.co.uk/2015/01/3100-reasons-to-oppose-a-new-town-in-hart/).  Hart District Council should work with Rushmoor and Surrey Heath work to create a joint new, “policy on” lower housing requirement for the whole Housing Market Area that:

* Takes account of the environmental damage that large scale over-development would cause to our valuable countryside and the green belt in Surrey Heath
* Uses more realistic jobs growth assumptions of say around 650-750 jobs per annum over the cycle which is above what was achieved over the last economic cycle as opposed to the existing assumption in the SHMA of 1,130 jobs per annum
* Uses more realistic inward migration and household size assumptions.

The more realistic assumptions above could reduce the overall housing “need” for the combination of Hart, Rushmoor and Surrey Heath by around 8,000 dwellings from 23,600 to 15,790. This would relieve the pressure on all three districts, and in particular, reduce the pressure on Hart to take the unmet needs of Surrey Heath and Rushmoor Boroughs.

**2. Create a formal brownfield option and invite a competition to design the art of the possible**

Hart Council should create a new, formal “reasonable suitable alternative” option of meeting the housing need solely through brownfield development, utilising the large area of vacant employment land[[4]](#footnote-4). This should involve the following:

* Creating a complete database of all of the potential brownfield sites in the district, including those not yet in the SHLAA and those not yet formally promoted to the council, including sites such as Bramshill, Pyestock, Sun Park, Ancells Farm, Bartley Wood, Fleet High St and all of the run down town centres (e.g. Fleet, Yateley, Blackwater and Hook).
* Inviting leading architects to compete to produce some visionary outline schemes of what a “brownfield solution” might look like for the district, taking into account changing demographics, changing shopping habits driven by the internet and achievable housing densities.
* Organising a conference with the architects, land owners, developers and local community representatives with the objective of identifying the art of the possible for brownfield development amongst the competing solutions from the architects.

This could be done in conjunction with the neighbouring authorities of Surrey Heath and Rushmoor.

**3. Do the work and consult upon the additional elements of a proper Local Plan**

Hart District Council needs to work on the other elements that should make up a local plan such as education, retail, transport, employment, meeting the needs of the ageing population and other infrastructure.  Hart should conduct suitable, [high level strategic analysis](http://wehearthart.co.uk/2015/02/188m-infrastructure-funding-gap-leaves-hart-new-town-plan-in-tatters/) to build an evidence base to answer the following questions:

* **Education**. How many school places will we need and where in both the current “high growth” and proposed “medium growth” alternative requirement scenarios? How might these be delivered and what are the costs of the alternatives?
* **Retail**. What is the range, type and location of shops required across the district, taking into account changing shopping habits, the growth of the internet, changing demographics and the alternative growth scenarios?  How will we [regenerate our high streets](http://wehearthart.co.uk/2015/02/how-do-we-regenerate-our-high-streets/)?
* **Transport**. What investment will be required in the major road and rail infrastructure under both growth scenarios? Considering alternative sites for each of the development options (including the new “brownfield option”), what investment will be required in minor roads, making broad assumptions on the location of alternative sites?
* **Employment**. This review should be conducted across the Hart, Surrey Heath and Rushmoor.  What types and quantities of employment land will be required under the alternative growth scenarios, taking into account changing work structures and habits; what is the current forecast surplus/deficit in 2032? Would any extra employment land need to be found?  How much current employment land could be released for housing?
* **Other infrastructure**. It is likely that a new town, particularly in Winchfield, would require even further infrastructure spending due to its current lack facilities such as mains sewage and mains gas. What is the cost of providing additional infrastructure for a new town such as sewage, gas, roads, electricity, rail etc?
* **Ageing Population**.  What type of housing is required to meet the needs of the [6,850 extra people aged over 75](http://wehearthart.co.uk/2015/04/hart-district-council-not-serious-about-catering-for-the-ageing-population/)and the extra 3,620 people who will be suffering from dementia or have some sort of mobility problem and where should it be located?

For each option and scenario Hart should outline the total cost of infrastructure spending required and the likely contribution from developers so that a proper financial model can be created.

**4.  Consider the Environment and Landscape**

Fourth, Hart should conduct the other studies that are required to update the evidence base such as the landscape character assessment and an assessment of the potential damage caused to our wildlife by over-development.

 Once this work has been completed, Hart District Council should carry out a new Regulation 18 consultation on the above that includes both a medium and high growth scenario and the properly evaluated options for meeting the housing need including the new proposed “brownfield” option. It would be preferable if the current “Option 4 – New town at Winchfield” (or indeed a new settlement anywhere in Hart) was dropped as an option. It will be important for the council to step up its engagement efforts during this period to ensure that a much larger proportion of the public responds to the consultation.

After the results of the consultation is known, firm up a preferred growth scenario and delivery option(s) to work up into a more detailed Local Plan and conduct an exercise to ensure democratic endorsement of the preferred option. This could take the form of a district wide referendum or a series of Parish Polls, followed by a Regulation 19 consultation before submission to the inspector.

**5.  Fix the management and governance problems**

Finally, Hart need to work on the setting up the Local Plan project properly and address the governance deficiencies. There is clearly no properly defined scope or deliverables as the [recent questions to the Planning Inspector](http://wehearthart.co.uk/2015/04/hart-district-council-and-government-inspector-ride-roughshod-over-local-democracy/) demonstrate.  Moreover, the timeline keeps slipping as we were originally supposed to have been consulted on a draft plan in March 2015, and it is clear that Hart is nowhere near that milestone even though it has dropped that consultation from its plan.  This indicates the Local Plan project is not properly resourced. The Council needs to appoint a suitably qualified, experienced project manager, follow a properly recognised project management methodology such as Prince 2 and invest in the proper resources required to carry out the project on time to proper quality standards.

1. <http://wehearthart.co.uk/2015/05/hart-council-rules-out-register-of-brownfield-sites/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://wehearthart.co.uk/2015/05/brownfield-capacity-in-fleet-and-hook-keeps-on-rising/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <http://wehearthart.co.uk/2015/04/how-to-make-a-better-local-plan-for-hart-district/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <http://wehearthart.co.uk/2015/07/massive-surplus-of-brownfield-employment-land-but-rushmoor-wants-hart-to-concrete-over-green-fields/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)