

## **Hart District Council meeting with Keith Holland, DCLG**

**10.30am – 4pm Monday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2014**

### **Draft Note of meeting**

#### **I. Duty to cooperate**

Rushmoor and Surrey Heath consultation responses to Hart's options paper are attached. They both allude to the possibility that options can be combined to potentially meet shortfalls in their areas.

Next meeting of SHMA Member liaison group 28<sup>th</sup> October 2014.

Until Rushmoor and Surrey Heath have undertaken reviews of their plans in light of the SHMA, and 'have left no stone unturned' in aiming to meet their housing needs (tested through examination), Hart does not know the extent of any true shortfalls in those authority areas.

Hart wants to progress its plan as quickly as possible, but does not wish to become the depository for unmet housing needs before Rushmoor and Surrey Heath have fully explored their capacity and had this tested at examination.

Rushmoor and Surrey Heath timelines:

- Originally Rushmoor were going to do a Delivering Development DPD following on from their adopted Core Strategy. However, in light of the SHMA findings they have recently decided to undertake a full local plan review, to a similar timetable to Hart (consultation draft plan in July 2015).
- Surrey Heath is currently undertaking work on a Site Allocations DPD as a follow-on from their core strategy. This is the Council's preferred approach. However, they may consider whether to proceed in this way once they have reviewed the outcomes of work on the SHMA, Joint employment land review, SHLAA work and any other evidence. They will also have regard to recent changes to the guidance set out in the NPPF.

*Q1. What approach should Hart take in this situation?*

*Q2. Can we get a soundness check of the SHMA now?*

**Keith's advice:**

- i. Liaison Panel is key
- ii. Look at Aylesbury Vale who also failed
- iii. Hart could do its own work to establish a realistic capacity in other areas
- iv. Could do a 'policy-off' or 'unconstrained' call for sites across the HMA
- v. It is open to a Green Belt authority to review its GB in light of up to date housing needs. NPPF policy has not changed although the guidance has been changed to put extra emphasis on Green Belt protection.
- vi. If you have made every effort to engage but still don't know capacity in other HMA authorities, then plan for your needs, but offer scope for early review of the plan. Inspector needs to know there is a mechanism for addressing needs should there be a shortfall elsewhere in the HMA. Early review may be acceptable, but equally cannot kick the issue into the long grass just because it's difficult to deal with.
- vii. SANG capacity problems – don't need to have complete SANG coverage for the whole plan period, but do need to show there is potential to solve the problem
- viii. Can't get the SHMA examined until the plan examination.

**2. Neighbourhood plans and the relationship with local plan**

There are 5 parishes wanting to do neighbourhood plans. How can the local plan be prepared in such a way that it allows neighbourhood plans to be developed?

What happens if a neighbourhood plan runs ahead of the local plan, for example, allocating fewer homes than the District would want to allocate in that parish?

**Keith's advice:**

Local Plan will supersede any neighbourhood plans prepared in advance of it.

**3. Project plan and timeline**

The timeline is summarised overleaf (note the published Local Development Scheme needs updating to reflect this).

A scoping document and project plan are attached.

*Q. Do we appear to be on the right track?*

*Q. How can we speed up the process?*

**Keith's advice:**

Keep consultation to a minimum in accordance with Regs. Don't need a draft plan consultation, but make sure the SA work is done properly, with options tested. If substantial changes are needed, then need to reconsult rather than proceed straight to submission.

#### 4. Project plan and

#### 5. Housing Options – Thames Basin Heaths SPA avoidance

In considering a preferred strategy for housing growth, we are working on the basis that Option 1 (growth within settlements) and Option 5 (directing growth beyond the 5km SPA 'zone of influence') should be followed, given NPPF preference for previously developed land, and the saved South East Plan Policy NRM6 which states "Priority should be given to directing growth to those areas where potential adverse effects can be avoided without the need for mitigation measures".

Q. Do you agree that Options 1 and 5 should be fully explored before combining them with other options?

#### Keith's advice:

Agree, but south west Hart not an obvious area for significant growth in sustainability terms. Need the balance between SPA protection and other factors.

#### 6. Five year land supply

In the absence of a local plan, what housing figure should the Council use as a basis for its land supply calculations? Should it use the Objectively Assessed Need figure for Hart in the SHMA? Could a lack of five year supply in Rushmoor and Surrey Heath judged against their needs be a material consideration?

#### Keith's advice:

Technically probably yes, but if you are preparing a 5 yr land supply based on your objectively assessed needs you are on pretty strong grounds. You can't really argue that 5 yr supply should be based on a lower figure than your OAN because of constraints until your plan is in place.

#### 7. Travellers

Hart's previous GTAA was published May 2013. It looked 5 years ahead so it is already out of date.

We were about to progress a new GTAA to inform plan preparation. But the Govt has just published a consultation on Travellers proposing to alter definition of Travellers and change the guidance on assessing needs.

We don't want to spend money on abortive work, but nor do we want to delay the plan on this single issue. Rushmoor is happy to work with us but they are also mindful of the new consultation. Ideally we update the study once the new guidance is finalised.

*Q. How should we deal with the Travellers issue so that we can have a sound plan that it is not delayed? Can we have a criteria based approach in the main local plan, and defer Traveller site allocations to a separate DPD if necessary?*

**Keith's advice:**

Do a study once the new approach is confirmed. If your current approach is working, then stick to it. An entire plan will not be brought down because of a single policy on travellers.

## **8. Transport Assessments and infrastructure delivery plans**

Do you have any advice for the Council with regards planning for infrastructure? Specifically on transport, what is the inspector looking for from a transport assessment? Will a strategic transport model be ok for a plan that includes specific sites?

**Keith's advice:**

Level of detail depends on the strategy and the level of impact on the existing infrastructure. Must be able to demonstrate deliverability.

## **9. SHLAAs.**

What is your view on the inclusion of a large site windfall allowance (i.e. of sites above the SHLAA site size threshold of 5 units)?

**Keith's advice:**

Had doubts over the robustness of a windfall allowance for large sites – does that not acknowledge that your own SHLAA is not robust because you are not identifying every site? Safer not to be optimistic about windfalls.

## **10. SA/SEA**

*Q. What general advice can you give on SA/SEA and the testing of alternatives?*

**Keith's advice:**

Test every strategy to the same degree.

**11. Have regard to Sustainable Community Strategy?**

*Q. Legally we should have regard to the SCS, but the Hart SCS is defunct – the Local Strategic Partnership is no longer in existence. Is it ok to ignore it?*