

Questions & Answers to Hart DC re preparation of Local Plan

dated 15 September 2015

Question 1

What are the timescales for the Revised Options Paper, the Draft Local Plan and the Revised Plan, pre submission to the Inspector, as declared by the Joint CEO at the Standards Committee on 20 Aug, and what statistical process will be used to analyse the public response?

SP response

Current timescales are shown below. These are set out in a new Local Development Scheme being considered by Cabinet on 1st October, the papers for which are available at <http://www.hart.gov.uk/October-Meetings>

- Revised Options Paper – Winter 2015
- Draft Local Plan ‘Preferred Approach’ Summer 2016
- Publication (Pre-Submission Draft) Autumn 2016
- Submission Winter 2016

We have yet to agree any statistical processes for analysing the public responses.

Supplementary

Would you agree that in advance of a Public Consultation on Housing Options, Hart Council should take care not to influence public opinion by showing a preference for any of the Options, but since the article in Hart News clearly states that Winchfield New Town is Hart's preferred option, will the Council agree to fund a leaflet drop apologising for its error and making it clear that it has no preference for any particular Option or funding other groups to circulate their leaflets to ensure a level playing field?

SP response – subject to HDC minutes update

The article in Hart News said it was ‘exploring;’ options so the article is not inaccurate. The consultation will be “as even handed as we can make it”

Question 2

Could the Council confirm who are the members of the core strategy team in HDC, both elected and officers, who are formulating the Local Plan and their respective responsibilities?

SP response

Local Plan Steering Group comprises:

Cabinet Member for Planning (Chairman)	Stephen Parker
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The Leader of Council	As above
Cabinet Member for Housing	Stephen Gorys
Chairman of Planning Committee	Simon Ambler
Political Group Leaders	David Neighbour James Radley

Officers:

- Joint Chief Executive – Daryl Phillips - Project Sponsor
- Planning Policy Manager – Daniel Hawes, (supported by a Principal Planning Policy Officer and a Planning Technician) – responsible for delivery of local plan

We are looking to recruit new staff to the team, and the Policy manager has access to private planning consultancies to help support local plan preparation.

Supplementary

Given that 3 of the 7 appointments in that key group are filled by the same person, should the Council consider a more representative membership to avoid the concentration of power in too few hands

SP response – subject to HDC minutes update

I don't believe so, they are advisory groups not decision making groups and I am content that all members of the council are invited to attend and comment, many do.

Question 3

Would the Council agree with the President of the Royal Town Planning Institute, in the report dated 14 Aug , that there is a fundamental flaw in the reasoning that there is a quick fix and a sustainable solution to the housing crisis by putting large numbers of new homes close to railway stations , because in towns with railway stations with direct connections to London only 7.4% of commuters actually travel to London by train, 72% of commuters instead travel by private vehicle, to jobs within their local area or to other places not in London?

SP response

In my view there are no quick fixes to the housing crisis, and we should all beware of those who suggest they are. I will certainly look at the RTPI report in case there are any pertinent lessons for Hart. We will also consider and consult on alternative strategies before making a decision on a new settlement.

However, we must also prepare the local plan in line with the NPPF which has as a core principle that planning should *“actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest*

possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable (paragraph 17, penultimate bullet point)".

Supplementary

Given that the centuries old road system in and around Winchfield will need a massive upgrade, destroying the Heart of Hart, if a new settlement goes ahead, how will the infrastructure costs be funded

SP response – subject to HDC minutes update

This is all part of the sustainability appraisal process and all options are being considered, we are well aware that any option will require significant infrastructure; similar costs would be required for urban extensions.

Question 4

Given that the Hop Garden Road development was turned down by the Government Inspector on appeal since, amongst other considerations, it would "conflict with Local Plan Policies RUR1, RUR2, and RUR3 which seek, among other things, to restrict development in the open countryside beyond settlement boundaries", what justification has the Council for pursuing a Local Plan strategy of building a new town in open countryside, which is diametrically opposed to long-standing policies formally approved by Hart residents?

SP response

The Hop Garden decision was determined against current local plan policies, and was successful at least in part because Hart currently has a five year supply of housing land. However the Council cannot forever rely on the current saved plan because it does not address the housing needs that we face over a longer time frame. The NPPF requires an up to date plan that looks at least 15 years ahead. Unfortunately there are not enough brownfield sites available to meet housing needs over that period, so we must review the current plan. That means identifying new sites for development that are not in the current saved plan. We can either continue to expand the existing settlements into the countryside, or we can choose a new settlement, or we may need to do both.

Supplementary

Why would Winchfield be a preferred option to all the others that have been rejected given that the environmental constraints in Winchfield are far greater than those at Hop Garden Road

SP response – subject to HDC minutes update

This is part of the testing process, there are always pros and cons and this is why a second consultation needs educated informed views

Question 5

Does Hart's acceptance of the obligation to take on Rushmoor and Surrey Heath's unmet housing capacity during this plan period lead to the logical conclusion that it will be impossible for Rushmoor or Surrey Heath to accommodate any new housing at all in the following plan period and that in this event, does Hart accept the principle that it will have to accept the totality of the housing need for all three councils next time and have to build probably in excess of 25000 homes or the equivalent of 5 new towns in that period?

SP response

The Duty to Cooperate under the Localism Act 2011 obliges us to work with Rushmoor and Surrey Heath (and in theory others) to meet housing needs as defined by the NPPF and NPPG. The Council will only accept any unmet housing needs from Rushmoor and Surrey Heath reluctantly.

I do not accept the principle that Hart will have to accept the totality of the housing need for all three Councils next time around:

- Firstly I am not going to speculate on what housing needs might be in 15 years' time;
- Second, I am not going to speculate on what the housing capacity of Rushmoor and Surrey Heath will be in 15 years time, bearing in mind new brownfield sites are likely to become available, and Green Belt policy may well have changed by then freeing up land in Surrey Heath;
- Thirdly I am not going to speculate on what national planning policy will require of us next time around. National planning policy has a habit of changing over time. The NPPF and the legal duty to cooperate may well be replaced with an entirely different approach by that time. All we can do is prepare a new plan in line with the rules as they are written today.

Supplementary

If, as mentioned in Hart's News, 3,500 houses are needed and 1,800 brownfield sites have been identified, this leaves a further 1,700 houses required - no more than a 5% increase in the current housing stock of 38,000 over the next 17 years, so why can these not be provided from a fair sharing amongst existing communities or is Hart trying to justify building in Winchfield for a requirement post 2032, which is not relevant to this plan period

SP response – subject to HDC minutes update

This will be one of the options to be considered in the next consultation

Question 6

Given that the last LP failed due to a lack of cooperation with Rushmoor and Surrey Heath, but the vision of maintaining the rural nature of Hart was not challenged, is Hart not inviting a further failure through abandoning the main strategy put forward in the last failed LP since that was implicitly approved by the Inspector?

SP response

The last plan was rejected due to Rushmoor and Surrey Heath failing to cooperate. The Inspector looked at housing numbers and indicated that he had a problem with them, but did not look beyond that. Specifically, he did not consider the vision. It is thus incorrect to assert that the main vision and strategy put forward in the last core strategy was implicitly approved by the Inspector. It would be unwise for the Council to blindly follow the same vision and strategy in the context of much higher housing growth requirements.

No supplementary

Question 7

Given that London, with presumably much higher growth rates, has agreed to meet its own needs will HDC continue to convince both Rushmoor and Surrey Heath that they need to meet their own housing needs, if necessary accepting that their housing requirements that close to London call for higher housing densities?

SP response

We are already pressing Rushmoor and Surrey Heath to meet their needs as far as possible, including through increasing densities. Last summer we responded to the Rushmoor Draft Plan to that effect. However as a local planning authority, under a legal duty to cooperate, we need to be realistic and reasonable in our actions. What's right for London does not necessarily make for sound planning in Rushmoor and Surrey Heath which are different areas with different characteristics, opportunities and constraints.

Supplementary

If London does meet its own housing needs, doesn't this call into question the inward migration assumptions in the SHMA and therefore Hart, Rushmoor and Surrey Heath housing allocation should be reduced

SP response – subject to HDC minutes update

What London is accepting as OAHN doesn't mean that people won't migrate outwards from London.

Question 8

How many units have been applied for or granted or identified, and their locations and categories, as possible conversions or developments on brownfield sites since October 2014?

SP response

With regards solely to conversions allowed through permitted development rights:

At 14th September 2015, there were 258 dwellings approved through the permitted development/prior approval notice procedure the bulk of which are conversions from offices to residential. 5 units were completed in the year 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015. This information is published on Hart's website.

These figures exclude brownfield sites that require planning permission, because those are not currently split between greenfield and brownfield developments. We do need to be mindful that as yet the PDR regime closes next May, and it is now way too late for a developer complete any such conversion if not already started. You will however note the brownfield provisions on today's council agenda, which we will be discussion later this evening.

Supplementary

Should the number of Brownfield site houses declared in Hart News of 1800 actually be at least 2438 and possibly as many as 3600 if the density is increased, even possibly more as the number includes only 6 of the 27 buildings at Ancells and only 1 site in Hook and does not including Pyestock

SP response – subject to HDC minutes update

We can only include sites that are actually available for residential development e.g. the owners of Pyestock have declined the possibility of residential development.

Question 9

Of the 7534 housing target set out in the SHMA, what is the residual requirement left that need to be granted planning permission?

SP response

At 14th September 2015 the residual requirement to 2032 was approximately 2,900 dwellings needed to meet Hart's housing needs as identified in the December 2014 SHMA, although we will be required to refresh this document before we go to Examination. However I should point out that this figure does not allow for any unmet need arising in Rushmoor and Surrey Heath that we may have to meet under the provisions of the Duty to Cooperate. Rushmoor currently say they have a 1,600 dwelling shortfall although as I have said previously, Hart has challenged that figure.

No supplementary

Question 10

In the 'Conclusion' (secs.13 & 14) of 'The Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development' document, Hart gives guidance to Members regarding saved policies, five year land supply but the Interim Housing Delivery Strategy (IHDS) is not mentioned at all; has Hart abolished the IHDS? If it has it should say so, if it has not, it should be referenced in in 'The Hart Local Plan' section, because inter alia IHDS (Principle 2) gives specific guidance, unobtainable elsewhere, regarding development outside settlement boundaries.

SP response

The IHDS has not been withdrawn although it has in some regards become out of date. In any event, this will be superseded by the provisions of the new local plan.

No supplementary