

## **Spatial Strategy Workshop - 12 July 2010 – Community Panel and Local Groups**

### **Urban Consolidation**

- Need to avoid badly planned cramming
- Urban consolidation is affecting St Albans is actually 260 houses
- Higher density/taller homes
- Smaller units – more affordable / provides feedstock
- Urban consolidation generally seen as desirable, providing safeguards for surrounding areas e.g. building heights.
- Must ensure that the scale (size/massing) is appropriate to the context of the site.
- Shouldn't build too high.
- Scenario could not meet the housing need on its own.
- Overall favourite scenario
- Traffic management will be essential in making this scenario work
- Need to consider parking issues and congestion on the roads.
- Urban consolidation is a plus, but not development of green space and allotments.
- Need homes for key workers, usually with families – how does that work with urban consolidation?

### **Pros**

- Makes good use of facilities.
- Fewer transport problems – houses nearer facilities etc could/should reduce car use
- More business centred in main settlements – more employment opportunities
- Minimises destruction of surrounding landscape and changes to outlying villages
- Eco sensible – uses existing dysfunctional sites, which is sustainable.
- Libraries/other centres may reopen if demand returns
- Transport services become more viable if used more
- Does not use green belt
- Community cohesion
- Prioritises use of brown field sites
- Young professionals have fewer demands on services such as schools, healthcare
- Not just young people, older people may wish to downsize to an apartment in the centre close to services.
- Overall positive, but caveats about impact upon heritage.
- Mainly located in St Albans which currently has the greatest number of facilities.

### **Cons**

- Overcrowding, overuse/strain of established services if not improved or expanded
- Uses green spaces in city
- Infilling can spoil character
- May lead to single type communities
- Need to ensure good design and safety

- Should go forward with strategy to protect/maintain green space in city
- Change character of town – overfilled feel due to higher population
- Crisis for primary schools in the city centre.
- Pressure on residential parking and services
- Flats may have a negative impact upon the historic St Albans skyline.
- People don't want flats, they want houses.
- Danger of losing green spaces and attractive gardens in the centres.
- Difficult to attain affordable housing targets due to viability.
- Would more properties in the centre result in more traffic?
- May exacerbate primary and secondary school pressures

### **Growth of Smaller Settlements**

- Cycle route and secure cycle parking in city centre is needed.
- Has Eastcheap Farm been suggested for development?
- Must be well integrated.
- No guarantee that banks or supermarkets would return to these areas.
- Positive response overall
- Strong support for residential element of BRE to retain BRE as a key local employer
- Generating employment opportunities in smaller settlements more important than absolute maintenance of GB boundaries
- Will infilling in villages change their character and make them less attractive to prospective inhabitants.

### **Pros**

- Critical mass may be achieved to support new public transport service to/from city centre/amenities
- New people/ideas/growth of community/new blood
- Deliver more facilities for young people (retaining them in area)
- Allows children and established residents to stay locally
- Allows settlements to become large enough to require better services/facilities/schools/businesses
- Extra people would support local facilities
- Family's can stay in village.
- Nibble rather than gobble the Green Belt.
- Provision of a mixture of family houses.
- Spreads the impact across the District.
- Potentially lower priced housing as further out of town centres.
- More open greenfield sites to be avoided

### **Cons**

- Do not want to spoil village feel with overdevelopment – will change character
- Many small developments may withdraw business etc from town centre
- Wrong sort of housing may lead to poor mix of population

- Housing type is important – no executive homes
- Will change village life experience
- Lead to infill and eventually urban spread
- Danger of just attracting more “incomers” for retirement etc. rather than families
- Overcrowding of villages
- Employment issues – lack of employment opportunities
- Transport in rural areas problematic – what is the solution?
- May change the character of villages.
- Will put stress on existing facilities.
- Not big enough to get facilities into villages.
- Not particularly sustainable – result in increased car usage.
- Not enough to deliver schools
- Young people may not want to live in these locations.
- Lack of cycle and walking links between smaller and larger settlements e.g. Wheathampstead to St Albans or to Harpenden is a downside

### **Eco Village**

- Combined Heat and Power is supported
- Affordable social housing is required.
- Attractive building
- An interesting possibility in theory
- If developed needs very stringent conditions to ensure that it genuinely meets the Eco-criteria.
- Need to ensure sustainable transport links.
- Milton Keynes is a good example at a much larger scale.
- Mixed response overall
- High eco credentials of site an advantage
- Likely buyers of specifically eco-friendly homes and such people who have signed up for an “eco-minded” lifestyle are more likely to live a genuinely eco lifestyle than the average

### **Pro**

- Sustainable option
- Favour that it is a village rather than new eco town – support village character
- On previously developed land
- Does not use un-built green belt
- Will include primary school
- Needs transport
- Needs regulation of population – make sure they are being sustainable
- Does not impact people in rest of district
- School bus could solve secondary school issue
- Opportunity to create a sustainable community on Previously Developed Land
- Be at the cutting edge, lead the debate, future proof, possible tourist attraction
- Provide own energy.
- If link in with London Colney, could provide greater benefits.

- In favour, if done correctly and includes a new school.

### **Con**

- Would need all its own facilities
- No secondary school
- Transport links provision
- Not standalone solution – what about future needs, can it keep growing?
- Isolation
- Need to have public amenities in mind before building eco-village
- Need new legislation to control developer and occupants to ensure they are fully eco
- Lack of employment leads to commuting
- Poor transport congestion on busy roads. M25 bridge is the bottleneck and too expensive to improve. Cycle routes are needed. Better bus services are needed but unlikely to be enough people to make it viable.
- Lack of facilities / social opportunities for young people
- Lack of secondary schools
- South of M25, a barrier to walking and cycling
- Would people head south for facilities? i.e. out of the District.
- Unlikely to be self-sufficient
- Risk of being dormitory.
- If fails – fails badly!
- More viable if not Eco.
- No train station.
- Relative isolation of Harperbury a significant downside, particularly because of likely high car dependence
- Transportation constraints – access to Radlett, Watford, Borehamwood, London Colney etc is not good.

### **Urban small extensions**

- Need to define strong and defensible Green Belt boundaries.
- Needs careful consideration “looking at individually through a microscope”
- Overall positive response
- This scenario would meet more family housing needs than scenario 1 – meets a different demand/population make up.

### **Pros**

- Compliments existing urban areas
- Easier to develop – evenly spread
- Infrastructure exists
- May retain population density
- Does not impact too much on established developments
- It is organic growth
- Adds to existing communities
- Easier to produce smaller controlled/better planned developments that compliment the existing
- Easier on infrastructure – skeleton facilities already exist
- May be a way of achieving numbers without huge infringement on Green Belt
- Tail end of existing community – the existing community can't

continue to exist on its own

- Lower burden existing services
- Larger economies of scale.
- More choices given.
- Could deliver extra facilities.
- Have less environmental impact
- Advantages of already established transport/infrastructure/facilities

### **Cons**

- Eats into green belt/lead to urban sprawl
- Problems with water and sewage
- Urban areas merging together could be a problem
- Where will secondary schools go?
- Loss of Greenbelt Greenfield a significant downside

### **Post 2021**

- Post 2021 – should move forward with combination of scenarios 1 to 4, not broad locations. Priority should be urban consolidation, urban small extensions, eco village then growth of smaller settlements.
- Has assumed Scenario 4 has gone ahead and not a combination.
- Some logical locations identified, especially at Hemel Hempstead, which compliments the employment growth.
- Consider Redbourn development. Links to motorways might be an advantage.

### **Pros**

- New communities eases overcrowding established communities
- Better transport to villages may be delivered as an upside
- Creation of the employment site at London Road in conjunction with Oaklands expansion may increase the proportion of people who both live and work locally, with potential significant advantages to Civic Life – e.g. having enough time in the evening to contribute to Scouts, Guides etc

### **Cons**

- Not sustainable – uses undeveloped land
- Eats into GB
- Max cost as major infrastructure will be required
- Would have negative impact on existing areas e.g. Milton Keynes destroyed commerce in Aylesbury
- Such a large expansion of Redbourn would significantly alter the feel of the village, but still offer little community gain or a new secondary school
- Some concern about increased development at Oaklands, which could lead to a feeling of St Albans and Hatfield merging.
- Concerns about the impact upon Redbourn. The scale of growth shown would change its character.

### **Additional Comments**

- Housing for mid-range incomes is an issue. Not eligible for social housing and not on city salaries.
- Retirement housing planning should realise that people want to stay in their family home for as long as possible.
- Recreational evening classes have disappeared.
- Keep leisure and associated activities centrally located.
- Concern government /political changes alters targets/ policy mixes and confuses original plans. Funding/planning etc.
- Need to avoid large concentrations of affordable housing, as happened at Napsbury.
- 35-40% affordable housing is needed, but consider the distribution.
- A variety of housing is important as a diverse community is vital.
- Consider accessibility to emergency services.
- Developments should reflect needs of various socio-economic groups – important to attract those with spending power and also provide for those needing affordable accommodation.
- Need to think carefully about transport demands – even if public transport is increased, will people use it.
- Didn't realise so much of the District was Green Belt. There might be a need to let some Green Belt go, but the Green Belt has helped to avoid settlements merging.
- Reducing the proportion of the District that is Green Belt by 2% would be ok.
- Was previously opposed to Green belt development, but having seen the maps and heard the figures, I would now support it.
- Need to provide schools in conjunction with new housing – if development is dispersed there is a risk that schools will not be close to housing.
- The scope to expand existing schools should be considered. Also, whether a new school could be built mid way between two large development sites.
- Consider car sharing schemes to cope with commuting and general travel needs and encourage car sharing and walking to school schemes.
- Concerns for elderly and healthcare.
- Would favour large scale development that allows for schools, healthcare, leisure and transport rather than small pockets that add pressure.
- Need more jobs outside the retail/service industry sectors.
- Timing of development should be related to infrastructure provision.
- Planned/managed activities for youth and elderly (those who don't drink alcohol) are important.