



**Duty to Co-operate Meeting with St Albans City and District Council
Tuesday, 22nd January 2018 (The Forum, Hemel Hempstead)**

Attendees

Councillor Mary Maynard, SADC (MM)
Tracy Harvey, SADC (TH)
Chris Briggs – SADC (CB)
Councillor Graham Sutton, DBC (GS)
James Doe, DBC (JD)
Chris Taylor, DBC (CT)
Andrew Horner, DBC (AH)

Minute taker – Stephen Mendham, DBC (SM)

Notes of meeting:

1. INTRODUCTIONS

The parties introduced themselves and explained their respective roles.

2. Update on St Albans Local Plan

a) Latest on Local Plan

MM provided an overview of progress. St Albans are through reg 19 with no prescribed body withholding DtC. Sites taken forward unlikely to please all developers which may lead to Judicial Review. Some local councillors are concerned at the scale of the proposed developments but social and affordable housing provision are seen very positively..

Infrastructure provision is raising some issues and the challenge of effectively engaging with the NHS regarding healthcare provision was discussed. JD explained that work to date indicates there may be an ability to accept a new hospital if the case is made out but it is very much work in progress. Both JD and CB felt that the NHS have not been very forthcoming with information. TH suggested that the hospital issues should progressed with the South West Herts Group.

b) *Timetable for new Local Plan*

MM, CB and TH advised that quick progress is now being made with submission likely in late March or early April 2019. MM advised that it has good momentum to get it done and wishes to keep that momentum going with so many parties currently on board, including central government who seem to be pleased that it is moving forward.

c) *Duty to co-operate / Cross boundary issues*

All parties confirmed their wish to continue to co-operate.

GS explained that a concern is the numbers put forward for Hemel East where there is pressure from residents and councillors and believes that there should be some give and take by both sides. MM explained that anything St Albans does for Dacorum means that St Albans has to potentially provide something somewhere else in its area. There is the further issue that the Councils are at different stages in their Local Plan process.

MM explained that St Albans would listen to sound planning reasons for taking numbers and therefore Dacorum would need to provide detailed reasons, based on comprehensive evidence. This might then enable St Albans to make an allocation, for example by way of an update to the Local Plan. TH expressed concern that if allocations are made now that will delay submission of St Albans' Local Plan and risk intervention. St Albans cannot at this stage add any more policies. CB/MM cautioned against taking a purely bi-lateral approach to allocations should Dacorum's updated studies show a deficit. The SW Herts Group would need to provide a collective way forward to address that concern.

Both Councils have concerns regarding the Crown's approach in the Leverstock Green area:

- Both JD and TH advised that nothing has been agreed in terms of master plans but the Crown appears to have a different approach to both Councils. JD/TH advised that the Crown are looking to submit an application around July 2019 but Dacorum and St Albans feel the Crown's plans need more work.

- St Albans have not yet seen anything from the Crown regarding PPA. Both Councils are receiving mixed messages from the Crown on resourcing and what offers have been made seem very inadequate for the work likely to be involved.

- MM advised that she had had a good and positive meeting with Leverstock Green residents. GS said he felt that there was great strength of local feeling and both Council's need to ensure that there is strong engagement with the local community.

On Gypsy & Traveller issues GS advised that this part of Dacorum already has an over concentration of G&T sites and is concerned regarding the two additional sites suggested within the Hemel East application. There needs to be further discussion between the Councils.

CB advised that St Albans has a higher proportion than most areas with an indicated need to provide circa 60 sites for G&T. Re-distributing sites may adversely impact on the progress of St Albans' Local Plan and current evidence supports the allocations provided.

MM suggested that Dacorum goes forward with its call for sites & include G&T sites. Dacorum stated that it does have a problem with the allocation of sufficient G&T sites.

In relation to housing numbers, St Albans suggested that Dacorum state that if its evidence base demonstrates that it cannot meet the need it should put forward this argument to the SW Herts Group for consideration. JD expressed concerns that this may not be a realistic solution as Local Plans are being prepared in advance of the proposed Joint Strategic Plan, for which there is no confirmed timescale presently.

JD advised that Dacorum will have a much clearer position in mid-March with its sites but it is already known that there will be a shortage in the first 5 – 10 years. St Albans advised that it also will have a shortage (against the standard methodology figures) in the next 5 – 10 years. CB suggested that a stepped approach may deal with it.

JD said that it needs to be appreciated that in reality, East Hemel will become an organic part of Hemel Hempstead. A possible way forward may be that both Councils put before St Albans' inspector at examination that Dacorum cannot meet its housing need but recognises that St Albans is also constrained.

Both Councils are dealing with Green Belt release whilst at the same time showing the planning inspector that no stone has been left unturned in that search.

St Albans has concerns with the Crown's approach over the mix in the employment area. Whilst the Crown primarily wants provision for logistics St Albans is seeking a functional business park with a good mix of businesses.

TH – suggested pushing back at Employment Zone meetings where the Crown will also be present and CB advised that St Albans is open to Dacorum stating that employment falls within its area. JD explained the constraints on employment land within Dacorum where essentially Maylands is the only location where employment can happen and the only other possible location is Kings Langley which is likely to be highly contentious. JD repeated that Dacorum made its position clear in its response draft Local Plan policy S5. CB felt that there was a query on viability but the approach was generally correct based on recent trends.

JD – in respect of policy S6 there needs to be an overarching policy on Hemel Garden Communities. CB advised that St Albans are not proposing any major changes, there will be minor modifications and clarifications, and St Albans going into examination with an open mind. TH felt that it is more clarification than a policy shift. Some matters cannot be picked up as it would be difficult to make adjustments without policy shift. St Albans will provide a list of matters where it cannot meet Dacorum's representations.

3. Update on Dacorum Local Plan

a. Latest on Local Plan

JD explained that Dacorum's full evaluation of sites is expected to finish end of March 2019. Report to cabinet on progress in February 2019. Aiming to produce a draft Local Plan for reg19 consultation in Summer 2019. As part of the process Dacorum is looking at development trajectories and urban capacity / densities and higher densities are seen as part of issues surrounding green belt release. Cross party T&F groups have begun. GS advised that Dacorum have elections in May which may slightly change composition of the T&F groups.

b. Timetable for new Local Plan

Dealt with in 3a above.

c. Duty to co-operate / Cross boundary issues

Dealt with in 2c above.

4. Hemel Garden Communities (HGC)

CT advised that the Crown is pursuing its own ideas. Both Councils agreed that there is a strong need to put the message across to the Crown that there are issues that need to be addressed and to hold regular meetings with the Crown, especially as local residents are keen to see that there is engagement. Councils are to make the April meeting.

JD stated a need to provide clarity on the roles of both Councils in HGC and raised the possibility of both Councils entering into a Memorandum of Understanding. St Albans felt that low staffing levels may make that difficult to achieve and are looking at the Crown to provide resources, it risks delaying matters and may limit or even prevent St Albans realising other options.

5. SWHG and SoCG etc

MM advised that on SWHG that it is progressing with a project plan being produced. Attendance has been patchy by leaders which may arise from lack of depth of understanding about what officers have been doing. GS & JD stated that it was not their impression, leaders are there for vision with officers attending to the technical work. JD and GS agreed to take the matter away and obtain feedback.

6. AOB

None.

Meeting outcomes / agreed actions:

1. Both Councils will take forward hospital issues with SW Herts Group.
2. St Albans will provide a list of matters where it cannot meet Dacorum's representations.
3. Both Councils are dealing with Green Belt release whilst at the same time showing the planning inspector that no stone has been left unturned in that search.
4. Both Councils are to make Hemel Garden Communities meeting in April 2019 and to use it as an opportunity to engage with the Crown regarding their concerns over the Crown's approach
5. Dacorum will look into work of SWHG and provide feedback