

Report of Meeting with Stevenage Borough Council - 9th May 2016 10am

Attendees;

Caroline Danby- SBC Principal Planner
Deborah Horner- SBC Senior Planner
Jack Rigg- Chairman, GPC
Cheryl Peers, Vice Chairman, GPC
Tony Bracey, Councillor, GPC
Peter Bracey, Planning Committee, GPC

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the points raised by GPC in our response to SBC's recent Local Plan Consultation. Main issues discussed were as follows:

Housing Numbers: The figure of 7,600 homes is the minimum that Whitehall have indicated will be deemed to be acceptable and are derived from current ONS projections. (so much for local democracy!)

Creation of New Town to address development needs: As with NHDC, given the time it will take to get such a project up and running (10-15 years) this is not a solution for the development period to 2031. Given the housing pressures on a number of Local Authorities in the area (NHDC, East Herts, Stevenage, South Cambs) it may prove more effective to appoint a New Town Commissioner than getting agreement between some or all of these authorities.

Gypsy and Traveller provision: SBC received a lot of negative feedback from respondents on this issue. Also at our previous meeting with Richard Javees, SBC we were told that the Stevenage Police had refused permission for the Dyers Lane site to be expanded but on checking directly with the police (Chief Inspector Julie Wheatley, North Herts Borough Commander) this was found to be incorrect, indeed it would make more sense for policing of the Traveller community to remain under the control of one force rather than being split between two forces. This issue is now being reconsidered although as part of the published public consultation it will have to go forward to the Inspector at the Public Examination.

Lister Hospital: As presented the SBC's Local Plan envisages building up to the hospital boundaries with no provision for future expansion of the hospital site to accommodate the sharp increase in population which will result from approval of Local Authority development plans within the hospital's catchment area (some 100,000 people). We were advised that despite several requests by SBC to Lister regarding their future development requirements to 2031 no response was received. Historically there had been discussions between the hospital and the owner of the land on which the rugby club stands but an agreement on price could not be agreed. Since then it is believed that the owner has entered into and granted a purchase option to a housing developer.

Local Road Capacity: Development proposed by SBC in North Stevenage (housing and an employment area as well as a new convenience retail store on Graveley Road) will significantly increase road congestion in the area and through Graveley Village itself (as will that proposed by NHDC). Currently the junction of the B197 Graveley and North Road Stevenage is classified by Highways as a hazard. Creation of an 1,800 housing development and an industrial area on North Road will further increase the accident rate at this junction, particularly as traffic from the industrial estate (high sided vans and lorries) are likely to access the site via the junction rather than travel towards Stevenage past the hospital and obscure the sight of other traffic at the junction. The solution is to install around about at the junction, which was what Highways initially wanted to but this was vetoed by Stevenage. Our hosts were unable to comment as this would have been dealt

within Stevenage by another team.

It should be noted that the Inspector in reviewing a Local Plan only takes into account development proposed under that plan. He is not required to take into consideration potential development by a contiguous Local Authority and the implication for infrastructure arising from future development.

Park and Ride to be located at Stevenage North B197, off A1(M) J8 : This item appeared on page 181 of Stevenage's Local Plan document. Deborah advised that this was something that had been thought about under the old SNAP plan and had been proposed by HCC at the time. There is no current intention on the part of HCC or SBC to proceed with such a scheme at present. However it should be noted that a review of Town Centre parking following the creation of some 3,000 homes within the town centre itself will need to be undertaken. (Personal comment: Part of the parking solution will be the use of multi-storey car parks rather than the current inefficient tarmac level sites. It seems doubtful however if this will provide sufficient parking particularly with the proposed expansion of Stevenage railway station).

J Rigg

21/5/2016