

The Housing Strategy

A statement on behalf of Transition Town Letchworth
John Webb, v2, 3rd November 2017

Matter 5: the spatial distribution of new housing (Policies SP2 and SP8)

Issue 5.1: "Is the distribution of housing supported by the Sustainability Appraisal, and will it lead to the most sustainable pattern of housing growth?"

Representation no. 4507 by Transition Town Letchworth: "New Settlements"

Our aim: long-term sustainability via resilient, "low-carbon" living.

JW5: "New Settlements", policy SP1 (& SP8); Matters 5 & 7: Issues 5.3, 7.1 d.

References

North Herts. Submission Local Plan, paras. 4.6 & 4.84, policies SP1 & SP8

National Planning Policy Framework, March 2012, para. 52:

"The supply of new homes can sometimes be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or extensions to existing villages and towns that follow the principles of Garden Cities."

Draft Sustainability Appraisal ..., report to NHDC, Set. 2016, section 4.3.1 item d. and final para.:

"The option to build a new settlement has not been pursued. This is because no options for new settlements have been put to the Council and with the amount of deliverable land submitted as part the local plan process by developers and landowners, compulsory purchase would not be considered in the public interest."

Soundness

Unsound because it is not justified - lacking a strategy to avoid conflict with existing settlements. Also ineffective - the notion of remoteness is unclear.

Does not comply fully with the Duty to Co-operate insofar as the district includes the original instance of a Garden City which has afforded the Council a unique platform, along with the neighbouring authorities and with national impetus, a unique basis for launching a new settlement project along Garden City lines and updated for "low carbon" living.

Note: The District Council been strategically active in this regard by engaging with the neighbouring and overlapping authorities and agencies. However the proposed policy SP1 item a. of reliance largely on accretion around existing settlements clearly inhibits any proposal for a new settlement. Our stance here is tinged with dismay and frustration that an ambitious New Settlement project is not already half-way to completion.

STATEMENT

We are asking for modifications to the wording of policy SP1 and its subordinate paragraphs to encompass 'sustainable development in and around North Hertfordshire' and treat 'integration with surroundings' as referring to transport communications rather than solely to existing settlements.

This would help to justify policy SP1 with a clear strategy and rationale for the siting of developments (as well as on infill and 'brown field' sites); to render it effective by providing new opportunities for delivery even before 2026* via co-operation with neighbouring authorities. The latter is essential both in principle to comply with the Duty to Co-operate and in practice since the local rail, road and cycling routes cross the shared administrative borders. Also some neighbouring authorities have recent, valuable experience of delivering new settlements.

*We regard the phrase 'after 2026' as self-fulfilling since the act of deferring the start of a task ensures that no new settlement will be completed in any useful timescale.