

Examination of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011- 2031
Stage 2 of Hearing Sessions
Statement by Hertfordshire County Council
02 February 2017

1. Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) has had sight of a statement written by North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) relating to Matter 11 Community Facilities. This was sent by Mr Nigel Smith to Andrea Gilmour (HCC Property) on 23 January 2017 (email 16.14pm). HCC has by way of response, sought the views of Children's Services Department and HCC's in-house Demographer Dr T Bennetts.
2. The email gave HCC sight of the detailed issues and statements now set out in NHDC (Mr Smith's) statement for the first time. HCC is involved in ongoing discussion with NHDC regarding its local plan, and will continue to engage with that authority as appropriate. Indeed a meeting is currently being arranged between the two authorities. In terms of the document submitted by Mr Smith the matter raised seems to relate to secondary education and so HCC's response confines itself largely with that particular aspect of education provision too.
3. The County Council respectfully requests that the Inspector accepts the statement below as the position of HCC and a final response to the NHDC document.

Matter 11 – Community Facilities

Question 6

4. The County Council has engaged in an ongoing dialogue with Stevenage Borough Council regarding its local plan and education requirements. HCC's most recent representations were set out in the following documents:
 - Representations on Stevenage Local Plan (Publication Draft January 2016), February 2016 (LP8 in SBC Examination Library)
 - Memorandum of Understanding under the Duty to Co-operate between HCC and Stevenage Borough Council on the Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-31, June 2016 (ED103 in SBC Examination Library)

Question 7

5. HCC considers the provision of additional school places in the local plan to be appropriate and effective. The provisions made meet demands from the local population and growth over the plan period, although it should be noted that a new secondary school site (8fe) is required, to be located to the north-east of Stevenage to meet demand from both north Stevenage and proposed developments on the outskirts of the town, which lie within North Herts District and East Herts District. HCC has made representations to NHDC and EHDC to that effect as part of its responses to consultation on their local plans.

Forms of Entry

6. School provision is often described in terms of 'forms of entry'. 1 form of entry (fe) equals 30 places per year group.

7. Primary schools have seven year groups from Reception through to Year 6. HCC has a preference for primary schools of 2fe or more, as this larger size provides improved opportunities for delivery of a broad education curriculum and staff development, as well as offering the ability to better manage fluctuations in demand. A 2fe primary school will have 7 year groups of 60 pupils (420 in total), plus a Nursery class where offered.
8. Secondary schools have five year groups, from Year 7 through to Year 11, and Sixth Forms with lower and upper year groups. HCC has a preference for secondary schools of 6 to 10fe as this offers improved opportunities for the delivery of a broad education curriculum. A 6fe school will have 5 year groups of 180 pupils (1080 in total) plus a Sixth Form.

Provision of pupil places

9. The Secondary Planning Area (SPA) for Stevenage is larger than the Stevenage Borough boundary as it includes Great Ashby, Knebworth and the villages surrounding Stevenage who traditionally look to the town for their secondary provision. There are currently around 1200 Year 7 pupils living in the Stevenage SPA (40fe). The current number of Reception (primary age) pupils residing in the Stevenage SPA is 1468 (49fe).
10. Current analysis confirms around 700 primary school aged children currently living within the Great Ashby parish alone (i.e. north east Stevenage); equivalent to over 3 forms of entry.
11. Around 90% of secondary age pupils who live within the SPA attend a Stevenage school. Those that go out of Stevenage, look to single sex schools in Hitchin and some into the three tier system in Buntingford. The inflow into Stevenage is to John Henry Newman which, as it is a Catholic faith school, serves a wider geographical area and therefore recruits around half of its population from outside the SPA, mainly from North Herts area.
12. The pupil numbers set out above represent the current position and do not allow for any additional pupil yield anticipated from housing growth proposed in the plan.

Assessing demand from new housing

13. When undertaking high level school place planning related to new residential development, HCC determines child yield based on a ratio of 1f.e. per 500 dwellings to be 97.5% confident of not underestimating yield.
14. This yield is derived from a study encompassing 49 developments within the boundaries of Hertfordshire, as undertaken by the then council demographer (c. 2008), which determined that a normally distributed mean value of 23.2 primary children per 100 dwellings would arise. However results indicated that to minimise risk to the authority, and the citizens of Hertfordshire, a yield rate of 42 children per 100 dwellings would encompass 97.5% of the survey observations and therefore only under predict the likely yield in 2.5% of instances. The survey proposed yield is also supported by the HCC projection model which utilises statistically robust customised table outputs arising from the 2011 census, as sourced from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), from which it was determined that based on the census dwelling type, tenure and bed size mix that 1fe would arise from 500

dwellings. The HCC projection model is used to consider yields on proposed developments.

15. The County Council applies the upper end of the range, 1fe per 500 dwellings, in the first instance (i.e. in response to local plans) to ensure prudent planning. When considering more detailed information such as pre application proposals or planning applications, the County Council may choose to use a lower ratio (such as 1fe per 850 dwellings if a development comprises mostly flats for instance) and/or uses a specific development forecasting model to ascertain more tailored demographic profiles, including pupil yields.

Response to NHDCs statement

16. Whilst it can be argued that the new build study is becoming dated the results derived therein still provide a high level guide as to the possible highest yield from new dwellings. HCC is currently implementing a new survey to update results as part of a programme of work in this area.
17. An alternative approach whereby the application of an average yield is made would be indicative that 50% of the time the number of children calculated as originating from new development will be an under projection. Should this occur for a large development then significant pressures on the education system could arise. HCC has a statutory obligation to provide sufficient school places for children and also a duty to minimise the costs that the citizens of Hertfordshire bear, 1fe per 500 dwellings is the threshold at which only 2.5% of developments were determined to exceed.
18. The 1fe per 500 school places is additionally supported from customised census outputs relating to All and Migrant Households in Hertfordshire. This high level model analysis applies 2011 census dwelling mix ratios to calculate yield where only the number of proposed dwellings is known. Where further information is available with regards to a proposal, such as Bed Size – Type – Tenure (or any combination thereof), then a more specific and detailed modelling is undertaken by the authority to determine a yield which is likely to occur based on robust statistical evidence. This analysis is typically undertaken at master-planning or pre application stage so that the yield can be predicted and planning obligations can be identified.
19. Mr Smith's assertion that HCCs preferred approach does not relate to the SNPP is incorrect. Office for National Statistics (ONS) SNPP provides district and county level population projections and forms the baseline from which in-house small area population and pupil projections are made for informing service delivery and demand. It should be noted that the SNPP (and high/low variants) are subject to projection errors, as are all forecasts, and for which the ONS indicated an overall Mean Absolute Percentage Error of 2.7% on the total population in their last review. The forecast errors associated with quinary and single year of age could be substantially higher than this particularly at the smaller LAD level. In addition the SNPP do not take account of future government policies, changing economic characteristics and other factors which could impact on the underlying computations – they deal solely with the usually resident population and the affects that assumed future vital and migration statistics have upon the populace. Indeed the ONS Mid-Year

Estimates (MYE) on which the SNPP are based are subject to errors themselves. The MYE are normally recalculated at the end of an inter-census period to correct for erroneous assumptions, for example the rebasing of the 2002 to 2010 Mid-Year Estimates released in November 2013 by the ONS following the 2011 census. These factors should be given due consideration when utilising the SNPP and consideration given to a possible population range (for single year of age or quinary age group) rather than placing reliance upon a specific figure.

20. NHDC has suggested that two development sites at Knebworth and Great Ashby providing education zones offering 4 ha each are to be allocated within the North Herts local plan. In their response to the NHDC local plan consultation HCC has given detailed reasons why this would not be an appropriate or effective response to secondary need.

Background to February 2016 response to SBC

21. The need for additional school places has been calculated as follows:-

- a. 7600 (15.2fe) new dwellings proposed for the local plan period (but as at October 2015, 2350 were completed/permitted) so total revised to 5429 (10.8fe)
- b. Of the 5429 homes, around 2100 are anticipated to be located in the town centre. Since most of these are expected to be flats, producing a lower pupil yield, HCC has used a fe/Dwelling ratio of 1:850 so total demand is forecast to be 2.4fe.
- c. So $3,329/500 = 6.6fe + 2.4fe = 9fe$
- d. Existing schools have an estimated* 3.5fe of expansion capacity (with former Barnwell East school site offering 5fe) = 8.5fe
*HCC is currently re-assessing secondary school capacity.
- e. In addition within the SPA:-
NHDC housing is anticipated to yield (2557) = 5.1fe
EHDC housing (600) = 1.2fe
TOTAL = 6.3fe demand from outside of SBC to be met at a school site north of Stevenage

Conclusion

22. HCC considers the approach to calculating pupil yield as set out above is a robust and objective assessment of educational need. This approach has been used and accepted across the county, including in relation to recently adopted local plans (Hertsmere, Three Rivers, Dacorum, Watford).

Development Services
Property
2 February 2017