

## Broad summary of the outcomes of the Stakeholder workshops, November 2010

There was a series of four stakeholder workshops held during November 2010, looking at possible new housing targets to cover the period 2011-2031. Each workshop invited a different group of stakeholders:

- NHDC officers (cross-departmental);
- Developers, landowners and other professional interested parties;
- Local interested parties; and
- Citizens' Panel.

Each workshop comprised two exercises. The first looked at a simple sustainability appraisal exercise, considering the environmental, social and economic implications of growth. For this exercise, the seven identified options were simplified into three broad levels of growth:

- Low (being primarily brownfield development only – circa 2,000 – 3,000 dwellings);
- Medium (circa 6,000 to 9,000 dwellings); and
- High (circa 13,000 – 16,000 dwellings).

The responses generated have been collated and are summarised in the following points:

- People don't mind growth provided it's done in such a way as to be well-integrated into existing communities without harming their character or identity.
- Protection of open spaces and countryside is important for their own sake and as habitats, but people dislike cramming the towns too much with development and want to protect open space within towns too and not just have flats.
- People are concerned by the amount of pollution and congestion that might arise from high growth.
- Desire to see enough growth in villages to safeguard the current facilities they have.
- People recognise the consequences of failing to meet our own needs in terms of impact of ageing population, access to housing for young people and impacts on house prices. However, there is a reluctance to go much higher than meeting your own needs because this will be taking growth that has arisen elsewhere (and could be disadvantaging those places) and also could lead to needs for even higher growth here in future (the more you build the more you need).
- Desire to see a link between employment growth and housing growth.
- Recognition that bigger developments can provide infrastructure, although quite a degree of scepticism as to whether the infrastructure provided with big developments will be sufficient, especially for types of infrastructure where there is a current perceived deficiency.
- Urban extensions seen as having good potential for creating planned communities, but not seen as appropriate to have all growth in such developments.

The second exercise looked at location-specific issues. Maps of each of the four towns were given to each group, along with maps indicating the areas adjoining Stevenage and east of Luton which have been promoted for development. For each of these maps a broad indication of the likely levels of growth (drawn from the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment) that could be yielded was given, although not the precise locations. These levels of growth were ranked as high, medium and low, although these terms vary in amount from town to town, depending upon how much land had been identified there. For most of the towns there was a degree of consensus:

- Royston - medium to high growth (562 – 903 dwellings)
- Baldock - medium to high growth (1,180-1,227 dwellings)
- Letchworth – medium growth (531 dwellings)
- Hitchin – low growth (193 dwellings)
- Stevenage – development industry and Stevenage Borough Council support high numbers, everyone else said no.
- Luton –support from specific developers promoting the current scheme, but not from anyone else.

We are now looking at the implications of these levels of growth – in particular seeing how we can reconcile them with the overall desire to meet locally-generated needs.

Work has been ongoing since October 2010 with infrastructure providers to identify any particular problems which may apply to any location with respect to any growth.