



Dacorum Environmental Forum
Full Meeting Thursday 17/11/2022

MINUTES

Attendance (Z= via Zoom)

Name	Organisation
Gruff Edwards	Chair DEF
Steve Wilson	Vice Chair DEF
Christopher Stanek	Hertfordshire Minerals and Waste Planning Policy Team, HCC
John Webb (Z)	Circularity Foundation
William Wyatt-Lowe	DEF
Robin Bromham	Hemel Resident
Mike Ridley	DEF and Friends of Halsey Field
Chris Ridley	DEF and Friends of Halsey Field
Lawrence Parnell (Z)	Kings Langley & District Residents' Association
Paul Harris	DEF
Paul De Hoest (Z)	Berkhamsted TC
Dennis Harvey (Z)	DEF
Susanne Watts (Zoom facilitator)	DEF and Friends of Halsey Field

Meeting started at 7:30pm

1. **Apologies etc.**

Adrian Whyte, Plastics Europe
Nikki Bugden for Nash Mills PC
Cllr Garrick Stevens , Berkhamsted TC
Sherief Hassan, Hemel Resident
Cllr Brian Patterson, Tring Town Council

2. **Minutes of DEF Sept 15th meeting and matters arising**

GE said that he had been unable to post a message of condolence on the royal.uk website as the book appeared to have been closed. Updates on LA3 Master Plan and Hemel Garden Communities/New Local Plan had been included in the text of the agenda E-mail. An update on Halsey Field would be sent round with the minutes.

Plastics and the low-carbon Circular Economy

GE expressed the collective feeling that this had been an excellent and thought-provoking presentation. In turn Adrian had said that he was impressed by the standard of questions posed to him.

3. Hertfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2040 Draft Plan

GE welcomed and introduced Christopher Stanek, Hertfordshire Minerals and Waste Planning Policy Team, HCC to present on this subject. CS attended via Zoom and had sent visuals for his presentation as a .PDF in advance to GE, who "Share Screen"ed and stepped through pages as requested. Both the presentation and subsequent Q&A session suffered from an "unstable" Internet connection that caused speakers to cut out intermittently. This was probably due to local conditions affecting the fire station's Guest WiFi.

SW took the chair for the remainder of this Item.

CS said that the current Plan, which is subject to a Sustainability Appraisal, merges earlier separate plans for Minerals and Waste, a necessary move since these two issues were related by for example the fact that mineral extractions create holes in the ground that are then filled with inert waste. The new Plan more closely aligns with the Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy, one of whose ambitions was to "Improve nature in the county by 20% by 2050".

Mineral extractions are "not inappropriate" in the Green Belt land, according to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

HCC as the responsible Authority for the Plan is bound by National Policy to ensure a seven year supply of sand and gravel required for projected development. If it fails to do this the risk arises that an application for extraction on a non-allocated site is made harder to challenge. In this way HCC's situation is analogous to that of local planning authorities, who need to demonstrate that they have a five year supply of housing land, failing which it becomes harder for them to refuse inappropriate planning applications.

The Plan contains 27 policies, of which the first three, designated "Core", are:

Policy 1: Climate Change

"Proposals for minerals and waste management development must demonstrate how they have incorporated mitigation measures to minimise future effects of climate change and how adaptation and resilience measures to potential climate change have been incorporated into the design."

Policy 2: Meeting Sand and Gravel Needs

"The County Council will seek to maintain a steady and adequate supply of sand and gravel to meet demand over the plan period, and to maintain a 7-year landbank of permitted reserves in accordance with the latest Local Aggregate Assessment."

Policy 3: Meeting Waste Management Needs

"Development proposals which would increase waste management capacity will be supported in principle where they meet an identified need* and where they seek to move the management of waste up the waste hierarchy."

The remaining policies include:

Policy 10: Secondary and Recycled Materials

Policy 11: Sustainable Design and Resource Efficiency

Policy 12: Landfill Excavation

This concerns development proposals for the excavation and re-restoration of historic landfill sites. There are 70 such sites in Dacorum. These proposals are currently rare, but are on the increase as resources become scarcer.

Policy 13: Restoration, Aftercare and After-use

Policy 14: Green Belt

Policy 15: Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Policy 16: Landscape and Green Infrastructure

Policy 17: Soils and Agricultural Land

Policy 21: Water Management

Policy 23: Transport Infrastructure Sites

The Plan is accompanied by a Policies Map showing spatial designations such as Mineral Safeguarding Areas (MSAs) for which the NPPF requires planning policies to safeguard the minerals within them against "sterilisation" (i.e. becoming inaccessible because of building development). Policy 5 of the Plan that deals with MSAs allows "opportunistic extraction" if "mineral cannot practicably be extracted in advance of the proposed development".

A table of "Shortfalls" was displayed, predicting (in decimal fractions of millions of tonnes) shortfalls in waste processing capacity against predicted demand for a number of waste streams over years up to 2040.

The processes were:

- Preparation for re-use & recycling

 - Materials recycling

 - Composting

 - Inert recycling

- Other Recovery

 - Treatment & energy recovery

 - Soil treatment

 - Inert recovery

 - Hazardous recovery & treatment

- Disposal

 - Non-hazardous

 - Hazardous Incineration

 - Hazardous landfill

JW expressed surprise that, given that the shortfalls for "Treatment & energy recovery" (which would include incinerators) were so small, the category still appeared in the table. There was a blurring of issues between "Disposal"/"Non-hazardous" and "Materials recycling", e.g. the recyclable material put into black bins by households.

CS said that his part of HCC had no control over it, but that the boundary between those two categories ought to move as recycling rates improved.

SW invited questions.

PdeH asked whether the temporary development of land for mineral extraction meant that it subsequently became Brownfield, thereby losing any Green Belt designation.

CS No, its status would not change.

PdeH asked whether there was a national strategy for Minerals and Waste.

CS Unfortunately not. Local Authorities such as HCC had been lobbying the Government for years for there to be one.

PdeH asked what was meant by "Improve nature in the county by 20% by 2050"

CS said that Policy 15 included the requirement that proposals for minerals and waste management had to demonstrate "a measurable gain in biodiversity consistent with Government guidance†";. The 20% aspiration in the Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy referred to the Government's Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Metric (*see DEF minutes 16th Sept 2021*).

MH pointed out that BNG could be on the development site (preferably) or elsewhere. Rye Meads Nature Reserve was a good example. BNG requirements would be (further) consolidated into planning law next year.

PdeH asked where did the topsoil come from when restoring landfill sites, for instance after the recovery of inert wastes from them.

CS said that for such operations the topsoil was first removed and put by for the restoration stage, ensuring that there was no loss in topsoil quality.

JW said that there was an inconsistency between the methodology for estimating demand for minerals, which was based on a ten year historical average, and that for water.

CS said that planning for water supply needed to be flexible. There was no requirement for the Plan to predict demand for it. That was down to the water companies.

RB said that many districts in Herts. had stopped their Garden Waste green bin kerbside service. Would that mean garden waste going into the mixed waste stream and therefore landfill?

CS said that that was more a matter for the Waste Disposal authority. His department would nevertheless continue to monitor and update their waste needs assessment.

A subsequent clarification from Duncan Jones, Partnership Development Manager - Hertfordshire Waste Partnership states:

"Whilst no Hertfordshire waste collection authority has terminated its garden waste service the majority do now make a charge as permitted under the Controlled Waste Regulations. In addition as is normal at this time of year most garden waste services are suspended during the winter period. It's also worth noting this is a borough / district matter and nothing to do with the County Council. Longer term we anticipate a degree of prescription with respect to the provision of garden waste services, including whether or not local authorities will continue to be able to charge for such services, when the Government's final Consistency proposals are published in the coming months."

SW said that gases (mainly methane) used to be vented off at former landfill sites such as Jarman Park. Was there some way of capturing and utilizing this?

CS said yes there was, and it was continuously taken into consideration at such sites.

4. Any Other Business

LP said that DBC were keen to remove the "embargo on planning consents" caused by the need to provide SANGs (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces) in order to reduce the visitor pressure on the Chilterns Beechwoods (Ashridge) that would result from housing proposals in the Draft Local Plan. *DEF minutes 12/5/2022 refers.* DBC's Cabinet had very recently approved the Chilterns Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation Mitigation Strategy, which included plans for three SANGs, Chipperfield Common, Bunkers Park and Gadebridge Park. *See <https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/planning-development/planning-strategic-planning/new-single-local-plan/chilterns-beechwoods-special-area-of-conservation>.* There had been no prior consultation with the affected parish councils, although clearly the provision of parking shown on the plans, whose object was to attract more visitors, would increase traffic and other congestion problems for them. The areas, already oversubscribed, were going to be swamped.

SW said that he had recently attended a meeting of Dacorum's Climate Action Network and one concerned with the Nicky Line and Hemel Garden Communities.

WW-L had attended the latest meeting of the Hemel Place Board on Oct. 6th and has subsequently forwarded to GE summary reports and visuals of the presentations surrounding it. He said that the assumption within the Board's "vision" that 40% of motorists would be persuaded to switch to other modes was unrealistic, and one that therefore underestimated the effect on the road network that the up to 11,500 new homes now envisaged would have. Despite this, lip service was being paid to benefiting existing residents. On the contrary, LPs concern about SANGs (above) was another example of disbenefit to existing residents resulting from the high housing growth figures. *See for example under "Summary of recent history of Government Housing Demand figures for Dacorum" in the Minutes of the DEF meeting 9th May 2019.*

Dates for 2023:

Steering Group: (Tuesdays) 10th Jan, 21st March, 27th June, 3rd Oct.

Main: (Thursdays) 9th Feb., 11th May, 14th Sept., 16th Nov.