

Garden City Visioning

Workshop notes from 17th September 2015

Stakeholders were divided into four groups for the workshop sessions:

Group 1 – Green

Members:

- Colin Haigh (facilitator) (WHBC)
- Jenny Smith (facilitator) (WHBC)
- James Farrar (ATLAS)
- Mandy Perkins (WHBC)
- Susan Parham (University of Hertfordshire)
- Paul Taylor (WGC Society)
- Lindsey Lucas (HCC)
- Colin Pullan (NLP)
- Jim Parry (Tenants' Panel)

Group 2 – Red

Members:

- Simon Andrews (DLA Town Planning)
- Ann Berridge (Panshanger People)
- Anushia Vettivelu (HCC)
- Julie Crawford (NLP)
- James Young (Hatfield Garden Village)
- Jeanette Hollingsworth-Biggs (WHBC)
- Oliver Waring (WHBC)
- Anita Ward (facilitator)
- Luke Beattie (facilitator)

Group 3 – Yellow

Members:

- Tony Skottowe (WGC Heritage Trust)
- Jenny Pierce (EHDC)
- Matthew Lappin (David Lock Associates)
- Bethan Clemence (HCC)
- Jane Quinton (Panshanger People)
- Chris Goward (Old Hatfield Residents' Association)
- Patrick Owen (DCLG)
- Ann MacDonald (WHBC)
- Paul Everard (facilitator)
- Rob Webster (facilitator)
- Josh Weir (facilitator)

Group 4 – Orange

Members:

- Katy Lock (TCPA)
- Will Davis (Panshanger People)
- Roger Flowerday (HCC)
- Ian Gregory (WeiHat Cycling)
- Joseph Thomas (David Lock Associates)
- Dennis Lewis (WGC Society)
- Angela Smith (Hatfield Garden Village)
- Paul Evans (ATLAS)
- Sue Tiley (facilitator)
- Simon Chivers (facilitator)

The points raised in the workshop sessions have been collated below:

Workshop 1 - The TCPA Garden City Principles - Are all of these still relevant and deliverable in 21st century? Do any new principles need to be added to meet today's challenges for 'healthy living'?

- There is a need for strong leadership
- Strong, open relationship between developers/trust/local government
- Ensuring clear and open debate involving key stakeholders
- Need to have core masterplanning principles for new neighbourhoods and the right planning mechanisms to achieve them
- Local government has less money to enable/maintain green space/open spaces/green infrastructure – so favour the idea of a trust
- Income from assets – needs to be retained as a Garden City Principle
- Local government /developers have to provide greater proportion of affordable housing
- More social integration for new areas – i.e. mix of housing tenures that are relatively indistinguishable, like the best bits of Welwyn Garden City
- New places could follow design of older plan (Welwyn Garden City)
- Continuation of the idea of green spaces surrounding housing, including street trees. Ensuring green spaces are valuable and usable. Locating new green spaces such that they benefit existing communities as well as new ones, to foster a sense of integration. There is a need for different types of green space to serve different purposes.
- About people not just bricks and mortar – making sustainable communities including safety and security and connectivity
- Must have space standards for new buildings
- Development of original cul-de-sac design feature to fit modern needs
- Incorporate sustainable transport – need good accessibility, limiting use of motor vehicles (foot, cycling, etc.), but accept the reality of the car

- With links to school, shops and local services and employment (reflecting patterns of travel to work)
- Lifetime housing keeping people in the community
- Covers all ages throughout life
- Downsizable homes with better access links to services as well as sociable need
- Regeneration of town centre to 'forward think' for future requirements
- Principles need to address the needs of all demographic groups
- "Garden City Principles" does not just mean trees – it is a whole ethos
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- Timing and Delivery
- Influence behaviour early e.g. Ebbsfleet: If put facilities / infrastructure in first possibly have greater influence on new residence.
- Accessibility of schools. Can make routes conducive to walking and cycling but not always successful
- Activity hubs enable multi purpose trips
- Need to incorporate other models of delivery such as custom build/self build
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- Priorities
- Addressing housing crisis means need to focus on providing for communities
- Stewardship/ empowerment
- People – Community engagement
- Employment Practices
- Increase in working from home means that broadband needs to be reliable
- Flexible house types needed to accommodate working from home

- Importance of getting design principles in early – ensuring for example that green spaces are well thought out from the offset – learning from poor/best practice; early and thorough consultation process
- Community ownership – confidence and passion from relevant stakeholders; can community develop guidelines?
- Maintaining quality of life for existing communities
- Principles easier to implement on a larger site? New Garden City viable option?
- Incorporate allotments into public space
- Sustainable renewable energy solutions
- Improve dialogue with individuals working on frontline
- Provide green spaces before housing development
- Community Land Trust is desirable to provide for landscaping and green infrastructure.
- Advance provision of green space
- Reflect national policy context
- E.g. 'Zero Carbon' policy has been swept away
- Need to satisfy the private sector
- Need to unpick viability
- Sustainability and politics of 'language'
- Local democracy and involvement of local community in the development process
- Gap between 'promise' and delivery
- How to capture value in terms of arrangements, other than the traditional development corporation?
- Timing of infrastructure - look at thresholds for provision – boulevards need to be designed with both cyclists/pedestrians and car in mind
- Currently cyclist has to share with either pedestrian or motorist

- Infill development and pressure for 'densification' – dependent on the context
- The more principles set out in the Local Plan the better
- Need for strategic approach for growth

Workshop 2 - Principles into practice - local interpretation of Garden City principles for Welwyn Hatfield

Design

- Create more certainty behind the process and developers may be more willing to allow some land value capture
- Must incorporate land value capture and S106 and CIL to achieve high quality design
- Masterplans ok but need to be sufficiently fine-grained to allow for real variety
- Need an overarching set of broad principles for design – design codes
- Agreed that, whilst there should be principles for the form and rhythm of the development, principles should not be prescriptive about materials for the style of the architecture – change should be embraced.
- Design “set pieces” need to be in the right place at the right scale – not just a matter providing spaces that look good on a masterplan – they need to function, have a use and create busy-ness.
- Street/landscape structure should be navigable
- Should not mean replication of previous design principles. Need to have a modern approach to adjust to modern lifestyles. BUT neighbourhoods need an identity.
- Garden City Model – came from an analysis of the issues at that time – some still evident but we now have contemporary issues
- Design – care needs to be taken about building heights and impact on character/ existing communities
- Density not an issue so much; high density can be conducive to local character
- Planning palette just as important in a design code – give trees and landscaping a value e.g. price tags on trees to generate feelings of

ownership

- Different types of open space need to be designed for different purposes
- Importance of mixed communities – the option for older people to downsize, but remain within the existing community. Creation of lifetime homes
- Community facilities such as schools, local shops etc should be co-located at “hubs”
- Density is a matter of relative scale – agreed could be greater at “hubs”
- Need different types of open space – natural landscape, amenity space, decorative space.
- Design codes could incorporate fashionably dated design of housing and green spaces - pleasant
- Build quality of houses is as important as their setting green spaces
- Need a legacy approach to building quality/design
- Landscape framework is an essential part of masterplanning and is key to quality and appeal
- Design neighbourhoods so that they feel part of wider area and fit with it
- Buildings could be taller at the cores of new neighbourhoods
- Parking of cars is a sensitive issue which needs to be carefully designed into high density housing.
- Can be on street – appropriate integration
- Good landscaping is key
- Small courts
- Home zone
- Promoting area nationally as well as locally
- Virtually garden suburb with strong economic links
- Plan for economic future including space for start-up companies

- Must incorporate connections to maintain biodiversity
- Small area for private usage (nature area) with no access for people
- Maintenance of green spaces; could be achieved through a trust
- Challenge of maintaining quality and feel whilst reducing budget; need to agree at start and have the “right” people involved
- Need for varying densities but need to translate principles into all types of development
- Will have to address how do we protect unique heritage whilst enabling opportunities for growth

Top Priority TCPA Principles:

- Package of elements:
 - economics
 - governance
 - place making
- Need political consistency, continuity of vision and commitment
- Land value capture very difficult to gain agreement on
- Is the solution to build facilities and hand over to a trust?

Density

- Protect the green belt and cram in development?
- Higher density does not necessary mean poor quality; good design can disguise density
- Release land from the green belt and develop useable green space
- Does not have to mean big gardens but better quality of open space
- Need smaller size accommodation
- Would higher density allow for this?

Green Belt

- Releasing land from Green Belt – try to focus on losing the poorer quality parts if possible. Protect the remainder and ensure new development provides net gain in biodiversity, quality etc.

Town Centres

- How can we improve town centres?
- Need wide variety of activities – without John Lewis would WGC die
- Requirement for larger units
- Remodelling of existing spaces
- Need to facilitate the transition from shopping -> eating -> drinking
- Importance of a large enough population to sustain local businesses
- Town centre shops should be protected from out of town shopping
- Realistic, affordable rent
- Encouraging markets = Food = Local and sustainable
- Traditional town centres = shopping now means leisure/mixed leisure uses, eating coffee shops and bars -> design shops /spaces appropriate to this
- Leisure industry provides employment opportunities especially for low skill/ flexible working
- Use gardens / spaces for arts and cultural activities / popup activities to bring people in

Other points

- Imperative that stakeholders can get involved at the earliest stage
- Leadership and stewardship – look at establishing a Trust, perhaps for new extensions to help with maintenance – income generating assets.
- Leadership – vision needs to be maintained over political cycles

- Issue of size of towns – what is the maximum size Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City can become before they turn into sprawl? This needs to be defined.
- Public transport needs to be provided early on as new neighbourhoods are being built and its usage encouraged.