

Housing and Development Group (HDG)

(Working Group to SELEP)

Tuesday 25th February 2020

10:30-12:30

Moat Homes, Dartford, Kent

Nick Fenton	Chair
Brian Horton	SELEP
Alex Riley	SELEP
Steve Nunn	Moat
Jemma Little	Haven Gateway Partnership
Jo Ellis	Kent Housing Group
Mark Curle	Chair Essex Developers Group/ Galliford Try
Alistair Pollock	South Essex Housing Group/Essex Developers Group
Ben Lockwood	Ashford Borough Council
Peter Wright	Harlow & Gilston Garden Town
Helen McCabe	Thurrock Borough Council
Mary Gibbons	CHP
Richard Bayley	NEGC Ltd
Duncan Innes	Swan
Lee Heley	Essex County Council

1. Introductions and Apologies

Chair thanked those present for attending and Moat Homes for hosting.

Apologies were noted.

Andrew Palmer, Emma Flynn, Ian Piper, Ian Vipond, Jonathan Buckwell, Mark Pullin, Coby Tomlins, Derek Godfrey, Claire Hamilton, David Godfrey, Edward Sheath, Frank Klepping, Hannah Wilson, Jo Ellis, Alethea Evans, Jeremy Potter, Tina Hinson, Rebecca Smith, Julia Wallace, Simone Williams.

2. Review & agree Notes and Action Points of previous meeting

The group agreed that the notes were a fair reflection of the previous meeting.

3. Terms of Reference

Brian Horton presented an updated Terms of Reference after comments at the previous meeting. The updated version now includes garden communities and up-to-date names.

The group approved the updated Terms of Reference.

4. Local Industrial Strategy

Alex Riley gave a brief overview of the current information on the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS), noting that the deadline for publication is now expected to be pushed back to Summer 2020.

The current version of the LIS evidence base has been seen by a Whitehall Analytical Panel and was assessed as being robust.

SELEP Strategic Board saw a draft version of the LIS at the January meeting and are in favour of the current approach to the strategic opportunity of 'building new communities for the future'.

The next step will be taking an updated version of the LIS to SELEP Strategic Board in March, this will include more granular interventions and actions against the associated priorities.

Action: Alex Riley to share updated version of LIS, when available, to the group.

Richard Bayley noted that SELEP should be conscious of the current policy direction within central government regarding the 'levelling up' agenda. The South East should be pushing the message that there are places worth investing in as they benefit the Midlands and North.

5. Ashford Commercial Group

Ben Lockwood presented on Ashford Borough Council's current approach to commercial development – this presentation will be shared with the group.

The group noted that this type of approach from a local authority was positive and should be replicated. Discussions with developers have led to visible results. The relationship between the district and borough council has also been positive.

It was also noted that Ashford has marketed itself effectively as an attractive location for investment.

Nick Fenton noted that this group should also explore the opportunities related to institutional funding to get commercial development done e.g. pension funds, given the significant shortfall of supply in this area.

6. Essex County Council Housing Work

Lee Heley presented Essex County Council's current approach to housing growth. Noting that it has three primary roles; promoting housing growth, supporting independent living, coordinating function to work with district authorities on homelessness.

It was noted that there are significant garden settlements planned within Essex, particularly in the northern part of Essex.

The challenges related to infrastructure and model shift were noted. Several group members stated that there should not be undue planning restrictions e.g. charging points for every household as this technology is unlikely to be required with the pace of improvement in EV charging technology.

Harlow & Gilston currently have a HIF bid to support the route from village one to Harlow town centre and noted that investment in the South East in projects like this is critical. Brian Horton noted that David Godfrey, who is currently leading on Kent's 'Infrastructure First' proposition to government, will be invited to present at the next meeting. There is definite synergies with the Essex and Kent approaches.

Action: Brian Horton to Invite David Godfrey, who is currently leading on Kent’s ‘Infrastructure First’ proposition to government, to present at the next meeting.

7. Update: I-Construct/ FutureProof

Jemma Little updated the group on both projects:

I-Construct is due to launch in May 2020. It has overcome state aid issues and is looking to contract with MHCLG. There have also been conversations with the Lower Thames Crossing team who are looking to work on supply chains.

The FutureProof project has secured additional funding for Phase 2 of the project. This will focus on a team of consultants working up the innovative financial model and taking the product to market. The next phase will likely be launched in April. The SELEP part of the project is now complete and a report will be shared pending conversations with the SELEP Secretariat.

8. Housing Delivery Test Update

There was a short updated on the current state of play relating to the Housing Delivery Test – the presentation will be shared for reference.

It was noted that several areas currently have a ‘Presumption’ outcome and a number of areas are forecast to fall into presumption of development in 2020.

The SELEP-level assessment is currently running at 85% delivery which is equivalent to requiring an Action Plan.

It should be noted that this is just a snapshot in time and the detail behind this is important. For example, a number of areas at threat of presumption in favour of sustainable development have a lot of greenbelt land. East Sussex have been very proactive in explaining the reasons for the results and what they could do about it, working with developers to solve delivery issues.

There are potentially some interesting policies on the horizon with the new government, particularly as it related to planning, that this group should track.

9. Viability Protocol

Brian Horton noted that both Kent and Essex have Viability Protocols, but these are beginning to look out of date. Mark Curle suggested that there could be a shared approach to developing new protocols on a pan-LEP basis that would be locally owned and delivered. Nick Fenton stated the importance of getting the social housing element of this right.

It was suggested that the group could have further conversations on how they could work together on this in a common-sense way.

The group agreed with this approach.

Action: Brian Horton to coordinate further discussions on Viability Protocols.

It was also noted that the approach should include encouraging districts to meet with developers and have discussions as well as picking up learning from the Letwin Review.



10. Open forum on Developers Issues

The group were informed that the First Homes consultation (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/first-homes>) ends on the 3rd April.

Actions:

- **Share updated version of LIS, when available, to the group (Alex Riley)**
- **Coordinate further discussions on Viability Protocols (Brian Horton)**
- **The Kent Rural Housing Planning Protocol will be shared with the group when ready (Brian Horton)**
- **Ebbsfleet's Estate Management Model will be shared with the group when ready (Ian Piper)**
- **Invite David Godfrey, who is currently leading on Kent's 'Infrastructure First' proposition to government, to present at the next meeting (Brian Horton)**