

East Grinstead Transportation Advice – 2nd Stage

WSCC Officer Comments

Background

The “west and south-west of East Grinstead for 2500 homes after 2006” is one of several locations identified for development “where possible” in paragraph 24.8 of the adopted South East Plan. This proposal has been carried forward from the West Sussex Structure Plan 2001-2016 which highlighted the need for a supporting transport package including a relief road.

Since Autumn 2008 officers of West Sussex County Council (WSCC) and Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) have been working with the Advisory Team for Large Applications (ATLAS), part of the Government’s Homes & Communities Agency, to address a number of difficulties associated with the delivery of the proposed development. During this period it has become increasingly clear that the relief road is unlikely to be provided, contributing to the conclusion that a development of 2500 dwellings is no longer a practicable option.

Atkins Studies

Through the work with ATLAS we secured some consultancy support in February this year to consider options assuming that no relief road can be delivered. This work was funded by the DfT and undertaken by Atkins Limited. The consultants’ final reports were published on MSDC’s website in June 2009.

Atkins’ Stage 1 findings suggested that a reduced level of strategic development may be possible without a relief road if supported by sustainable transport measures. However this initial work highlighted a number of areas requiring clarification and further analysis to provide the evidence to support an approach within the Mid Sussex LDF. Officers of WSCC, MSDC and East Grinstead Town Council met with Atkins in late July to agree the brief for this additional work.

Atkins’ latest findings are set out in “East Grinstead Transportation Advice – 2nd Stage, Report of Tasks 1 & 2”.

MTRU Advice

Over the past few months consultants Metropolitan Transport Research Unit (MTRU) have been providing advice to East Grinstead Town Council (EGTC) to support the Council’s input to the Mid Sussex Core Strategy. Their work has included providing advice upon key studies into transport and development issues. MTRU’s latest findings are presented in their September 2009 report “New Development in East Grinstead” which takes the results of Atkins’ Stage 2 Study into account.

This note provides a context within which the above-mentioned reports should be read.

Key Findings

- a. Atkins have concluded that the TEMPRO growth rates used in Stage 1 are compatible with the latest MSDC housing predictions (Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment) for East Grinstead excluding the strategic development.
- b. Atkins considered the use of a 5% threshold of acceptable flow increases, as proposed under Stage 1 Scenario 4, to be justified for the overall network subject to review when the results of detailed modelling of the proposed A22 junction improvements become available.
- c. Atkins’ revised designs for the junction improvements do not include advisory cycle lanes, or advanced stop lines, in order to maximise capacity gains.
- d. Deliverability issues identified by Atkins include the potential need to acquire limited third party land to achieve the capacity gains upon which the 5% threshold referred to in (b) above is based.
- e. Atkins have assessed the capacity for strategic development at Imberhorne Farm assuming about 2000 dwellings (as allowed for in the TEMPRO forecasts) have been provided on other sites in East Grinstead with appropriate mitigation.

- f. On that basis Atkins consider that there is no reason to amend the conclusion from Stage 1 that around 570 dwellings and 340 jobs could be provided within a 5% traffic growth ceiling. A more detailed analysis based on modelling of the existing and proposed A22 junctions is, however, recommended to check the 5% capacity threshold and derive a more accurate figure for the scale of housing that could be accommodated at Imberhorne Farm.
- g. MTRU have assumed that the same mitigation measures would be required for the 2000 dwellings as for the 570 dwellings and that scope for mitigating the combined impact of both proposals does not exist.
- h. MTRU have therefore concluded that the planned 2000 dwellings could be satisfactorily mitigated but that any additional strategic green-field development would result in worsened highway congestion compared to the existing situation.

WSSC Officer Comments

- Atkins' conclusion that TEMPRO growth rates can now be considered suitable for calculating traffic growth in East Grinstead to 2021 that is not attributable to strategic housing development at Imberhorne Farm is accepted.
- Further consideration of Atkins' proposed improvements to the key A22 junctions, including detailed modelling and the case for cycle facilities, is needed to verify the estimated capacity gains of 5-10%.
- Atkins' proposed levels of mode shift to sustainable transport modes are considered potentially achievable for larger new developments.
- Officers continue to have real doubts, despite the evidence provided by Atkins, that mode share increases needed to deliver an overall 10% mode shift across EG are achievable. An overall mode shift of around 5% would seem to be a more realistic expectation.
- There are limits to the scope for possible mitigation eg further junction capacity increases would require significant land acquisition, more than around 5% mode shift across East Grinstead unlikely to be achievable.

Conclusions

- The evidence provided by the two reports indicates a development capacity range of 2000-2570 dwellings in East Grinstead.
- The limited scope for mitigation, based on the information currently available, indicates a development ceiling of 2000 dwellings.
- Subject to further detailed analysis including transport modelling, part of that potential allocation could be provided at Imberhorne Farm if other sites are not progressed.

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