



**WELWYN  
HATFIELD**

**Joint Examination of the  
Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan 2013-2032  
and the  
East Herts District Plan 2011-2033**

**Birchall Garden Suburb/East of Welwyn Garden**

**Examination Hearing Statements**

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**Matters and Issues**

**Matter 6 - Sustainable Location  
and Movement**

## Matter 6 – Sustainable location and movement

### Issues

- 31) **What is the rationale for the dispersed siting of residential development where some areas are remote from the urban area of Welwyn Garden City? Is this the most sustainable option in terms of access to services and facilities within the City?**

### *Response*

- a) Birchall Garden Suburb comprises two areas of residential-led mixed use development separated by a large area of informal public open space. The open space will be delivered on an area of land, which has previously been filled and has not been promoted for any form of built development.
- b) The site has been promoted as a comprehensive scheme and the proposals have been developed such that the new suburb is fully integrated. Whilst some parts of the suburb are more remote from some existing urban areas of Welwyn Garden City, the development has been planned to be sustainable. The site will deliver two new primary schools, a new secondary school (in the East Herts part of the development), a new neighbourhood centre (in the East Herts part of the development), and a small neighbourhood centre (in the Welwyn Hatfield part of the development), each in an accessible location to meet the day-to-day retail needs of new residents, together with an employment area, community facilities, including healthcare (within the East Herts part of the development) and leisure facilities. Sustainable transport measures will link the site to the centre of Welwyn Garden City and other locations, including Hertford.
- c) Policy SP19 and Policy EWEL1 require that a masterplan which will form the basis of an SPD be prepared to ensure that the site is planned comprehensively. Amongst other things, the masterplanning process will address access and movement into, around and out of the site. The masterplan will ensure that the site is appropriately connected to other urban areas of Welwyn Garden City and services and facilities elsewhere in the town.
- d) Welwyn Hatfield is subject to significant constraints on supply and land availability. Without Green Belt release, Welwyn Hatfield currently estimates a housing land supply position representing around 46% of the latest Objective Assessment of Need. The Council has fully explored opportunities to deliver new residential development within the urban area of Welwyn Garden City including high density development within or near to the town centre. Due to constraints around Welwyn Garden City there are limited options for expanding the town. In the light of these circumstances Birchall Garden Suburb is considered to present the most sustainable

option. The scale of the site and the masterplanning of it will help deliver the most sustainable possible development outcome.

- e) The sustainability of the Welwyn Hatfield part of the development has been assessed through the Sustainability Appraisal of the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan (Welwyn Hatfield ref: **SUB/3**). Significant positives for the site included “proximity to transport services”. Overall the site has four times as many significant positives as significant negatives. This was attributed significant weight in favour of the site in the Welwyn Hatfield Site Selection – Background Paper June 2016. The sustainability of the East Herts part of the development has been assessed through the Sustainability Appraisal of the East Herts District Plan (East Herts ref: SUB/004). The site scores positively for access to a bus stop. It scores negatively for access to other facilities (health, education, community, employment areas), however this will be remedied by the delivery of these within the development itself. The East Herts part of the development will deliver a new primary school and a secondary school, plus health and community facilities. In addition, a new employment area has been designated along the B195 following recent grant of planning permission for employment uses. Provision is also made for further employment opportunities at the designated employment area currently occupied by BP Mitchell, should this site become available in the future.

**32) What specific proposals are there to provide improved and segregated movement facilities to connect the distinct parts of this development and to link them to jobs, facilities and strategic transportation in Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield?**

***Response***

- a) Policy SP19 and Policy EWEL1 set out the strategy for the development of Birchall Garden Suburb. In accordance with the relevant Local/District Plan policies the development will provide sustainable transport measures including the improvement of pedestrian links, cycle paths, passenger transport and community transport initiatives. The development will contain substantial areas of formal and informal open spaces which will provide north-south and east west connections, including upgraded routes for walkers and cyclists, including the Lea Valley Path and Cole Green Way. The Birchall Garden Suburb Strategy Diagram sets out the broad framework for access and movement into, around and out of the site.
- b) Policy SP19 and Policy EWE1 require that a masterplan be prepared which, amongst other things, will address access and layout. Proposals will be developed further through the masterplanning process to ensure that the site is planned comprehensively to create a new sustainable community incorporating Garden City principles. There is an opportunity to connect the site up to existing bus routes in the area. The County Council will be engaged in this regard as part of the

masterplanning process to ensure that the development is linked to jobs and facilities in Welwyn Garden City and other local towns.

- c) Hertfordshire County Council has commenced work on a Growth and Transport Plan for South Central Hertfordshire, which will cover the urban areas of Welwyn Garden City, Hatfield, Potters Bar, Borehamwood and St Albans. This will be a spatial transport plan developed in partnership with key stakeholders looking at current and future growth and transport challenges in South Central Hertfordshire and setting out appropriate solutions including justifying packages of transport-led improvement schemes and priority actions. Connecting major new developments such as Birchall Garden Suburb with jobs and facilities will be a key focus of the Growth and Transport Plan.
  
- d) In addition, the A414 Group comprising of the County Council and relevant districts (which includes both East Herts Council and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council) is also seeking to develop an A414 Corridor Strategy. This will have regard to proposed development sites, such as Birchall Garden Suburb, and will set out a package of measures to address challenges related to proposed growth in the area including the need for improvements in sustainable transport along the corridor.