

**Examination of the Welwyn Hatfield
Local Plan**

**Council's Statement for the
Stage 3 Hearing on
20th to 22nd February 2018**

Session 11

**SP9 Place Making and High Quality
Design and SADM11-12**



SP9: Place Making and High Quality Design

55) Should the policy include a section that seeks to promote healthy and active lifestyles through good design in new development?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) The role of design in promoting active and healthy communities is implicit throughout the Local Plan. Policy SP9 Place Making and High Quality Design promotes the provision of easy to use, safe, multi-functional public spaces and legible and accessible layouts that facilitate walking and cycling. Policy SADM3 Movement encourages walking and cycling by promoting the design of appropriate routes and of secure cycle parking. Policies SP6 and SADM7 protects and promotes sports and recreational facilities in new development and Policy SP12 Green infrastructure refers to standards for open space provision. Paragraphs 11.3 and 11.4 of the supporting text reiterate the way design of places and buildings can impact on physical and mental health.
- b) In response to the Draft Local Plan Proposed Submission 2016, a representation from Sport England seeks a commitment to amend Policy SP 9 to require the design of new development to promote healthy and active lifestyles. The policy approach in the Local Plan is consistent with the emphasis in the NPPF to plan for healthy communities. However, the Council acknowledges that the role of design in promoting health is not as explicit as it could be. A minor amendment has already been proposed to paragraph 11.9 to ensure that proposals are informed by Active Design guidance. To add further clarity, a modification is proposed to add healthy and active design principles to policy SP 9 (after the safe and secure section), as follows.

'Healthy and Active

- **Public space should be multifunctional, attractive and accessible public spaces, which facilitate sport and physical activity.**
 - **The internal and external layout, use and design of buildings should promote opportunities for physical activity.'**
- c) The modification will ensure that healthy and active lifestyles are explicitly addressed in the policy, providing more clarity in the design process. Equally a modification to paragraph 11.9 detailing best practice will provide additional guidance for applicants:
- “Development proposals and the Sustainable Design Statement should be informed by **strategic guidance that could include Active Design Guidance, best practice, the Council’s Supplementary Design Guidance...**”*

56) Should the policy include a clause that requires proposed taller buildings to be assessed in the context of their impact on the area’s heritage assets?

Welwyn Hatfield response

- a) Under the sub-heading ‘Taller buildings’, Policy SP9 already outlines that proposals for taller buildings should positively respond to the impact on historic assets and landscape. Therefore, the policy ensures that taller buildings are assessed in the context of their impact on the area’s heritage assets. The council consider it important that the impact of new development on heritage is considered in line with the NPPF.

57) Should specific design visions be promoted for each of the large new neighbourhoods proposed in the plan?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) No, Policy SP9 Place Making and High Quality Design is not place specific. It sets out the strategic approach for delivering high quality design across the borough and requires that new development responds to local character and context. This approach is consistent with national policy which states design policy should avoid unnecessary prescription or detail but should promote local distinctiveness (para 59 and 60, NPPF). In the Settlement Policies section of the Local Plan, vision and objectives are outlined for Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield, which include design principles for creating high quality housing and public realm, and ensures new development relates well to existing communities. However, the Council considers that the Garden City principles outlined in paragraph 14.6 are relevant to the masterplanning of all strategic developments, so a minor modification has already been added to the end of paragraph 11.5 as follows:
- ‘Garden City principles as set out in text box accompanying paragraph 14.6 will be applied when masterplanning the strategic sites in the borough.’**
- b) All the sites will be assessed in the context of the design principles and the relevant settlement policy. More detailed design visions for each site are not included in the Local Plan because they will be taken forward through the masterplanning process. Masterplans and SPDs will be produced for each strategic site to address detail design issues and a vision for these sites. They will be developed in partnership with relevant organisations and bodies to ensure a comprehensive approach is undertaken to deliver high quality places.

SADM11: Amenity and Layout

58) Should development within Welwyn Garden City be required to reflect the symmetry, balance and streetscape of the existing built development?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) Paragraph 59 of the NPPF makes it clear that design policies should avoid unnecessary prescription, and concentrate on guiding the overall design in relation to the local area. Local character is clearly an important consideration and Policy SP9 Place Making and High Quality Design requires new development to respond to local character and context. Paragraph 11.5 of the Local Plan’s supporting text includes a ‘character and context analysis’ box which outlines the spatial context that needed to be taken into account to ensure local distinctiveness. Applicants will need to demonstrate in a Sustainable Design Statement how a proposal’s design responds to the character and context of a site.
- b) The balance, symmetry and streetscape are part of Welwyn Garden City’s local character and using this policy approach development in Welwyn Garden City will need to respond positively to this context. The local objectives for Welwyn Garden City on

p132 of the Local Plan emphasise the importance of respecting the unique heritage and design of the Garden City. Policy SP15 The Historic Environment of Welwyn Garden City requires proposals in the town to demonstrate how heritage has been conserved, protected and where possible enhanced. However, it is not justified or consistent with national policy to 'require' existing design to be replicated. Instead, the design approach in the Local Plan requires local context to be taken into account without being overly prescriptive. More detail will be provided in the Council's Supplementary Design Guidance and the masterplanning process for strategic sites.

59) Is it essential for all dwellings to be dual aspect?

Welwyn Hatfield

- a) No, the provision of dual aspect dwellings is desirable, not essential. A representation submitted to the Proposed Submission Local Plan, 2016, raised concern that dual aspect flats are not always viable on urban sites. The Council recognises that dual aspect development is not always feasible and a minor modification to Policy SADM11 has already been proposed, as follows:
- 'Dwellings are dual aspect, **wherever feasible**, to enable passive ventilation and avoid the need for mechanical ventilation, subject to any noise and air pollution mitigation.'*
- b) The proposed change, does not relate to the soundness of the Local Plan, but will provide more clarity for applicants and development management officers.

SADM 12: Parking, Servicing and Refuse

60) Does the plan adequately address the management of parking demand?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) Paragraph 39 of the NPPF states that: "*If setting local parking standards for residential and non-residential development, local planning authorities should take into account: the accessibility of the development; the type, mix and use of development; the availability of and opportunities for public transport; local car ownership levels; and an overall need to reduce the use of high emission vehicles.*"
- b) Policy SADM 12 manages parking demand. It takes account of a site's location and accessibility to public transport, services and facilities, the level of parking demand likely to be associated with a development, the opportunity for shared parking and the promotion of sustainable forms of travel. It also takes account of the Council's parking standards, which are set out in Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) 2004 (WH/2)¹.
- c) The car parking standards within the SPG are applied on a zonal basis, which allows developments in central and accessible locations to provide lower levels of parking.

¹ An Interim Car Parking and Garage Policy 2014 (WH/12) explains that the car parking standards will be treated as guidelines and not maximums

There are four urban zones – Zone 1 indicates locations with excellent accessibility by non-car modes and strong local economies, thus justifying the lowest level of provision, i.e. between 0-25% of the parking standards. Zone 2 allows for 25-50% provision, Zone 3 allows for 50-75% and Zone 4 allows for 75-100% provision. These are a starting point for each development; the ranges allowing proposals to be tailored to site-specific circumstances.

- d) Paragraph 4.4 of the SPG indicates that the Council will support “car-free” development where appropriate and where legally binding agreements are entered into. However, the parking needs of disabled motorists should be met in full irrespective of location² and consideration may necessary to the need for operational parking, e.g. to allow for servicing and deliveries.
- e) The zonal-based approach provides a starting point and allows for a degree of flexibility depending on the location and the nature of a proposal. This runs alongside other measures; e.g. the use of Green Travel Plans to identify the opportunities for promoting the use of sustainable transport measures, and developer contributions to improve accessibility by non-car modes of transport, which might include footpath, cycleway and passenger transport infrastructure improvements.
- f) Car ownership rates in Welwyn Hatfield are higher than the national (England) average. At the time of the Census 2011, 80% of all households in the borough had access to one or more car or van (74% England), and 38% of households had access to two or more cars or vans (32% England). Access to a private vehicle varies depending on the urban/rural location of households. On average, 20% of the borough’s households have no access to a car or van; but in rural locations, this is a much lower proportion of households (around 7%), with 20% of households having access to three or more cars or vans.
- g) Thus the Plan seeks to manage the reality of car ownership levels, and the demand for parking that this brings, alongside the objective of encouraging and planning for more sustainable patterns of movement. It allows for lower levels of parking provision in the most accessible locations where travel by non-car mode is a reasonable alternative, whilst ensuring the delivery of well-designed environments that meet the needs of residents and businesses.
- h) Representations consider that the policy should advocate the concept of car free development in locations with the greatest accessibility to public transport. A change is sought to the Policy to either:
- *Specify a percentage of houses to be constructed with no car ownership, say. 5%; or*
 - *A combination of electric charging points, car pools and a significant element of car-free residential development should be considered on those sites with the highest public transport accessibility.*

² Paragraph 5.1 of the SPG (WH/2)

- i) Recognising the increasing use of electric/hybrid vehicles by the wider population and businesses, modifications are proposed to bullet point iii. of Policy SADM 12 in order to better future-proof development in preparedness for this growing technology:

An appropriate level and type of vehicle charging infrastructure ~~Electric vehicle charging points will be incorporated into~~ **town centre parking areas and at for new or regenerated** ~~neighbourhood centres~~ **where the opportunity arises.** ~~and the necessary infrastructure provided for major~~ **Appropriate provision should also be made within new residential, schemes employment and leisure related development.**

- j) A minor modification is also proposed to delete the reference in paragraph 11.19 (and an associated footnote) to an English Partnerships document that was first published in 2006. English Partnerships became part of the Homes and Communities Agency in 2008 and the document referred to has been archived by the publisher, the web-link provided in the footnote no longer works and the document is no longer generally available.
- k) No further modifications are considered necessary to make the Plan sound. There is no strong basis for the 5% suggested in representation and in any event, the Policy and the SPG already allows for lower levels of parking provision to manage parking demand in the most accessible locations. The existing Car Parking SPG will need to be reviewed at a future date. Matters such as the role of car pools and the growth in alternative car technologies can be addressed further at the time of this review and in the context of the Local Transport Plan 4, which is due for adoption by Hertfordshire County Council later in 2018³.

³ LTP 4 subject to consultation at the time of writing