

Examination of the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan

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

Session 12

SP14 New Schools



SP14 New Schools

- 138) **Does the plan make adequate provision for the increased educational capacity required to service the additional school population generated by the proposed development?**

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) Extensive work has been undertaken with Hertfordshire County Council as education authority, both on the emerging Local Plan (since the 2012 Emerging Core Strategy (ECS) stage) and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP). Discussions have centred on how education provision would be made to support the various housing distribution strategies proposed in the ECS, the Local Plan Consultation (2015) and the submission Local Plan. Pages 60 to 81 Of the IDP (May 2017) give a very full and relatively up to date account of the factors involved in planning for new education capacity, and in funding such capacity. The Infrastructure Topic Paper (TPA/5) also highlights the key education capacity issues.
- b) In terms of the submission Local Plan consultation, the County Council's position on education capacity is set out in its response dated October 2016 (dlpps 1108-1110), and in a Supplementary Education Statement dated January 2017 (Appendix 3 to Infrastructure Topic Paper TPA/5). The County Council's representations from 2016/2017 include a number of concerns and objections. These relate to Policy SP14, and to the adequacy or otherwise of the plan's provision for both secondary and primary school capacity in the Hatfield area. There is also an objection to the wording of Policy SADM17 on Urban Open Land, particularly in relation to land adjoining the former Howe Dell School site, which is dealt with under Inspector's question 120.
- c) These County Council objections, concerning the education capacity needed to support the submitted Local Plan and its identified housing growth, have now been resolved through joint working between the two councils and in some cases with landowners. The issue concerning secondary education in Hatfield has been resolved through the conclusion of the Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) between the Council, the County Council and Gascoyne Cecil Estates (EX23), which provides for an 8fe secondary school site at SDS5 (Hat 1), with reserve capacity to enable up to 10fe. The issue of primary education capacity in Hatfield is being resolved through the conclusion of a SoCG between the Council, the County Council and the landowner of housing site HS11 (Hat 11), with the landowner agreeing to provide a site for a 2FE primary school within HS11 and on immediately adjoining land. A signed SoCG will be made available to the examination.
- d) With regard to the policy matters on which the County Council has previously made representations, the Policy SP14 objection is intended to be addressed by proposed modifications to the wording of the policy. These are contained in a further SoCG

between the Council and the County Council, which removes any uncertainty around the provision of new secondary and primary capacity to serve the housing growth strategy contained in the submitted Local Plan. Similarly, the Policy SADM17 objection will be addressed by a modification to that policy to provide that the needs for new education capacity will be a material consideration in assessing planning applications which are subject to the Policy SADM17. A SoCG between the Council and the County Council has been concluded to this effect. Signed copies of both these SoCGs will be made available to the examination. The County Council is also submitting its own statements to the examination hearings on the Policy SP14 and Policy SADM17 matters.

- e) it remains the case that if, as a result of the discussions at the Local Plan examination, the Council is required to allocate further significant sites for housing through proposed modifications to the Plan, then further work will need to be undertaken by the Council and the County Council together to make sure that sufficient education capacity is available in the right places to support such growth. The commitment to undertake this joint work is made clear in the SoCG between the councils relating to Policy SP14 and, it is understood, in the County Council's hearing statement relating to that policy.