

Welwyn Hatfield
Local Plan Examination
Stage 4 Hearings – Session 14 (HS2)

05/18

Statement on behalf of Gascoyne Cecil Estates

Hearing Statement



jb planning associates

Chells Manor, Chells Lane, Stevenage, Herts, SG2 7AA

e-mail info@jbplanning.com url www.jbplanning.com

tel 01438 312130 fax 01438 312131



Introduction

1. At the Stage 4 Hearings the Inspector is considering the Settlement Policies and Site Allocations in the Submitted Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan. The agenda for the Stage 4 Hearings has identified 58 questions and this Hearing Statement, submitted on behalf of Gascoyne Cecil Estates, responds to Question 16 in relation to Session 14 (HS2: Creswick).
2. Gascoyne Cecil Estates (the Estate) is a major landowner in Welwyn Hatfield, with the Estate Landholdings covering several thousand hectares and extending into Hertsmere, East Hertfordshire, and North Hertfordshire districts. The long term historic nature of this interest – built upon 400 years of stewardship - continues to influence the approach that the Estate takes when considering the most appropriate way to manage its land holdings.
3. As a key stakeholder, the Estate has a significant interest in the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan. This interest is plainly not confined to the strategic allocations that are actively promoted by the Estate at Symondshyde (SDS6 – Hat15), North West Hatfield (SDS5 – Hat1), Creswick (HS2 – WGC1) and at Marshmoor (SDS7 – WeG4b).
4. The Estate has been for many years and remains proactive in advancing the principles of the Welwyn Hatfield Green Corridor, the protection of numerous heritage assets but most notably Hatfield House, the Old Palace (former Bishop's Palace), St. Etheldreda's Church and the Registered Park and Gardens, and in facilitating the provision of new infrastructure in the form of schools, local shops and employment, community facilities and open spaces, including public access to the wider Green Belt, and improvements to sustainable public transport.
5. It is with this approach in mind that the Estate and its advisers, welcomes the opportunity to engage with the Examination process and to assist the Inspector in finding the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan sound with further Main Modifications as may be required.



Response to the Inspector's Question

Question 16 – Is the development of this amenity Green Space for housing fully justified and consistent with specific policy guidance in place to ensure that such proposals will preserve the relationship between the Garden City and the Green Belt?

6. The land the subject of draft allocation HS2 presently comprises farmland in arable production and is not designated in any Local Plan as Amenity Green Space. There is currently limited public access with one public footpath running south roughly parallel with Hollybush Lane to Ascots Lane.
7. In the submitted Regulation 19 representations **Part 1: Volume 1: Representation 15: Appendix: 1 (October 2016)**, Gascoyne Cecil Estates propose to reduce the amount of land being taken from the Green Belt. The southern boundary of the proposed HS2 allocation has been re-designed to follow the line of a proposed new road rather than the existing overhead powerlines shown within the WHBC Draft Proposals Map.
8. The submitted Concept Masterplan makes provision for extensive new areas of public open space to the south of the HS2 allocation with proposals for two formal cricket pitches and a sports pavilion. The submitted Masterplan makes provision for new ponds and other ecological habitat improvements. The proposals re-inforce the green gap between Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield the new public open space and recreational areas forming part of a strengthened Green Corridor between the two settlements.
9. The proposals for HS2 therefore represent a manageable and limited incursion into the Green Belt on visually contained land. As well as providing additional new housing within an early part of the Local Plan period, the proposals allow the creation of a positive new use in the form of public open space and recreational areas on land to the south between Hollybush Lane and Ascots Lane. Use of this land to the south of the HS2 allocation for sporting or leisure pursuits is consistent with neighbouring leisure uses at Mill Green Golf Course and Stanborough Lakes South West of Welwyn Garden City.



10. Leisure uses and activities were uses permitted and recognised within the “Salisbury Line” agreement entered into between Gascoyne Cecil Estates and the New Town Development Corporation in 1946/1947. Examination Document **EX32** provides further background to the Salisbury Line.

11. The HS2 – Creswick area south of existing dwellings presently suffers from considerable and consistent fly-tipping, dumping and illegal encroachment none of which add to the general amenity of the area or appearance of the Green Belt. The proposed Masterplan for Creswick seeks to design out “back fences” bringing land into new rear gardens thereby allowing an opportunity to prevent the above detrimental activities.

12. In summary, proposals for Creswick will offer and encourage:-
 - a) Enhanced public access – the allocation site lies in and adjacent to the Proposed Welwyn Hatfield Green Corridor.
 - b) Encouragement of a greater sense of community.
 - c) Opportunities to improve public health
 - d) Better management of the area reducing conditions which presently support anti-social practices.
 - e) Improved potential biodiversity through greatly increased areas of managed grassland, tree, hedgerow planting and aquatic habitats.