

**Examination of the Welwyn Hatfield
Local Plan**

**Council's Statement for the
Stage 4 Hearing on
Tuesday 26th June 2018**

Session 14

**SP16 Welwyn Garden City
Town Centre Strategy**



Policy SP16 – Welwyn Garden City Town Centre Strategy

- 1) **Should the policy refer to the need to improve pedestrian and cycle links between the Town Centre and the rest of the town?**
- 2) **Should the policy refer to the need to improve public transport links to the Town Centre and the development of a strategy that encourages a greater use of public transport for journeys to and from the Town Centre?**
- 3) **Should Figure 9 indicate proposed pedestrian and cycling routes into the Town Centre?**
- 4) **Does the strategy provide enough emphasis for the need to improve pedestrian and cycle accessibility to and within the Town Centre?**

(Please note that Q's 1, 2, 3 and 4 are addressed together in this response).

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) Policy SP16 sets out a strategy for the town centre and how new development can make a positive contribution to improving the town centre's viability and vitality. This includes objectives of enhancing the quality of the environment, increasing the diversity of uses in the centre and providing a broad range of services to local people, and providing opportunities for events.
- b) The fourth bullet point in the strategy is:

"Improving movement and access within the centre, giving priority to pedestrians, cyclists and public transport, whilst maintaining and optimising the management of car parking provision"
- c) This sets out the importance of improving sustainable transport, accessibility and linkages within the town centre, and the importance of these as issues is echoed in the implementation section of that chapter of the Plan (paragraph 14.20), by defining the need to work with Hertfordshire County Council to implement transport projects which will improve the accessibility of the town centre. However, the clarity of this policy could be improved by a slight amendment to make it clear that it refers to "Improving movement and access within *and to* the centre", and this is proposed as a modification.
- d) The heart of the town centre already forms the hub for public transport, with the railway station accessed from the first floor of the Howard Centre, and the town's bus station – which has recently been updated – just outside, with further bus stops immediately outside John Lewis. Thus, accessibility to public transport is integrated into the current town centre, and recently facilities have been improved further with the works to the bus station.
- e) Providing appropriate and accessible transport links in locations from which the town centre might attract visitors, employees and others is covered under Local Plan

Policy SADM3 Sustainable Transport for All, and by the emerging South Central Growth and Transport Plan.

- f) A strategy for transport as a whole, including encouraging greater use of sustainable and public transport for journeys to and from the Town Centre, and across the County as a whole is the remit of Hertfordshire County Council, and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council works closely with them in this area. For example, a trial of changes to the road layout around Howardsgate is taking place in May and June 2018. The purpose of these changes is to improve the pedestrian environment but there will also be some benefits as well.
- g) The County Council has prepared a new Local Transport Plan (LTP4) which was adopted in May 2018, and is developing a South Central Growth and Transport Plan which will focus on the southern part of the A1 corridor and identify packages and schemes which will support the aims of the LTP. This is expected to go to public consultation later in 2018. As has been detailed previously during the examination process, the Borough Council has been engaged in both of these processes and this is ongoing.
- h) Figure 9 of the Local Plan shows the Primary Pedestrian routes in the town centre. However, this figure could be improved to also show key pedestrian and cycle routes into the town centre, including the bridge across the railway line and into the Howard Centre which is due to be upgraded as part of the Broadwater Road development (sites SDS3 (Pea02B) and SDS4 (Pea02C)) and to the north, and these are proposed as modifications.
- i) Overall, with the modifications proposed, Policy SP16 properly details the need to improve pedestrian, cycle and public transport links into Welwyn Garden City town centre and improve connections with the rest of the town, as well as properly highlighting the current provision.