

**Examination of the Welwyn Hatfield
Local Plan**

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

Session 14

**SADM20
Acceptable uses outside the Welwyn Garden
City Core Retail Zone (The Campus,
Parkway and Church Road)**



Policy SADM20 – Acceptable Uses Outside Welwyn Garden City Core Retail Zone Strategy

- 10) Should land to the south of Church Road be specifically proposed for redevelopment, either as an additional site or as a substitute for parts of SADM19?**

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) Policy SADM20 identifies three areas within the town centre in Welwyn Garden City, but outside of the Core Retail Zone. Two of these areas, Parkway and Church Road, are identified as mixed use, with the third area, The Campus, identified as civic uses.
- b) These uses are a reflection of their current uses. The Campus accommodates the Council offices, Oaklands College, and Campus West, which houses a cinema and library. The Parkway site accommodates office and residential uses.
- c) The land to the south of Church Road houses a church, a public house, and a children's nursery, along with car parking provision and a house. Policy SADM20 says that the Council will allow proposals for changes of use or development for office, community, cultural and residential uses provided they meet certain criteria. This policy thus acknowledges that the current uses are appropriate and does not specifically promote redevelopment. In addition, this site has not been promoted for redevelopment by landowners and there is no evidence that it is available for retail use. The site also lies away from John Lewis, in a block described by the Retail Evolutions report (ECO/11) as "secondary" (para 3.3) so it may be less commercially attractive to retailers.
- d) One representation to the 2016 Consultation (dlpps697) suggested that the Town Centre North site would take a long time to come forward due to fragmented land ownerships, and that to bring forward development in the town more quickly, the site covered by SADM20 should be extended to include the surface level car park opposite (on the north side of Church Road) which could then be utilised more quickly for development such as restaurants and pubs.
- e) However, this car park, which offers short stay car parking, is not in the Council's control, and has not been promoted for redevelopment. As a result, there is no guarantee that it could come forward for redevelopment, or if it were to, that this would be able to be developed any more quickly than the Town Centre North site.
- f) In addition, as detailed in responses to earlier questions, the Council is confident that the Town Centre North site detailed in Policy SADM19 is deliverable within the plan period, so this site would not be required.

Policy SADM20 – Acceptable uses outside of Welwyn Garden City Core retail zone

- 11) **Should the development criteria emphasise the need to retain the existing building appearance wherever possible when building alteration/demolition is being considered within Welwyn Garden City Town Centre?**

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) The development criteria in Policy SADM 20 sets out that development in the town centre, outside the retail core, must reflect the historic character. As detailed in response to question 12, criterion ii requires proposed new development to preserve and enhance the character of the conservation area and its setting. The importance of the building appearance will be taken into account as part of this consideration. A modification has been proposed to this criterion as follows:

“Preserve **and or** enhance the character **or appearance** of the Conservation Area **and its setting** ...”

- b) The second to last paragraph of Policy SADM 20 relates specifically to the area on the western side of Parkway and on the southern side of Church Road. As outlined in paragraph 14.25 of the supporting text the mixed-use buildings provide important context for the conservation area, particularly properties on Parkway that have retained their essential domestic form and architecture. The Conservation Area Appraisal identifies these areas as containing buildings potentially worthy of statutory listing. Accordingly SADM20 restricts redevelopment at these locations unless it would enhance the character of the conservation area.

- c) Two representations to the 2016 consultation were concerned that the term was ambiguous and that it was unclear if it included building alterations. Therefore, to clarify the term ‘redevelopment’ a minor modification was proposed as follows:

“On the western side of Parkway and the south side of Church Road proposals for the redevelopment of existing buildings in these areas will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the new building **or significant alterations** would enhance the character of the conservation area.”

- d) This minor modification clarifies that the policy requirement is intended to cover both the redevelopment of an existing building as well as significant alterations.

- e) However an additional modification is proposed to provide a more comprehensive approach to cover not only redevelopment and significant alterations but the possibility of proposals for new buildings (not necessarily involving replacement) as follows:

“On the western side of Parkway and the south side of Church Road, proposals for **new or replacement buildings, and any significant alterations or extensions to the redevelopment of** existing buildings, **in these areas** will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the **new-building development proposed** would enhance the character of the conservation area.”

Policy SADM20 – Acceptable uses outside of Welwyn Garden City Core retail zone

12) Should the development criteria refer to the need to preserve and enhance the setting as well as the character and appearance of the conservation Area?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) The NPPF defines 'setting' as the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Paragraphs 128, 132 and 137 emphasise the need to conserve and enhance heritage and to consider the contribution the setting makes to the significance of an asset.
- b) Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council acknowledge that the setting of Welwyn Garden City Conservation area has a role in positively influencing the significance of the conservation area. The Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area Appraisal (HIS/1) describes the conservation area and identifies how the views into and from the conservation area contribute to the setting, particularly from Parkway to the south. In this context, development proposals in the town centre will be assessed against Local Plan Policy SADM15, which requires that proposals should respect the character, appearance and setting of any heritage asset.
- c) Given the location of these areas within the conservation area it is clearly essential that any development within them preserves or enhances the character of the area. The Conservation Area Appraisal explains how the character of the conservation area comes from the inter-relationship of the layout, the buildings and the open spaces. There are a number of significant views in the conservation area, which provide a key setting for the buildings. The site specific policy SADM 20 specifically refers to the character of the conservation area and it is important it also refers to the need to consider the wider setting.
- d) This omission was raised by Historic England in response to the Proposed Submission Local Plan consultation, so the following modification has already been proposed to Policy SADM20. The words 'or appearance' have now also been added to criterion ii. for clarity and to ensure consistency with Policy SADM15 of the Local Plan:

“Preserve **and** **or** enhance the character **or appearance** of the Conservation Area **and its setting**”