

# **Examination of the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan**

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

**Session 14**

**SP17 Broadwater Road West**



## Policy SP17 – Broadwater Road West

### Mixed use development site at Broadwater Road West (SDS3/Pea02b and SDS4/Pea02c)

- 21) **Should the development principles include the provision of footpath and cycleway links within the development and connecting it to the Town Centre and the wider sustainable movement network?**

#### **Welwyn Hatfield Response**

- a) Policy SP17 as drafted states that one of the principles (ii) of the site's development will be *"To establish strong connections between the east side of town, the site and through to the town centre."* The Strategy Diagram at Figure 10 of the Plan indicates key pedestrian and cycle routes through the site and the important role of the railway footbridge in providing a direct link to the town centre.
- b) The Broadwater Road West Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) adopted by WHBC in December 2008 (WH/6), contains guidance (pp 61-62) on the provision of pedestrian and cycle links, both within the development site and linking to the wider sustainable movement network. Principle (v) of Policy SP17 requires the development of the site to adopt the urban design principles set out in the Broadwater Road West SPD. The SPD has been a material consideration in both the existing grant of planning permission for mixed use development on the site (WHBC ref: N6/2015/0294/PP) and in the ongoing assessment of the current planning application (WHBC ref: 6/2018/0171/MAJ).
- c) If strengthening of the policy approach is required, then a modification could be made to principle (ii) of Policy SP17, so that it reads as follows:

*"To establish strong connections between the east side of town, the site and through to the town centre, **by the provision of footpath and cycleway links.**"*

## Policy SP17 – Broadwater Road West

### Mixed use development site at Broadwater Road West (SDS3/Pea02b and SDS4/Pea02c)

- 22) **Given the surplus of jobs in Welwyn Hatfield above the number of indigenous economically active people and the shortage of available land for housing, is it appropriate to encourage redevelopment for employment purposes or the retention / relocation of employment infrastructure on the site?**

#### Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) Policy SP17 allocates the site at Broadwater Road West for mixed use development including 1,020 homes. The policy reflects and carries forward the adopted Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (**WH/6**) for the site, so should be read in conjunction with that.
- b) The SPD was adopted in December 2008. Following a detailed analysis of the site, its heritage, policy framework etc. the SPD sets out a Masterplan Framework (para 5.1 onwards). This sets out how the site can be redeveloped whilst adhering to Garden City principles, and sets out a series of key elements and an indicative site layout.
- c) The SPD notes that “the Broadwater Road West site was originally earmarked for industry, and some of the first major employers in the town were located on this site”, but acknowledges that in the eighty years since, there have been significant changes in the town and as a result the role of the site has now changed (para 5.5). Nonetheless, the presence of the Biopark to the south of the site gives an opportunity to locate employment uses on the site (para 5.14) and enhance the knowledge economy of Welwyn Garden City (para 5.36). In addition, the close proximity of the railway station makes this a highly accessible location which is likely to be attractive to employment uses and consequently the identification of an employment hub next to the station is set out in the SPD as one of the key land use elements. This is echoed in the Local Plan, with para 14.28 stating that “The provision of employment here is an important component of the plan’s strategy to provide employment in highly accessible locations”.
- d) As has been discussed in earlier sessions of this examination, Welwyn Hatfield has more jobs in the borough than economically active residents. This is also referred to as having a positive jobs density or having a net inflow or surplus of jobs. However, as has also been discussed, this positive jobs density is relatively modest, ranging from 1.01 to 1.11 in recent years (i.e. a net surplus of between 1% and 11%). In addition, and also as discussed previously, this small surplus helps improve the sustainability of Hertfordshire more generally since in the county only Welwyn Hatfield and Watford experience such a surplus, with all of the other boroughs and districts – and the County overall - experiencing net out commuting. As has also been discussed previously, a neutral jobs density (i.e. a figure of 1.0) would not mean

that commuting did not take place, merely that in- and out-commuting flows cancelled one another out.

- e) Despite this historic positive jobs density, and again as discussed at earlier sessions of this examination, the borough has seen significant losses of employment floorspace in recent years. In the plan period to date (to 31 March 2018) there have been net losses of 27,440sqm. Much of this has been due to the permitted development conversion of B1a office space to C3 residential uses which the Council is currently unable to control. Losses on this scale threaten the ability to deliver the overall strategy in the Local Plan, and if unchecked could potentially threaten to turn the small positive jobs density to a negative jobs density, where the borough would see net out commuting.
- f) Monitoring for the 2017-18 year has shown another net loss of employment floorspace. The year saw gains of 3,445sqm and losses of 21,253sqm, giving a net loss of 17,808sqm, and an overall net loss of 27,440sqm in the plan period to date. However, one key part of this loss comes from the planned release of this site, as in the 2017-18 year planning permission for redevelopment had been granted and demolition began, so 14,227sqm of the loss is taken up by this site.
- g) As a result of these continuing losses and the implications, it is appropriate for the Broadwater Road site to include some provision for employment uses within its comprehensive redevelopment. Paragraph 5.10 the SPD takes on board the evidence of the Central Hertfordshire Employment Land Review of 2006 (**ECO/1**) – which was current at that time - to determine that 19,000sqm of employment floorspace is an appropriate level for the site. This is a relatively small part of the overall site and has been carried forward into the Local Plan policy with point (vii) of the policy saying that “at least 17,650 square metres of Class B1 employment floorspace will be provided in addition to that which was already provided on the site as at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016. Within this total, site SDS3 should provide a minimum of 6,400 square metres of Class B1 employment floorspace”. This 17,650sqm figure is different to the 19,000sqm detailed in the SPD due to a 1,357sqm extension to the Biopark in the south of the site (planning application reference N6/2010/0263/MA).
- h) The employment provision within the SPD has been interpreted by the current planning application for the site (06/2018/0171/MAJ) which proposes 6,328sqm of B1 floorspace, and by the existing planning permission (2015/0294/PP) which proposed 6,370sqm of B1 floorspace, along with a range of other employment generating uses such as health, community uses, a crèche / day nursery and retail. The current application is expected to go to Development Management Committee later in 2018.
- i) The remainder of the 17,650sqm detailed in the policy is land adjoining the railway line currently in B8 use, which it is expected will come forward for B1 development within the plan period.