

# **Examination of the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan 2013-32**

## **Inspector's Preliminary Questions**

Having now read the Local Plan (LP) and much of the supporting information that relates to site allocations, the Inspector is beginning to formulate the issues that may need to be discussed at the Hearing sessions and is coming to preliminary conclusions as to the Policies that relate to Settlement Policies and Site Allocations that it may not be easy to find sound in their current form. To assist the process, he has now asked me to write to you about some of the Settlement Policies and Site Allocations that you have put forward and he has set out some questions that arise from a reading of the representations thereon. He would value your brief comments on these. Please note that the Inspector does not propose to examine proposals that are clearly likely to be affected by the outcomes of the additional Green Belt work that he has requested to be undertaken.

### **Matter 6 – Settlement Policies**

#### **Issues**

In the context of the plan's overall vision and strategy are the Settlement Policies and related site allocations positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national planning policy and therefore a sound basis for the location of development within the Borough during the plan period?

#### **Welwyn Garden City**

##### **SP 16 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?

##### **SADM 19 Town Centre North Development Site**

5. What evidence is there to suggest that this proposal is truly deliverable within the plan period?
6. What mechanisms are in place to ensure its timely delivery?
7. Should the proposal be promoting the provision of car parking within the site?  
Is this a sustainable outcome?

8. Should the design criteria refer to the need to preserve and enhance the setting as well as the character and appearance of the Conservation Area?
9. Is the extent of the proposed loss of the existing public open space within this development site fully justified and consistent with other Policies of the Plan, in particular SP 11 and SADM 17?

### **SADM 20 Acceptable uses outside of Welwyn Garden City Core Retail Zone**

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 SADM 19?
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?
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?

### **SADM 21 Housing allocations in Welwyn Garden City**

13. Are the proposed dwelling capacities for the individual "other key housing sites" appropriate in their context within Welwyn Garden City?
14. If not what is the justification for the departure(s)?

### **HS1 Land at Bericot Way and Waterbeach**

15. Is the suggested density for the development of this site consistent with the Garden City principles?

### **HS2 Creswick**

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.

### **HS6 Land at Gosling Sports Park**

17. In an era of increasing leisure time and sports participation how can the loss of sports facilities at this location be seen to be in accordance with National Policy at Section 8 of the National Planning Policy F?
18. In the absence of any assessment for community requirements for dry skiing and golf driving within the evidence base, how is the loss of these sports/recreation facilities justified?
19. What complementary proposals are in place to relocate the lost facilities, for which there is a community need, elsewhere?

## **HS7 Land at Waterside**

20. Is the proposed development of this amenity green space for housing consistent with Policies SP 11, SP12 and SADM 17.

## **SP 17 Broadwater Road West**

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?
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.

## **SP 18 North East of Welwyn Garden City**

The discussion at the Topic Specific Policies session suggested that the owners of much of this site would not support the reopening of Panshanger Airfield. The promoters of the facility said that the non-Green Belt land that is not now allocated for residential development had insufficient space to safely establish and operate a runway to be used by light aircraft.

The revised Full Objectively Assessed Housing need calculated for the Borough suggests that the currently proposed housing development proposals fall far short of meeting that target. Some currently proposed housing sites may be found unsound and others upon examination may not provide the envisaged numbers of dwellings.

In such circumstances it is important that every opportunity to increase the plan's ability to deliver housing is explored.

Would you reassess the extent and capacity of this site with a view to maximising the potential housing numbers that could be achieved through

- a) The site's extension to the north.
- b) A detailed review of the Green Belt boundary in this area.
- c) Investigation of the feasibility of locating some non-housing uses, particularly open uses in the adjacent parts of East Hertfordshire.

23. Has early and meaningful engagement and collaboration been undertaken with the local community, as required by paragraph 155 of the NPPF?
24. Is the proposed Green Belt boundary to the north of this site one that is readily identifiable and capable of enduring permanently and consequently is in accordance with paragraph 83 of the NPPF?
25. Will there be adequate capacity in the offsite drainage network and treatment capacity to support this development in addition to other development proposals that would use the same systems?

26. Should the Masterplan make provision for a segregated primary footpath and cycle network that links into such routes that provide access to other parts of the City?
27. Has a comprehensive survey of the site's wildlife been carried out, identifying the presence of any protected species?
28. If so have any protected species been identified and in that case what mitigation is put forward to ensure their continual survival and protection?
29. Should the Master Plan make provision for the development of health facilities to serve the new local community?
30. Should the Master Plan require the provision of a small neighborhood centre at which such facilities, along with other provision for the new community, could be located?
31. What is the evidence base justifying a gypsy and travelers site in this area in addition to one within Birchall Garden Suburb? How robust is it?
32. Is a gypsy and traveller site in this location supported by the Gypsy and traveller community?
33. To what extent does this proposal have ramifications for highway safety and the free flow of traffic on the wider highway network? What mitigation measures have been put forward to ensure that this development does not undermine these principles?
34. Does the policy effectively deliver the requirement of paragraph 143 of the NPPF to encourage the prior extraction of minerals?
35. Should the land at City Park employment area be defined as open land?

## **Hatfield**

### **SP 20 Town Centre Strategy**

36. Should the policy refer to the need to improve pedestrian and cycle links between the Town Centre and the rest of the Town?
37. 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?
38. Does the Policy adequately promote improvements to the connectivity of the Town Centre with the rest of Hatfield?
39. Should Figure 13 indicate proposed pedestrian and cycling routes into the Town Centre?

40. Does the strategy provide enough emphasis for the need to improve pedestrian and cycle accessibility within the Town Centre?

### **SADM 26 New Dwellings in Hatfield**

#### **HS9 Land at Howe Dell**

41. Is the permanent loss of these playing fields justified and in accordance with local and national policy that seeks to promote and maintain areas of open space?
42. Has a robust analysis of the value and use placed upon this site by the local community and justifying its release for residential development been undertaken? If so what are the results?

#### **HS11 South Way**

43. Has the removal of this site from the Green Belt been effectively assessed? If not then its importance to the purposes of the green Belt and the effectiveness of South Way as an edge to the Green Belt should be a consideration of the Green Belt Review.

NB HS11 appears to be in North Myms rather than Hatfield. Given the Green Belt issues concerning this site, I will defer discussion until there is a clearer understanding of the way forward on the open breaks between the Boroughs urban centres. HS11 will consequently be discussed in the context of other proposals in Welham Green.

### **SP 22 North West Hatfield**

44. Should the Master planning proposals, when developing measures to secure the improvement of pedestrian links and cycle paths, provide for a new segregated crossing over the A1M with links to other parts of Hatfield, including its Town Centre?
45. Should the Masterplan make provision for a segregated primary footpath and cycle network within the site that links into such routes that provide access to and from other parts of the town?
46. Will there be adequate capacity in the offsite drainage network and treatment capacity to support this development, in addition to that required to support other development proposals that would use the same systems?
47. Has a comprehensive survey of the site's wildlife been carried out, identifying the presence of any protected species?
48. If so have any protected species been identified and in that case what mitigation is put forward to ensure their continual survival and protection?
49. Does the northerly extent of this site provide for a sufficiently wide green area that is free from development between Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City?
50. To what extent does this proposal in combination with other development proposals in the area have ramifications for highway safety and the free flow

of traffic on the wider highway network? What mitigation measures have been put forward to ensure that this development does not undermine these principles?

51. Is a gypsy and traveller site in this location supported by the Gypsy and traveller community?
52. What exceptional circumstances exist for providing travellers' pitches in a prominent location within Green Belt on the north-western side of Coopers Green Lane?
53. Should the Master planning criteria require the protection and enhancement of the setting of the listed building (Old Cottage) within the site?
54. Does the policy effectively deliver the requirement of paragraph 143 of the NPPF to encourage the prior extraction of minerals?

### **SP 26 Neighbourhood Planning**

55. Are any Neighbourhood Plans specifically proposed?
56. Are any Neighbourhood Plans likely to be proposed?
57. Does the plan clearly indicate what action would be taken by the Borough Council to support local communities in the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans?
58. Should the Local Plan specifically require Neighbourhood Plans to have regard to specific information on the local need for new homes and jobs in their areas?

6 May 2018