



REPRESENTOR ID: 845636 & 904332

EXAMINATION OF THE WELWYN HATFIELD LOCAL PLAN

**STATEMENT OF HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL (HCC)
GROWTH & INFRASTRUCTURE UNIT**

ON BEHALF OF HCC (excluding HCC Property)

**IN RELATION TO MATTERS AND ISSUES RELATING TO POLICY SADM 27
NORTHERN SETTLEMENTS**

APRIL 2020

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This statement is in response to the questions that have been raised by the Inspector under the Matters and Issues in relation to Policy SADM 27 relating to Northern Settlements to be heard at a future date in 2020 yet to be decided.
- 1.2 Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) has sought to address the specific questions that are of relevance to the topic areas covered in the county council's representations to the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan Proposed Submission Document 2016.
- 1.3 This statement follows the format of the questions that are listed under the Matter and Issues Examination Document EX185A.

Questions

2.0 Woolmer Green

Policy SADM 27, Site HS 15 (WGr1), Land east of London Road

Matter 1 – Historic Heritage

Q8 Has the impact of development on the setting of the heritage asset been given adequate consideration?

- 2.1 HCC does not have any specific comments regarding the Listed Building, however recommend that an archaeological evaluation is carried out prior to an planning application being submitted, with any development proposal taking into account the archaeological evaluation which could include the setting of any historic buildings.

Matter 2 – Environmental Considerations

Water

Q9 How would the surface water at this site be managed?

- 2.2 Hertfordshire County Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) notes that there are two surface water low routes converging on the southern boundary of this site, one of which comes from the east. The LLFA considers that the need for management of surface water at this site would be dependent on the details of any specific proposal and as such would be considered in detail at planning application stage should the site be brought forward for development.

Q11 Are there any on or off-site ramifications for flood risk that would result from the implementation of the proposed development?

- 2.3 HCC is unclear at this stage whether there would be any ramifications for flood risk. Whilst there are no historical reports of flood risk, there has been significant flooding in the vicinity, and as a result the modelled flood risk needs to be reviewed to be able to be clearer on this matter.

Q12 Would the site's development require a balancing pond?

- 2.4 HCC cannot be certain at this stage whether or not a balancing pond would be required at this site, if it were to be brought forward for development. There may be the potential for this to be required, but that is dependent on the details of the site proposals and specific layout.

Q13 If so how extensive would this be and where would it be located?

- 2.5 HCC is not in a position to be able to determine how extensive this may need to be and where it should be located as further work would be required to calculate the size and determine the location.

Q14 How would foul drainage be dealt with?

- 2.6 This aspect is outside of the LLFA's remit. The advice is that Thames Water and the developer would need to determine these aspects of water management as part of any development on the site.

- Q15 Are there any foul drainage constraints that would impede the implementation of any development? 2.7 This aspect is outside of the LLFA's remit. The advice is that Thames Water and the developer would need to determine these aspects of water management as part of any development on the site.

Matter 3 - Infrastructure

Q16 Has the proposal's impact on local infrastructure been effectively considered?

- 2.8 HCC as Highway Authority has not received any specific information on the predicted impacts of the development from the site promoters, however the development has been included in HCC's latest County wide model run (COMET LPR5) as a site for 150 dwellings. Given the strategic nature of the model it is not possible to isolate the impacts of this particular development. A development of this type however could be expected to add around 90 additional vehicle trips to the network in each of the AM and PM peak hours.
- 2.9 The COMET LPR5 model run assumes that the proposed capacity improvements on the A1(M) (all lane running between junctions 6-8 which increases capacity to 3 lanes in each direction) will be implemented prior to the completion of the development which is expected to result in a reduction in traffic on parallel routes such as the B197 through Woolmer Green.

- 2.10 As a result the modelling work indicates that the B197 would continue to operate within capacity in the Woolmer Green area, although the New Road approach to the B197 is predicted to be over capacity along with the approaches to the Clock Roundabout to the south where the B197 joins the A1(M) at junction 6.
- 2.11 The modelling work indicates that traffic from the development is likely to primarily travel north towards Stevenage, south towards Hatfield and the business parks and east towards Hertford and Ware.

Q17 Would the cumulative impact of the traffic generated by the development have an unacceptable impact on highway safety without mitigation?

- 2.12 The Highway Authority considers that the additional traffic would primarily travel north and south along the B197. This corridor has been identified as a Sustainable Transport Corridor in the emerging North Central Growth and Transport Plan and a scheme has been identified to develop a Stevenage to Welwyn Garden City cycle route along this route. Additional development traffic would potentially impact these proposals and the development should consider measures to provide safe cycle and pedestrian access from the site to this corridor to encourage sustainable trips rather than car travel.

Q18 Would the cumulative impact of the traffic generated by the development have a severe impact on the road network without mitigation?

- 2.13 It is considered that within Woolmer Green the additional traffic could be accommodated within the capacity of the B197 corridor although there is expected to be impacts on the wider road network.

Q19 If so what would this mitigation involve and is the site's overall viability sufficient to be able to financially support any necessary highway improvements?

- 2.14 HCC would expect the development to provide contributions towards the B197 sustainable transport corridor improvements. Of particular relevance is the need for this development to contribute towards the improvements between Woolmer Green and Knebworth facilities and facilitate the delivery of the sustainable transport connections between the development and the sustainable transport corridor. Local Plan policy should make reference to this.

Q20 Is there sufficient capacity within local schools to provide places for the children likely to be generated by the development?

- 2.15 HCC as the Education Authority has assessed the primary and secondary school provision needs arising from the number of dwellings in this proposed new development.

Primary education

- 2.16 HCC considers there to be a close match between the demand for school places and the actual number of places available at the primary school within the northern settlements. The nearest primary school to this proposed development (St Michael's Woolmer Green School) has had capacity in some of the school year groups to accommodate additional children. However, the county council is not confident that there would be sufficient capacity at primary school level to accommodate this particular WGr1 development.

Secondary education

- 2.17 Due to the level of housing proposed across the area, it is not expected that there would be sufficient secondary education capacity to accommodate this development without additional secondary education capacity being provided.

Q21 *If not, what extra capacity is required and where would it be located?*

- 2.18 With regard to primary school capacity, there is the potential to expand Welwyn St Mary's Primary School by 1 Form of Entry to meet the demand arising from this development and others in the vicinity.
- 2.19 In terms of additional secondary school capacity that would be required, there is the potential to expand Monks Walk Secondary School from 8 Forms of Entry (226 pupils) to 9 Forms of Entry (256 pupils).

Matter 5 – Sustainability

Q27 *Is Woolmer Green a sustainable location for development?*

- 2.20 Woolmer Green is located on the B197 corridor approximately 1 mile from the small settlement of Knebworth and 4.6 miles from the nearest large urban centres of Welwyn Garden City and Stevenage.
- 2.21 Currently, Woolmer Green as a small-sized settlement, has a limited number of services (one doctors clinic and one primary school) necessitating travel to Knebworth to access the nearest train station, services (including a pharmacy, dentist and barbers) and retail (including a small supermarket, convenience store, restaurants/takeaways) as well as an additional primary school and early childcare.
- 2.22 The Highway Authority uses network buffers as a way of assessing whether everyday services, including access to a train station are within walking and cycling distance to the proposed site. These are set at 0.5 mile (800 metres) for walking and 1.5 miles (2500 metres) for cycling (these are considered to

be roughly the average acceptable distance travelled over 10 minutes to access everyday activities).

- 2.23 The distance to the nearest train station (Knebworth Train Station) from the site is measured as being 1.1 miles from the northern-most access point (measured from the London Rd (B197)/Bridge Rd junction) and 1.4 miles from the southern-most access point (measured from the London Rd (B197)/Mardleybury Rd junction). This means that walking to and from the proposed site to access Knebworth train station is not feasible, however cycling is considered to be a feasible option in terms of distance.
- 2.24 The distance to Knebworth town centre (using the Co-op supermarket as the central focal point for the town's services) from the site is measured as being 0.9 miles from the northern-most access point and 1.2 miles from the southern-most access point of the site. This means that access on foot from the development site to everyday services is not a feasible option, but cycling is considered to be a feasible option.
- 2.25 Woolmer Green is well-served by buses with hourly services operating (Monday - Saturday, (5.30am – 23.24pm) from Woolmer Green inbound and outbound to Stevenage, Knebworth, Welwyn Garden City, Hatfield and St Albans; and one AM service and six PM inbound/outbound services operating on a Sunday. There are existing inbound and outbound bus stops located within 400m (an acceptable network buffer) of both the southern-most end (Oak Rd) and northern-most end (B197 (London Rd)/Bridge Rd) of the proposed site.
- 2.26 Data sourced from the Office for National Statistics shows that the usual (mean) home to work travel time for residents in the Welwyn-Hatfield borough (2017) is 30 minutes. This measurement can be used to assess the acceptable travel time by bus from the proposed site to access both everyday services and education in Knebworth as well as services, education and employments areas in the larger urban centres.
- 2.27 Intalink (the bus travel information in Hertfordshire system) timetables show that the scheduled journey times to/from Woolmer Green to Knebworth (3 – 4 minutes), Stevenage Bus Station (13 minutes) and Welwyn Garden City Rail Station (23 minutes) are acceptable. Scheduled bus journey times to/from Woolmer Green to Hatfield (52 minutes) are not acceptable.
- 2.28 This information shows that the proposed site is well-located to enable travel by bus to a larger retail offering (including large supermarkets), schools (including secondary schools) and other health care providers (including two hospitals) located in Welwyn Garden City and Stevenage.

- 2.29 It is observed that the B197 corridor currently attracts high volumes of rat-running traffic avoiding the queues on the A1(M) during peak hours. This combined with discontinuous, narrow and poorly maintained footways, lack of priority crossings and no segregated facilities for cyclists creates an unattractive environment for people wanting to use this corridor to access everyday services on foot or by cycle.
- 2.30 With regard to potential transport network improvements, the South Central Hertfordshire Growth and Transport Plan (GTP) has identified the need to improve connections between towns and facilitate development on the Welwyn Garden City to Stevenage and Hitchin corridor through the formation of a sustainable transport corridor along the B197 (Package 17, Scheme 98 of the GTP).
- 2.31 Scheme 98 interventions will aim to discourage the use of the B197 for longer distance inter-urban travel through the use of signage, reduction in permitted traffic speed and traffic calming as well as physical changes to the road layout to incorporate better provision for pedestrians and cyclists. These interventions, along with the planned A1(M) Smart Motorways scheme aim to reduce the occurrence of rat-running traffic through towns (including Woolmer Green) and provide improved access by sustainable modes to every-day activities in Woolmer Green, Knebworth and further afield in Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City. As a result of this intervention, it is considered that such an area as this could have its transport network improved.

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