

Examination of the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan 2013-32

Reg 19 (Submitted Sites)

Northern Settlements

Policy SADM 27 Site HS 15

Land East of London Road, Woolmer Green

Gladman and the Landowners of Site HS 15

Matter 1 – Historic Heritage



April 2020

Q1. To what extent has the proposal had regard to the available heritage evidence?**Q2. To what extent does the Site impinge upon the setting of the Listed Building?**

- 1.1 The historic constraints of Woolmer Green and the proposed allocation HS 15 have been considered through the Council's site selection process. The Sustainability Appraisal (Exam doc SA/06) confirms that for most nearby heritage assets, the development of Site HS 15 is likely to have none or negligible effects. Significant negative effects are however identified as possible for Payne Farmhouse with mitigation recommended by the Sustainability Appraisal to reduce this effect.
- 1.2 The Site Selection Paper (Exam Doc HOU/20a) identifies Paynes Farmhouse as a potential constraint to developing the Site, however, considers this can be overcome with mitigation measures in line with Policy SADM15 of the Local Plan. Mitigation is secured as a site consideration through Policy SADM27, in the form a landscape buffer between the proposed development area and the heritage asset; the scale and extent of which will be agreed with the Council through the planning application process. The Policy also requires the submission of a Heritage Impact Assessment to allow for the heritage asset and the effect of developing HS 15 to be considered in detail.
- 1.3 It is noted that in their role as statutory consultee, Historic England do not object to the proposed allocation of Site HS 15. In their representations to the Reg 19 version of the Plan, Historic England make comment that it should be possible to develop HS 15 without causing unacceptable harm on Payne Farmhouse. Historic England welcomes the mitigation provided through Policy SADM27.

Table 11 says that a landscape buffer is to be established to the east of the Site to protect the setting of the adjacent listed building.

Q3. In the context of the Site boundaries on the proposals map, where is this buffer to be?**Q4. How wide is this buffer expected to be?**

- 2.1 The buffer will be located along the eastern boundary of the Site within the allocated site boundary. An illustrative masterplan submitted as part of the landowner's representations to the Reg 19 Plan provides an early indication of the extent of this buffer. The scale and nature of this boundary shall be determined through the planning application process in consultation with officers, statutory consultees, and the community. It is intended during the course of the examination to provide the Inspector with visualisations as to what this buffer might look like.

The opportunity to do this in the context of the current hearing statements has however not been possible owing to restrictions connected to COVID-19.

Q5. In this context would the development be harmful to the setting of the Heritage Asset?

Q6. If not, why not?

3.1 The effects of the proposed development upon the setting and significance of the Heritage Asset will be subject to detailed assessment through the planning application process. The buffer is intended to soften the developed edge of Woolmer Green, reducing its visibility from the wider countryside and enhancing the containment of the settlement in this location. The buffer to be provided through the development of HS 15 is intended to complement and be read in the context of the current vegetation which surrounds the farmhouse, and as such, at this stage, it is not anticipated that this will be harmful to its setting.

Q7. Would any harm be substantial and if not, what weight should be given to it?

4.1 It is anticipated that the development and its associated landscape buffer would result in less than substantial harm to the heritage asset, with this harm to be weighed in the planning balance against the economic and social benefits of developing the Site for housing, the significant housing needs of the District and settlement, the visual benefits provided by the development in providing a new defined and contained boundary to Woolmer Green, and net gains to biodiversity provided by the development's landscaped buffers.

4.2 It is noted that this balance has been undertaken by the Council through both the Sustainability Appraisal (SA/06) and the Site Selection Paper (HOU-20a) with the conclusion favouring the allocation of the Site for housing.

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

5.1 It is considered that there has been ample consideration of the impact of the development on the setting and significance of Payne Farmhouse. This process has translated into policy requirements for a landscape buffer between the development and the heritage asset to be agreed through the planning application process, and submission of a Heritage Impact Assessment. Moreover, Historic England, statutory consultee for heritage assets, do not object to the allocation of HS 15, and is satisfied that proposed policy requirements outlined in Policy SADM 27 provide sufficient protection and consideration of Payne Farmhouse through the planning application stage.