

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 HS 15**

Matter 3 – Infrastructure



**April 2020**

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

- 1.1 The Infrastructure Topic Paper (Examination document reference TPA/05) gives a thorough account of the process and engagement that the Council has undertaken in preparing the Local Plan. This process and engagement with statutory consultees and providers, including Hertfordshire County Council and Highways England, has informed the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan (Examination document reference INF/20) which sets out the necessary infrastructure required to support the sustainable delivery of the growth requirements of the Local Plan to be delivered through planning obligations/CIL. In addition, site specific policies of the Local Plan include requirements for specific infrastructure found necessary to secure the delivery of that particular site, with Policy SP13 of the Submission Local Plan geared to ensure that infrastructure requirements at the time of any planning application are fully considered.
- 1.2 The Council's process undertaken through its plan preparation has not revealed any showstoppers which would prevent or severely delay the development of Site HS 15. The Local Plan includes the necessary provisions to ensure that specific infrastructure needs to the development site are addressed effectively at the planning application stage, where statutory consultees and providers will again be engaged to understand the latest provision in relation to infrastructure capacity and suitable contributions sought if required.

**Q17. Would the cumulative impact of the traffic generated by the development have an unacceptable impact on highway safety without mitigation?****Q18. Would the cumulative impact of the traffic generated by the development have a severe impact on the road network without mitigation?****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?**

- 2.1 The Infrastructure Topic Paper (TP/05) confirms that in preparing the Local Plan the Council has undertaken traffic modelling of planned growth which has been agreed with Hertfordshire County Council. This modelling has informed the infrastructure requirements of the Local Plan as set out in site specific policy and as confirmed through the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (INF/20).
- 2.2 The landowners of HS 15 submitted a Traffic and Transport Appraisal by Bancroft Consulting as part of their representations to the Reg 19 version of the Local Plan. The Traffic and Transport Appraisal confirms that vehicle and pedestrian access can be taken into the Site from London Road both safely and sufficiently to support the proposed development. It also confirms that London Road does not have a dangerous safety record.

- 2.3 The Traffic and Transport Appraisal seeks to assess what impact the proposed development would have on the local highway network. Assessing the predicted trip rates associated with 150 dwellings, a café/shop, and small business unit. This initial assessment shows that the effect of the proposed development alone and cumulatively on the wider highway network would not be severe ensuring compliance with the requirements of the NPPF.
- 2.4 As summarised in our Matter 5 (Sustainability) Hearing Statement. Locational factors unique to HS 15 should help limit the number of trips made to and from the Site by car and ensures future residents will not be car dependent. The includes excellent pedestrian and cycling connectivity to services and facilities located in both Woolmer Green and Knebworth, and the Site's accessibility to quality public transport links provided by the 300/301 bus service and the rail services from Knebworth Railway station.
- 2.5 The planning application for the Site's development will be determined in accordance with Policy SADM 02 of the Submission Local Plan which relates to highway capacity and safety. A Transport Assessment will be submitted as part of the planning application process which will consider in detail the highway impacts of the proposed development taking into account cumulative effects. The TA will be produced in consultation with Hertfordshire County Council who will also have the opportunity to examine and comment on the TA during the application process. Should it be confirmed through this process that mitigation within the local highway network is necessary through the development, then off-site mitigation will be agreed and secured.
- 2.6 Gladman considers that the Submission Local Plan provides the necessary safeguards to ensure that the proposed development does not result in severe impacts on the operation of the highway network or result in adverse effects in highway safety. Sufficient work has been undertaken to date by the Council to understand strategic level impacts.

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

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

- 3.1 School capacity and the implications of the Local Plan as submitted is summarised through the Infrastructure Topic Paper (TP/05). HS 15 is confirmed to be located within Hertfordshire County Council's Welwyn Primary Planning Area. Dialog with the County Council shows that it is expected that cumulative growth in this Local Plan will result in the need for an additional 0.8FE, with the proposed development at HS 15 generating 0.3FE of this need (as confirmed in INF/20).

- 3.2 It is confirmed by the County Council both through HOU/20 and their representations to the Reg 19 Plan that there is considered to be sufficient capacity to accommodate planned growth within the Welwyn Primary Planning Area. The capacity identified exists in neighbouring settlement to Woolmer Green meaning that residents may need to travel a short distance to access sources of primary education in the short term (see next paragraph). Importantly the County Council has not stated their objection to this position. Should this position change, the County Council has confirmed that there is opportunity for a 1FE expansion at Welwyn St Mary's VA C of E Primary School.
- 3.3 Information gained from Hertfordshire County Council by the landowners of HS 15 and submitted through their Reg 19 representations, confirms that 22% of pupils at Woolmer Green's Primary School originate from outside of the Primary Planning Area. As such, it is likely that any travel made to access primary education to locations outside Woolmer Green by future residents will be only a temporary measure until places are reorganised in time. In the longer term it is expected that residents of HS 15 will attend Primary School in Woolmer Green and the potential need to travel for primary school provision will be short term.

**Q22. Is there sufficient capacity within local health services to meet the primary health care needs of the persons who would reside in the development?**

**Q23. If not, what extra capacity is required and where would it be located?**

- 4.1 The nearest GP surgery to the Site is located in Knebworth, accessible by foot, bicycle and bus from the Site. The GP Surgery has been subject to recent development with North Hertfordshire Council having approved the development for a new combined surgery and library (Planning Application Reference 16/01369/1). This project is now complete providing a larger, modern facility, which is marginally closer to the Site than the previous surgery. The landowners of HS 15 have contacted the Practice Manager whom has confirmed that the capacity of the new facility is designed to be able to cater for expanded populations for Knebworth and Woolmer Green.
- 4.2 The planning application to develop the Site will be subject to the requirements of Policy SP13 of the Submission Plan, and the local CCG, as statutory consultee, will have the opportunity to make comment on the proposed development. This gives rise the opportunity to further address healthcare needs, with the potential for financial contributions subject to this request meeting Planning Obligation tests.

**Q24. Is a local convenience store being provided at the approved Entech House development?**

- 5.1 The approved scheme at Entech House includes provision for a new convenience store. Moreover, Lessiters Chocolate Factory located opposite Entech House, has now constructed a large café/factory shop. Both facilities are easily accessible from HS 15 by foot.

**Q25. Would there be a requirement for additional or improved retail or community facilities within Woolmer Green if this development was implemented?**

- 6.1 Discussions with Officers at Welwyn Hatfield Council have identified that there would be no requirement for a convenience store or café facility at HS 15 when the convenience store at Entech House comes forward owing to competition/viability considerations, and on account of need. As set out above in response to Question 24, a café facility is now in operation at the Lessiters Chocolate Factory.
- 6.2 On this basis it is apparent that the requirement of the convenience store and café could be removed from Policy SADM 27. The removal of this requirement does not in Gladman's and the landowners view alter the exceptional circumstances for removing the Site from the Green Belt or are fundamentally linked to issues of soundness. Should the convenience store not come forward at Entech House in the interim period before HS 15 is committed, then Gladman and the landowners would be open to discussions about accommodating this at the proposed development.
- 6.3 Gladman and the landowners of HS 15 do not anticipate further requirements for on-site facilities at HS 15 other than those currently outlined in Policy SADM 27, however remain open to discussions with the Council, statutory providers, and the community, about what role the Site could play in promoting and supporting the sustainability of Woolmer Green.