

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

## **Council's Statement - Stage 8 Hearing session**

### **Northern Settlements**

**Settlement: Woolmer Green**

**Policy Number: SADM27**

**Site References: HS15 (WGr1)**

**Matter number: 1**

**Issues: Heritage**

**Question Numbers: Q1-8**



## Policy SADM 27 Woolmer Green - Site HS15 (WGr1), Land east of London Road

### 1) To what extent has the proposal had regard to the available heritage evidence?

#### Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) The Council believe that the proposal has had full regard to the available heritage evidence. It is aware of the location and nature of the relevant heritage assess, and these were taken into account in 2016 when this site was identified for consultation as a possible housing site.
- b) There is one listed building located approximately 25m from the eastern boundary of the proposed housing site; Payne's Farmhouse, which is Grade II listed.
- c) A historic environment desk-based assessment of the existing agricultural land which encompasses the site, was commissioned by Sworders on behalf of the landowners and was included with the promoter's Regulation 19 Submission (**dlpps582**), along with an indicative masterplan which was informed by the assessment. This work, which provided information on the historic and archaeological background of the site, did not assess the impact which residential development could have on the adjacent heritage asset and has not been reviewed by the Council's heritage advisors or Historic England. Table 11 of the Draft Local Plan 2016 advises that a Heritage Impact Assessment is submitted for consideration at planning application stage, as advised by Historic England (**dlpps2141**).
- d) The Council has engaged with Historic England throughout the plan making process and the selection of suitable sites and the advice received from Historic England has been taken into account when selecting this site for allocation. Historic England have raised no in principle objections to the allocation of these sites.
- e) The comments made by Historic England to the proposed allocation of WGr1 as a housing site in October 2016 (Regulation 19 representation) **dlpps2141**, clarified the position in relation to the heritage asset:

*'We have previously advised that this site has a grade II listed farmhouse (Payne's Farmhouse) immediately to the east, but it should be possible to develop this site without causing unacceptable harm to the significance of the farmhouse. To the west and northwest of the site are two employment sites, neither of which would adversely impact on any designated heritage assets.'*

- f) Therefore, the Council consider that (in line with paragraph 189 of the NPPF 2012), the evidence supporting the allocation of this site is proportionate to the asset's importance and sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposed housing allocation on its significance.

**2) To what extent does the site impinge upon the setting of the Listed Building?**

**Welwyn Hatfield Response**

- a) The site lies circa 30m to the west of Grade II Listed Building Payne's Farmhouse beyond established boundary hedgerows. The listing states that the building has features which date back to the 17 Century, with 18 Century extensions either side of the original building and a modern north-western extension.
- b) The setting of this Listed Building is rural, and as a former Farmhouse the building would have formerly had a functional relationship with the surrounding agricultural fields. However, the modern extension on the north-west of the building and the established hedgerows and mature trees contributes to the screening of the Listed Building to land on its western boundary.
- c) The proposed development site does not have a significant relationship to this heritage asset, either visual or functional, and as the site is well contained by the surrounding landscape feature. However, as the proposed allocation lies in close proximity to the heritage asset, and is included in land which could be considered as the setting of the Listed Building, the requirements of Table 11 of the Draft Local Plan 2016 are:
- A landscape buffer to the east to protect the setting of adjacent Listed Building; and
  - A Heritage Impact Assessment to be submitted at planning application stage for consideration.
- d) The comments by Historic England to the proposed allocation of WGr1 as a housing site in October 2016 (Regulation 19 representation) **dlpps2141** states that:

*'Historic England supports the need for a landscape buffer to the east to protect the setting of the adjacent listed building and also the requirement for a Heritage Impact Assessment at planning application stage.'*

**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.**

- 3) In the context of the site boundaries on the proposals map, where is this buffer to be?**
- 4) How wide is this buffer expected to be?**
- 5) In this context would the development be harmful to the setting of the heritage asset?**
- 6) If not, why not?**

- 7) **Would any harm be substantial and if not, what weight should be given to it?**
- 8) **Has the impact of development on the setting of the heritage asset been given adequate consideration?**

#### **Welwyn Hatfield Response**

- a) A combined response is provided to questions 2 – 7.
- b) The proposed landscape buffer will be located on the eastern boundary of the site, within the site boundary. The indicative masterplan and representation submitted by the site promoter in 2016 (Regulation 19 representation) **dlpps582** indicates that this green space/landscape buffer could form informal public open space.
- c) The site promoter submitted a Landscape and Visual Appraisal which proposed the inclusion of an area of green space along the boundary with Payne's Farm. This open space is proposed to include a landscape buffer that would further separate the farmhouse and increase the level of screening along this boundary. The appraisal also noted that built form within the development would be set back behind this eastern landscape buffer and arranged fronting onto an internal road. This arrangement would give approximately 60m of separation between Payne's Farm and new dwellings within the site.
- d) In the accordance with the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment methodology the developable area of the allocation was reduced from 8.9ha to 6.8ha to allow for an appropriate landscape buffers to be provided within the site, 0.8ha of the remaining land is for employment uses resulting in a developable area for housing of 6ha at 25dph. The precise width of the proposed buffer to the east of the site has not been calculated at this stage and this will be informed by the heritage impact assessment which is required to accompany the planning application when details regarding site layout and mitigation measures would be provided and considered.
- e) The Council consider that the development of site WGr1 to the west of the Grade II Listed Building Payne's Farmhouse, would not cause substantial or significant harm to the heritage asset. As previously explained the Listed Building is well contained and screening features already exist to form visual separation from the buildings to the land on its western boundary. Urbanising features currently exist with the employment sites to the west and northwest of the site and these are not considered to be harmful to the heritage asset. Whilst the development of WGr1 would bring the urban form of Woolmer Green in closer proximity to the Listed Building, the enhancement of the existing landscape features along the western boundary of Payne's Farmhouse would maintain the rural setting and separation of the Listed Building. This positive measure could enhance the asset's setting.

- f) As previously explained Historic England, as the statutory body for heritage matters, have not objected to the allocation of this site for residential development and have advised the Council that it should be possible to develop this site without causing unacceptable harm to the significance of the farmhouse. Historic England agree with the inclusion of site-specific considerations in Table 11 of the Draft Local Plan 2016 which require a Heritage Impact Assessment to be submitted at planning application stage and included landscape buffering.