

Examination of the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan

Council's Statement - Stage 8 Hearing session

Southern Settlements

Settlement: Brookmans Park

Policy Number: SADM31

Site References: HS21 (BrP13), HS22 (BrP14)

Matter number: N/A

**Issues: Highway Safety, Trees, Wildlife,
Green Belt**

Question Numbers: Q115-122



Policy SADM 31 Brookmans Park
Site HS21 (BrP13) Land west of Brookmans Park,
Site HS23 (BrP14) Land east of Golf Club Road

115) Would the development of either or both of these sites result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) Representors have raised concerns that Golf Club Road is narrow and unsuitable for further development (e.g. dlpps 1470, 1837). Further concerns have been raised (e.g. dlpps 191) around levels of visibility at the junction of Golf Club Road with Brookmans Avenue and Georges Wood Road.
- b) However, the Highway Authority (HA) has not objected to the proposed allocation of either or both of these sites on the grounds of highway safety.
- c) On a cumulative basis, Hertfordshire County Council considers (dlpps 2025) that the overall level of development proposed at Brookmans Park (HS21, 22, 23) is likely to impact on two key junctions, the A1000 Great North Road/Georges Wood Road and A1000/Great North Road/Swanley Bar and recommends that minor mitigation measures be investigated
- d) This is a matter that principally relates to the management of localised congestion issues at peak hours. Any junction improvement measures that may ultimately be deemed necessary, would address matters of highway safety at the relevant design stage. This settlement level matter was addressed in the Council's Housing Sites Selection Background Paper 2016 (HOU/20) at paragraph 17.9:

The two Priority junctions of Georges Wood Road (which is a private road)/A1000 (The Great North Road) and Swanley Bar Lane /A1000 have been identified by the Highway Authority as having current congestion issues in peak hours. Improvement measures such as a right turn lane may be required.

116) If so, could this be mitigated through achievable highway improvements? ”

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) As noted above, the HA has raised no objections in principle to the proposed allocation of either of these sites on the grounds of highway safety and any need for wider highway improvements would be considered further at pre-application or planning application stage.
- b) The suitability of sites HS21 (BrP13) and HS23 (BrP14) was considered in the council's Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) 2016 (HOU/19). Golf Club Road would be the point of access for both HS21, and HS23 which is diagonally opposite. Golf Club Road is part of the public rights of way

network and currently provides a shared surface vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access (since it has no footpath) to the golf course, residential units and the school.

- c) The Highways Authority advised that given the existing characteristics and usage of Golf Club Road vehicle movements along Golf Club Road would need to be limited in connection with any new development. Consequently, the HA advised in 2016 that the combined estimated capacity of the two sites would be the upper limit for these sites subject to highway mitigation measure on Golf Club Road, which could be secured at the planning application stage.

117) Is the development of these sites compatible with the need to protect trees on the sites?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) Site HS23 (Site BrP14) contains grassland and trees and adjoins Local Wildlife Site WS165 George's Wood Road. A tree preservation order exists on the Oak tree in the south west corner of the site.
- b) The northern half of Site HS21 (BrP13) land west of Golf Club Road comprises of woodland. The developable area of the site has therefore been reduced by approximately half in order to allow for the retention of the existing woodland area on the site, both for ecological reasons and to protect the elements of the site namely the parkland trees, which reflect the characteristics of the Potters Bar Parkland Landscape Character Area that the site is located within. The site therefore has an estimated capacity of 14 dwellings HELAA June 2016 (**HOU/19**).
- c) The promoter of the site at Reg. 19 stage (dlpps 1221) sought a change to the plan (to Table 15) with the following effect: Produce a landscaping plan which identifies specific valuable trees to be retained and new planting where appropriate.

118) Is there any protected wildlife that could be affected by the proposals?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) The HELAA (**HOU/19**) identifies a potential for protected bird species due to the presence of an area of woodland on part of site HS21 (BrP13). As noted in the response above, Table 15 highlights the need to retain trees where appropriate. A detailed tree survey would need to be carried out at planning application stage, and appropriate protection measures considered at that stage. The ecological sensitivity of the site was considered by Herts County Council Ecology at an earlier stage of plan making (in 2015). It considered that the ecological sensitivity of the site is low and there are opportunities for improving the ecology of the site through planting (lpc2726 2015¹).
- b) HS23 (BrP14) – This site contains grassland and trees, and adjoins Local Wildlife Site WS165 George's Wood. HCC Ecology considered this site at an earlier stage of

¹ https://welhat-consult.objective.co.uk/portal/planning_policy/local_plan_consultation_january_2015/local_plan_consultation_january_2015?pointId=s1421332986669#section-s1421332986669

plan making (in 2015). It considered that whilst there was a possibility of protected species (birds) on site, this was highly unlikely, that the ecological sensitivity of the site was low but that a buffer should be provided to adjacent Wildlife Site. The opportunities for habitat creation, possibly an orchard was noted (lpc2267 HCC Ecology²).

119) If so, how would it be protected?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) HS21 (Brp13) – In the HELAA 2016 (**HOU/19**), the estimated capacity of the site was moderated to reflect a reduction in the estimated the developable area of the site (reduced by approximately one half) in order to allow for the retention of the existing woodland areas on the site, both for ecological reasons and to protect the elements of the site (parkland trees) which reflect the characteristics of the Potters Bar Parkland Landscape Character Area.
- b) HS23 - (Brp14) – In the HELAA 2016 (**HOU/19**), the capacity of the site was moderated to 10 dwellings, with a modest density of 20dph to address the previously mentioned highway matters but also to allow for a response to the need for ecological mitigation measures (allowing for the retention of the existing preserved tree and the provision of a buffer to the adjacent Wildlife Site).

120) Is either site within the Green Belt?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) Both sites are currently located within the Green Belt in the adopted Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

121) Would the development of HS21 result in ribbon development/urban sprawl?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) Ribbon development is characterised by the building of houses in a continuous row, along a main road that is leading out of a town or village, without any accompanying development of the land to the rear of the properties. The proposed development is not ribbon development. This relatively small site does not project beyond the most northerly edge of the existing settlement boundary.
- b) Any development would be contained by the trees within the site's woodland area thus limiting any perceived sense of urban sprawl at this particular location.

² https://welhat-consult.objective.co.uk/portal/planning_policy/local_plan_consultation_january_2015/local_plan_consultation_january_2015?pointId=1421325221870#section-1421325221870

122) If so what exceptional circumstances exist to justify their removal from the Green Belt?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) The Council's approach to selecting sites for release from the Green Belt is in accordance with national policy and guidance and gives consideration to the Calverton Test. This includes giving consideration, on a site-by-site basis, for how consequent impacts can be reduced to their lowest reasonable practical extent.
- b) In applying the Calverton test to site BrP13 the release of all of site BrP13 would result in moderate-high harm to the Green Belt. The Green Belt study considers that release of the parcel would lead to weaker boundaries, although the site appears to be bounded by a mature and established tree belt, existing road and residential property. The surrounding landscape features to the north and west could be retained to create a natural visual barrier to the wider countryside, reducing the impact on the Green Belt. It is therefore considered that development within the very small parcel could retain these existing boundaries without undue weakening, thus helping to minimize impact.
- c) In applying the Calverton test to BrP14, notwithstanding the Green Belt Stage 3 Study assessment and the moderate-high harm to the Green Belt of releasing the site, it is a small parcel of land, with potential for impact to be minimized and on this basis the positives weigh in favour of the site. The site is contained to the west and south by the settlement of Brookmans Park and to the northwest by protected woodland. The release of the site would not extend the urban area of Brookmans Park further north. The release of the adjoining land to the southwest would create a continuous Green Belt and thus ensure that any impacts are minimized.
- d) Brookman's Park is a sustainable settlement with a good range of services and facilities and public transport connectivity, including a railway station, and the release of these two sites would constitute sustainable development.