

Examination of the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan

Council's Statement - Stage 8 Hearing session

Southern Settlements

Settlement: **Cuffley**

Policy Number: **SADM33**

Site References: **HS26 (No02), HS27 (Cuf1),
HS28 (Cuf6), HS29 (Cuf12), HS30 (Cuf7),
HS31 (No10)**

Matter number: **2**

Issues: **Infrastructure**

Question Numbers: **Q182-192**



Cuffley Policy SADM 33
Sites HS26-31 (Cuf1, 6, 7 & 10 and No02 & No10)

Matter 2 – Infrastructure

Significant concern has been raised by representors concerning the provision of the infrastructure necessary to develop these sites, particularly in the context of that required to provide for the needs of future residents but also because of the need for off-site mitigation, in particular but not exclusively in relation to the highway network in Cuffley.

182) Has the impact of the proposal on local infrastructure been effectively considered?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) Yes. In line with the NPPF (paras 156, 162), the Council has continuously worked with the relevant infrastructure service providers and landowners, to assess how the location of and scale of potential housing allocations within Cuffley may impact the capacity of its existing infrastructure and whether any proportionate enhancements or new provisions are required to address additional demands of growth and support sustainable development. A range of infrastructure providers such as Hertfordshire County Council Highways and Education, Thames Water, Utility providers were consulted during the assessment of potential sites through the HELAA and with regard to their cumulative impact at different stages of the Local Plan process. Their consultation responses have informed the location and scale of proposed allocation of sites within Cuffley as well as whether any mitigation is needed to address any infrastructure capacity issues.
- b) A number of Statements of Common Ground and Memoranda of Understanding (**EX13, EX57, DC/9**) have been agreed between the Council and key stakeholders, to address any outstanding issues and demonstrate effective cooperation relating to any infrastructure matters associated with the Plan.
- c) In line with the NPPF (para 162, 182), no constraints have been identified that could delay beyond the plan period or prevent future delivery of the proposed housing sites within Cuffley.

183) If so what are the outcomes?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- d) The outcomes of the work undertaken are outlined in responses to Questions 185, 186, 188, and 190 below.

184) Have the considerations included the impact of the significant development proposed at Goff's Oak in adjacent Broxbourne?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) Yes. The Council has worked with Broxbourne Borough Council (BBC), to identify and address the cross boundary strategic priorities between the two areas, through the different stages of the Plan making process. The villages of Cuffley and Goffs Oak are located in close proximity (circa 500m) to each other. There are significant cross boundary linkages relating to the provision and access of infrastructure such as healthcare, primary education and transport.
- b) A Memorandum of Understanding (**DC/9**) has been agreed between the two Authorities, setting out how they have cooperated with one another to address strategic cross-boundary issues such as infrastructure provision and in particular how primary school capacity issues for growth will be addressed.
- c) The modifications to the Broxbourne Local Plan propose the allocation of approximately 200 dwellings in Goffs Oak.

185) Is there sufficient capacity within the local schools to provide places for the children likely to be generated by these developments?

186) If not, what extra capacity is required and where would it be located?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) Cuffley Primary School (2FE) is the only school in the village and is well sized to meet the needs of the existing community it serves. The existing school site is tightly constrained and Hertfordshire County Council as the education authority advises that additional land would be required to facilitate school expansion.
- b) The primary school capacity for Cuffley needs to be considered in the context of the neighbouring settlement of Goffs Oak. The education authority advises that a limited amount of growth at Cuffley (around 400 dwellings including sites with planning permission) could be accommodated through the 1Fe expansion of Woodside primary school in Goffs Oak, which lies within the local authority area of Broxbourne. The effect of this is that it will allow the rebalancing of the net outflow of primary school students from Goffs Oak (and elsewhere within Broxbourne), which will in turn create capacity at Cuffley school to facilitate new development in Cuffley. An MOU has been agreed between the two authorities in line with this (**DC/9**).
- c) Whilst there is no secondary school in Cuffley the education authority has raised no concerns about the level of growth in Cuffley in terms of secondary school provision which can be accommodated within existing secondary schools serving this village.

- d) Overall, the Council consider that there will be sufficient primary and secondary school capacity, to accommodate the future education needs of the proposed housing within Cuffley.

Q187) Is there sufficient capacity within local health services to meet the primary health care needs of the persons who would reside in the developments?

Q188) If not, what extra capacity is required and where would it be located?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) The Cuffley and Goffs Oak Medical Centre, have a main surgery within Goffs Oak and a branch surgery in Cuffley. In addition, both of these villages contain a pharmacy.
- b) It is understood that the CCG and partner organisations are keen to align their own planning with the Local Plan process in the future. The CCG has not raised any issues associated with the proposed level of growth per se, although they have made it clear that any development would need to make a pro-rata contribution towards delivering an appropriate increase in services.

Q189) What are the off-site highway ramifications of these proposals?

Q190) Without improvements, would there be unacceptable harm to highway safety and/or the free flow of traffic within Cuffley?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) The Council has worked with and consulted Hertfordshire County Council Highway Authority (HCC) to assess how the allocation of sites and scale of growth across different locations may impact the capacity of the highway network and whether any necessary mitigations are required throughout the different stages of the Local Plan process. The County Council and Highways England provided advice on the transport modelling studies that were commissioned by the Council, at various stages of the site selection process. The details of the modelling work undertaken since 2010 to support the submitted Plan are included in the MOU (**EX/13**) and the Infrastructure Topic Paper (**TPA/5**).
- b) The Council commissioned the Welwyn Hatfield and Stevenage Hitchin (WHaSH) transport modelling work (2013) to test the implications of the emerging Local Plan growth scenarios on the highway network in the Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield areas A1M corridor, as well as advice on mitigations. This model was refined in 2014 and 2016, to test the growth distribution strategy with mitigations. The WHaSH modelling area did not cover proposed growth within the southern villages, including Cuffley. But it did take into account the cumulative effect of growth arising from these villages on the principle road network within the WHaSH area.
- c) In addition, the County Council carried out a separate assessment (2016) to estimate the additional traffic generated from proposed development within Cuffley and its impact on key junctions of the local highway network, as well as suggested

mitigations. This indicates that there are two junctions of particular concern: the Plough Hill/Station Road/Northaw Road East junction and the Northaw Road/Cattlegate Road junction. These are identified as congested junctions and adding development traffic will exacerbate these problems. However, the lower growth scenario of 365 dwellings used in the 2016 assessment indicates that the junctions could all operate within capacity, subject to junction reconfiguration to provide changes to priority. For example, for the Plough Hill/Station Road/Northaw Road junction, it is proposed to change the junction configuration to give priority to the major peak period traffic from Northaw Road and Station Road. For the Northaw Road/Cattlegate Road Junction, it is proposed to change the configuration to give priority to traffic flow from Northaw Road East and Cattlegate Road.

- d) Since submission of the Local Plan, transport modelling work has been undertaken using Hertfordshire County Council's COMET model to assess increases in congestion and waiting times at key junctions on the network, which are likely to arise as a result of development of the selected local plan sites and potential additional sites. The recent COMET model (2019) runs include provision for the priorities at the above two key road junctions to be changed, which HCC as Highway Authority considers would improve traffic flow through the village and reduce queuing. Subject to these highway improvements, HCC does not consider that there will be a severe impact on the highway arising from the proposed housing sites within Cuffley.
- e) The Council are aware Northaw and Cuffley Parish Council commissioned AECOM to model the transport impacts of the allocations in Cuffley and assess the cumulative impacts of growth proposed in Goffs Oak, to support their Local Plan representation (2016). This indicated there is a lack of capacity at the Northaw Road East, Cattlegate Road and Northaw Road West junction and that mitigations will fail to address the capacity issues.
- f) The County Council have reviewed the above study. Their response indicates the trip generation has been over-estimated, the very high rates of queues/delays at base year are unrealistic and no survey results have been provided to verify traffic flows at the junctions.
- g) Overall, the Council do not consider the allocations in Cuffley will have an unacceptable harm to highway safety; or cause severe impacts in relation to the flow of traffic.

191) Are the sites' overall viabilities sufficient to be able to support any required highway improvements as well as any other required contributions to additional infrastructure and facilities?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) Yes. In line with the NPPF (Para 173-4, 177) a Combined Policy Viability Update Study (August 2016) has been undertaken (**VIB/5**) for the Draft Local Plan. This demonstrated that development in this area is generally viable.
- b) The Council do not consider that the required highway improvements for sites in Cuffley in addition to other requirements will result in any abnormal costs that may impact their viability or delivery.

192) If not what other options have been considered to try to achieve viable development sites?

Welwyn Hatfield Response: See above