

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: **N/A**

Issues: **N/A**

Question Numbers: **Q168-181**



Cuffley, Policy SADM 33 Sites HS26-31 (Cuf 1, 6, 7 & 10 and No 02 & 10)

At paragraph 100 the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) says that Local Plans should develop policies to manage flood risk from all sources. It also points out at para. 109 that the planning system should prevent new and existing developments from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of water or noise pollution. At paragraph 123 it further points out that planning policies should avoid noise from giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life as a result of new development. There is significant representation against these sites in the context of the possible contribution their development could make to off-site flooding.

168) How would the surface water from these sites be managed comprehensively and individually?

Wewlyn Hatfield Response

- a) Flood Risk and Water Management at the sites in question would be managed in accordance with **Policy SADM 14: Flood Risk and Surface Water Management**. This provides detailed criteria to ensure that proposals are in accordance with national policy, guidance and best practice. The applicants for sites considered major development (10 units/+) will be required to incorporate SUD measures within the design of a future scheme, to reduce the risk of surface water run-off issues within the site area and wider area. Detailed proposals would be considered at planning application stage and would require sign-off by the Local lead Flood Management Authority. .

169) Has a flood risk assessment been carried out?

Wewlyn Hatfield Response

- a) Yes, the Council commissioned JBA Consulting Ltd to undertake a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) in 2015, which was amended in 2016 (**ENV/10**) in order to take account of Environmental Agency's revised guidance on making allowances for climate change when modelling fluvial flood risk. The Environment Agency and Hertfordshire County Council as Local Lead Flood Authority were consulted and approved the changes and updates to the documents and maps.
- b) The 2016 SFRA (**ENV/10**) included a level 1 study of fluvial, pluvial, ground water and residual flood risk across the Borough, taking account of the impacts of climate change. To determine which sites required a SFRA Level 2 Assessment (.i.e. Exceptions Test), all of the 2015 SHLAA sites considered suitable for development were screened (table 11.1); to identify if their areas were either within Flood Zones 2, 3, and/or had an ordinary watercourse within or adjacent to them (.i.e. not included in EA Flooding maps). This screening assessed the proportion of a site area that is within Flood Zones, whether they are adjacent or proximity to any watercourses, as well as the proportion of site impacted by surface water flooding and the level of risk; in order to determine where additional flood modelling would be required as part of Level 2 assessment. Detailed level 2 assessment summary tables were produced for sites **HS27 (Cuf1)**, **HS29 (Cuf12)** and **HS30 (Cuf7)**. Based upon the findings of the

SFRA, the Council have applied the Sequential Test for all of the sites promoted for development and as the proposed allocations within Cuffley passed this, no exceptions test is required for them (**ENV/13 and 13a**).

- c) A site specific flood risk assessment has also been prepared, to support an outline application (S6/2015/1342/PP) on site **HS28 (Cuf6)**.

170) Are there any on or off-site ramifications for flood risk that would result from the implementation of some or all of the proposed developments?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) The Council do not consider that there will be any on or off-site ramification for flood risk that would result from the implementation of the proposed development, as the proposed sites are not located within flood zones 2 or 3 or areas of significant surface water risk. The proposed sites (**HS27:Cuf1, HS28:Cuf6, HS30:Cuf7**) within Cuffley are affected by low (1 in 1000yr) to medium (1 in 100yr) risk of surface water flooding, but this largely impacts a small proportion of the total area. The capacity of Site **HS27 (Cuf1)** is reduced because of highway constraints but there is also a need to buffer Cuffley Brook. The developable area at Site **HS30 (Cuf7)** has been reduced 0.5 ha to account for fluvial flood risk.

171) If so how are they to be mitigated?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) See previous response

172) Would the sites' development require (a) balancing pond(s)?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) No the Council have not been advised of any requirement for a balancing ponds for the proposed allocations within Cuffley.
- b) The Flood Risk Assessment submitted to support an outline application for 121 dwellings and associated infrastructure (**S6/2015/1342/PP**) on Site **HS28 (Cuf6)** stated that "The drainage ditch and tributary of Northaw Brook situated approximately 75m to the south of the site is considered an appropriate receptor for storm water discharge and as such, has the potential to receive flows from the proposed development, once restricted to the pre-existing 'greenfield' rates of run-off." The proposed masterplan is indicating that balancing ponds would be located to the south of the site, within the open spaces/landscaped areas.

173) If so, how extensive would this/they be and where would it/they be located?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) The applicants flood risk assessment for the outline application (S6/2015/1342/PP) on Site **HS28 (Cuf6)** indicates the following:
- Residential Site Area: 4.89 ha
 - Developed Area: 3.26 ha
 - Landscaped Area: 1.63 ha
 - Dwelling proposed: 121
- b) The balancing ponds will be located within the part of the proposed open space/landscaped areas, to the south.

174) How would foul drainage be dealt with?

175) Are there any foul drainage constraints that would impede the implementation of any of the developments?

Welwyn Hatfield response

- a) WHBC has worked with Thames Water, as the sewerage undertaker, and Thames Water's consultant Savills, to understand the how the proposed allocation of housing sites may impact the capacity of the waste water infrastructure, to treat any additional demands of growth, as well as whether any enhancements or additional capacity may be required. The foul drainage from proposed sites within Cuffley would drain to Deephams Sewage Treatment Works at Edmonton. A £250 million pound investment to upgrade this Sewerage Treatment Works was completed in June 2019.
- b) The Thames Water consultation response to the Housing Economic Land Availability Assessment (2015/16) indicated that the wastewater network capacity of the area is unlikely to be able to support the demand anticipated from the development of Sites **HS27 (Cuf1), HS28 (Cuf6), HS29 (Cuf12), HS30 (Cuf7)** without upgrades to the drainage infrastructure which can take 18 months to 3 years to design and deliver. No issues were raised in regards to Site **HS31 (No10)**.
- c) Further minor modifications have been proposed to Table 17 - Site specific considerations of Sites **HS27 (Cuf1), HS28 (Cuf6), HS29 (Cuf12), HS30 (Cuf7)** to include reference to "Secure any necessary upgrades to waste water infrastructure"

176) What impact would the proposals have on the wider countryside landscape?

In particular on, Broxbourne Wood, Hoddesden Park Wood and Northaw Great Wood SSSIs.

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) In compliance with the NPPF (Para 81, 109), the Council have given adequate consideration to the need for the proposed allocations to protect and enhance the landscape of the area, throughout the Plan making process. The Plan has been informed by the Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Studies 2016 (**ENV/11**). More recently, external consultants were commissioned to undertake a Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (2019) to inform the ongoing Local Plan process. It should be noted that there are no landscapes within the borough of national importance or value, which have the highest status of protection (para 115, NPPF).
- b) The key findings from the 2019 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment for the proposed allocations on the edge of Cuffley are outlined below.
- c) **Site HS27 (Cuf1):** The 2019 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment identified this site as having a low-moderate sensitivity to residential development (LCA56). The close relationship between the site, a narrow strip of land, and the adjacent urban edge, including aural intrusion from the railway line, limits sensitivity. The Hertfordshire Way Long Distance Path passes the southernmost part of the site, but it is the views across the valley that are of greatest sensitivity, rather than the views towards the site and existing urban area. Any development here would not extend the built edge further east than the existing development to the south of the site, or further north than the existing development to the west of the site. There is no landscape relationship between this site and Northaw Great Wood, which is located on the opposite side of Cuffley to the west, nor with Hoddeson Park Wood, which is some distance from the site and on the far side of Broxbourne Wood. Furthermore, there is not thought to be any landscape impact on Broxbourne Wood from the proposed development, the setting of which is unaffected by the proposed development, nor the urban edge of Cuffley from Broxbourne Wood. These sites are not referenced in the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment.
- d) In order to minimise any adverse impact on the landscape and visual character, the developable area is reduced and limited to the existing eastern edge of the built form; to minimise the encroachment to the Cuffley Brook and riparian vegetation. In addition, new tree/landscaping planting would be required to physically define the new eastern Green Belt boundary, in order to break up the mass of development.
- e) A Modification has been proposed to Table 17: Site Specific Considerations:
- Structural landscaping area to the east in advance of any development to define the Green Belt boundary and minimize its visual impact on the surrounding landscape, and views from Goffs Oak.
- f) **Site HS28 (Cuf6) 108 dwellings:** This site is located to the south of Cuffley within LCA 55a: Theobalds Estate. The Landscape Sensitivity Assessment identifies the parcel of land that forms the site in question as having a low-moderate landscape sensitivity. The landscape here does contribute to the rural landscape setting to the south of Cuffley, but it has no strong sensitivities. The railway is an intrusive influence

and the sports ground to south adds to the urban fringe character. Mature vegetation encloses this site on the settlement edge, as well as creating a distinction from the fields to the south and the wider LCA. The site is not be visible from Northaw Great Wood SSSI, Hoddesdon Park Wood or Broxbourne Wood, which are located on the other side of Cuffley to the north and these features are not referenced in the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment.

- g) To minimise any adverse impacts on the landscape and visual character, it recommends that the proposed allocation should maintain the vegetation that encloses the settlement edge and the PROW along this should be retained.
- h) **Sites HS29 (Cuf12) and HS30 (Cuf7):** These two sites have been identified by the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (2019) as having moderate-high landscape sensitivity to development (LCA53c). However, it is noted that the sites in question form a small area of the wider parcel considered, located to the very southern extreme of the parcel and containing some existing buildings. Whilst the larger parcel has a sloping landform that provides a distinct setting to Cuffley, restricting development to the southern extreme of this parcel is thought to help reduce the scale of any impact. As with other examples, there is some similarity with the consideration for Green Belt harm in this location and the exclusion of large areas of land to the north of Sites **HS29 (Cuf12)** and **HS30 (Cuf7)** for development, helps to demonstrate how the Council have sought to minimise any impact to the lowest reasonable extent, whilst still facilitating development at one of the most sustainable settlements in the borough. It is not thought that the area of the two sites (**HS29 and HS30**) would have any impact on Northaw Great Wood. Hoddesden Park Wood and Broxbourne Wood are not visible from the site being located to the north of Cuffley. Again, these features are not identified in the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment in the context of these sites.
- i) A number of measures have been proposed, to minimise any adverse impact on the landscape and visual character. For Site **HS29 (Cuf12)** the proposed area for release from the Green Belt has been restricted to the infill area between the northern extent of Site **HS30 (Cuf7)** and the existing settlement boundary on the lower sloping landform, with a lesser prominent topography. Further, the northern and western boundaries of Site **HS30 (Cuf7)** currently defined by hedgerows; and northern boundary of **HS29 (Cuf12)** (undefined); would be defined and enhanced by newly established tree/landscape belts.

177) Is any harm likely to be adverse and if so to what extent can the harm be overcome through mitigation?

- a) Please see response to previous question.

178) Would there be any long-term impact on the wildlife at these sites from the development of any of the Cuffley sites?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) No, the Council do not consider that there will be a long term impact on the wildlife of the SSSIs from the development. The updated Local Plan HRA (2019) makes reference to the potential increase in visitors but concludes that the proposed sites within Cuffley will *not have adverse effects on the integrity of Wormley Hoddesdonpark woods SAC/SSSI in relation to recreational pressure, either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.*

179) If so would there be any potential unacceptable impact that could not be satisfactorily mitigated?

- a) See above.

180) Is atmospheric pollution a potential issue at any of these sites?

181) If so, how would it be mitigated?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) No, atmospheric pollution is not an issue at any of these sites. The Council's monitoring of air quality indicates that air quality in Cuffley meets government standards.
- b) A number of consultees have raised concerns regarding the existing air quality within Cuffley, how the nitrates (NO₂) may be above national, EU limits and the potential impact of this on environment and human health.
- c) The Welwyn Hatfield 2019 Air Quality Annual Status Report, in fulfilment of Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 Local Air Quality Management, indicates that there are currently no Air Quality Management Areas designated within the borough. This reported the results the monitoring of air quality at sites across the borough, which included two monitoring sites on Station Road/B156 (**WH5 & WH6** – Cuffley High Street) and confirmed that the annual mean concentration of NO₂ for Cuffley is significantly below and within the national and EU objective of 40µg/m³.
- d) The total number of homes will increase by 299 new homes (.i.e. circa 16%). All of the proposed site allocation within Cuffley achieved a significantly positive score (++) against the Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal (2019) objectives 4.2: Reduction in greenhouse gasses from transport and 4.3: Avoid and reduce air pollution; as they were within walking distance of an employment area, 400m of four bus stops and 1400m of Cuffley train station.
- e) Cuffley and Northaw Parish Council commissioned Air Quality Consultants (AQC) to monitor and report the air quality and NO₂ levels at Station Rd (Cuffley), Coopers Lane (Potters Bar) over a three month period due to air quality concerned near C3

uses, which could worsen as a result of Draft Local Plan proposals. This indicated that the concentration of NO₂ particles, at five monitoring locations along Station Rd (B156), exceeded the national objective of 40ug/m³ between June and August 2017.

- f) In response to this, the Council requested AECOM to undertake a review of the AQC Monitoring Report. The raised a number of criticisms in relation AQC's sources of data, scope of the study and the methodology. Most importantly, AECOM identified that whilst the work undertaken by AQC followed many facets of best practice, the measurements recorded were not adjusted to represent locations of relevant exposure, as recommended by DEFRA's technical guidance, which states: 'wherever possible, local authorities should ensure that monitoring locations are representative of exposure'. Once the appropriate corrections were made, AECOM concluded that: 'the findings indicate the NO₂ concentrations are below the AQS objectives at locations of relevant exposure'.
- g) The Local Plan Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA, 2020) assessed the potential impact of increased car use, congestion, associated air quality and recreational pressure on the integrity of Wormley Hoddesdonpark Woods SAC. *"The Appropriate Assessment concludes that the Welwyn Hatfield Proposed Submission Local Plan would not have adverse effects on the integrity of Wormley Hoddesdonpark woods SAC in relation to increased air pollution and recreational pressure, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects" ..*
- h) The Council do not consider it necessary to propose any specific mitigations for potential air quality issues within the site specific considerations of proposed draft Policy **SADM33**.