

Examination of the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan

Council's Statement - Stage 8 Hearing session

Southern Settlements

Settlement: Little Heath

Policy Number: SADM32

Site References: HS24 (BrP7), HS25 (LHe1)

Matter number: 1

Issues: Environmental considerations

Question Numbers: Q123-138



Little Heath

Policy SADM 32 Sites HS24 (BRP7) Land south of Hawkshead Road

Policy SADM 32 Sites HS25 (LHe1) Land north of Hawkshead Road

Matter 1 – Environmental Considerations

At paragraph 100 the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) says that Local Plans should develop policies to manage flood risk from all sources. There is significant representation against these sites in the context of the possible contribution their combined development could make to off-site flooding.

123) How would the surface water at these sites be managed?

Welwyn 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** that provides detailed criteria to ensure that proposals are in accordance with national policy, guidance and best practice. Detailed proposals would be considered at Planning Application stage and would require sign-off by the Local Lead Flood Management Authority.

124) Has a flood risk assessment been carried out?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) Yes, the Council has undertaken comprehensive Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) to inform plan preparation (2016) and the updated site assessment work (2019). This work was undertaken by professional expert consultants.
- b) The sites in question passed the Stage 1 SFRA with 100 % of both sites located in Flood Zone 1. For that reason neither site was considered further in relation to the Level 2 Assessment or the Sequential Approach. A small area of both sites fall within the 1000 year flood risk area but is not located on the Environment Agency Historic Flooding Map. The sites were not identified within the SFRA as needing specific consideration at Planning Application stage. The Environment Agency have not identified any issues associated with this sites.
- c) A combination of **Policy SADM 32: Little Heath** and **SADM 14: Flood Risk and Surface Water Management** provides sufficient clarity to ensure that flood risk is considered appropriately in accordance with national policy and guidance.

125) Are there any on or off-site ramifications for flood risk that would result from the implementation of the proposed development?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) No. Please refer to the Council's response to Questions 123 and 124.

126) If so how are they to be mitigated?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) N/A. Please refer to the Council's response to Questions 123 and 124.

127) Would the sites' development require a balancing pond?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) The Council would expect this level of detail to be considered at Planning Application Stage. The Council has not been advised by the Local Lead Flood Management Authority that a balance pond would be required or that ones are being proposed by the promoters of the sites.
- b) However, the Council is content that the strategic assessment undertaken to inform plan preparation is both proportionate and consistent with national policy and guidance. Furthermore, that Policies **SADM 14 and 32** provides sufficient clarity to inform any application. Please also refer to the Council's response to Questions 123 and 124.

128) If so, how extensive would this be and where would it be located?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) N/A.

129) How would foul drainage be dealt with?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) The Council would expect foul drainage to be dealt with in accordance with normal good practice as advocated by the Water Utility Company and normal planning practices. At the time of plan preparation in 2016, it was understood that development within the borough (at this location) and in neighbouring authorities would require upgrades, and that both network and treatment capacity was required in relation to these sites. Thames Water advised that any upgrades may take 18 months to 3 years to design and deliver (**HOU/19**).

130) Are there any foul drainage constraints that would impede the implementation of either development?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) No. Please refer to the Council's response to Question 129. For clarity, the trajectory for site HS24 (BrP7) shows completions across three years with the first 34 dwellings being delivered in 2023/24 and completing in 2025/26, to take account of the sewage infrastructure upgraded that are required.
- b) For site HS25 (LHe1) the promoter has indicated that infrastructure works have been put in place to service this site (as part of another development). The Council's updated trajectory shows completions over two years in 2023/24 and 2024/25 (please refer to the Council's response on Matter 5).

131) What impact would the proposals have on the wider landscape? In particular on Gobions Historic Park and Garden?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) The Council has prepared comprehensive landscape evidence, including the Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study (2016 – **ENV11**) and the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (2019 – **EX156**).
- b) The 2019 Study identifies the area to the south and east of Swanley Bar, including the site **HS25 (LHe1)**, as having ‘moderate’ landscape sensitivity, whereas the land to the west of Swanley Bar, including the site **HS24 (BrP7)**, as having ‘moderate/high’ landscape sensitivity.
- c) The landscape sensitivity is similar in nature to the Green Belt impact, discussed within the Council’s Matter 4 Statement, where the area contributes towards the separation between settlements. However, the Council’s proposals to limit the scale of development and provide mitigation from a Green Belt perspective, in order to reduce any impact to its lowest reasonable extent, also helps to reduce the impact on the wider landscape. The area proposed for development is considered to relate well to the existing built area at Little Heath and ensure separation is maintained between settlements.
- d) Historic England, in their response to the Local Plan as proposed for submission published in 2016, that it ‘may be possible for some development to come forward (on site **HS24**) without causing unacceptable harm to these designated heritage assets’ and ‘we welcome bullet point one of Table 16 where there is a requirement for a Green Buffer to help mitigate heritage impacts on Gobions Historic Park and Garden’.
- e) In relation to HS25 and any potential impact on the nearby grade II listed Osbourne House, Historic England state in their response: ‘however, if the existing hedgerow is retained and reinforced as appropriate, it should be possible for this site to come forward without resulting in harm’ and ‘we therefore welcome bullet seven of Table 16 where there is a requirement to retain and enhance the landscape buffer along Hawkshead Road to mitigate the impact of development on the grade II listed Osbourne House’.
- f) For the reasons set out above, it is considered that any impact on Gobions Historic Park and Garden would be acceptable. **Policy SADM 32 – Little Heath** includes policy requirements (Table 16) to provide mitigation for the site HS24 (BrP7):
 - ‘Green buffer to help mitigate heritage impacts on Gobions Historic Park and Garden and the Grade II* Listed Folly’.
- g) The other relevant policy requirements are listed under the Council’s response to Question 133.

132) If this is likely to be adverse, to what extent can it be overcome through mitigation?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) The Council does not consider that any impact from the site proposals would be unacceptable, in relation to the wider landscape or on Gobions Historic Park and Garden, as demonstrated by the response from Historic England (see also Council's response to Question 131). Limiting the scale of development and providing mitigation from a Green Belt perspective will also contribute towards minimising any landscape impact. Furthermore, **Policy SADM 32 – Little Heath** provides sufficient clarity to ensure the delivery of appropriate mitigation. Please also refer to the Council's response to Question 131.

133 Would there be any impact on the Gobbins Wood wildlife site from the development of either of these sites?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) The nearby woodland is described as representing 'moderate' ecological sensitivity within the Council's site assessment process. However, a combination of **Policy SADM 16 – Ecology and Landscape** and **SADM 32 – Little Heath** are sufficient to protect the nearby ecology. Policy SADM32 includes specific policy requirements in relation to **HS24 (BrP7)** to:
- Green buffer and retention of existing trees to help mitigate impact on local ecology. Retain the existing pond, or compensate for its loss.
 - State 1 Habitat Survey required at Planning Application stage.
 - Avoid and mitigate any potential impact on Northaw Great Wood SSSI.
- b) Policy SADM includes the following specific policy requirements in relation to **HS25 (LHe1)** to:
- The southern woodland boundary and Hawkshead Road should be retained, and woodland management used to enhance ecology.
 - Retaining and enhancing the landscape buffer along Hawkshead Road will help to preserve local ecology and mitigate the impact of development in the Grade II Listed Osbourne House.

134) If so would there be any potential unacceptable impact? And could it be satisfactorily mitigated?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) The Council does not consider there would be any unacceptable impact and considers that any limited impact would be capable of mitigation as per Policies **SADM16 and 32**. Please also refer to the Council's response to Question 133.

135) What potential impact could these sites have on Northaw Wood SSSI?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) The site **HS24 (BrP7)** is within 1800m of Northaw Wood SSSI and any impact is considered to be limited. However, Policies SADM16 and 32 provide for appropriate protection and mitigation. Please also refer to the Council's response to Question 133.

136) If there would be any, how could it be mitigated?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) Please refer to the Council's response to Questions 135 and 133.

137) Would either of the proposals have an impact on the setting of the listed Folly or on Osbourne House?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) This matter is considered in the context of the wider landscape and appropriate mitigation. Please refer to the Council's response to Questions 131 to 133.

138) If so to what extent would there be harm? And could it be mitigated?

Welwyn Hatfield Response

- a) This matter is considered in the context of the wider landscape and appropriate mitigation. Please refer to the Council's response to Questions 131 to 133.