

Our Ref: LF/18092

31 October 2019

Mrs L St John Howe
Programme Officer
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By Email Only: louise@poservices.co.uk

Dear Mrs St John Howe

Re: Green Gap Assessment October 2019. Land East of New Road, Digswell (Dig1).

We write further to your email of the 6 October 2019 inviting comments on new documentation published by the Local Planning Authority.

As explained in our earlier correspondence, we represent Countryside Properties in respect of Site Dig1, Land East of New Road, Digswell. This site has been promoted via the 2019 'Call for Sites' exercise undertaken by the Local Planning Authority. You have confirmed that whilst we are not a Regulation 19 party, given our recent promotion of Dig1, you have confirmed that we are entitled to make comments on the recent documentation.

The Green Gap Assessment has been produced to assist the Local Planning Authority in understanding the local purpose of the gaps between settlements to assist in further site allocations.

Noting that there is no standard methodology available for undertaking such assessments, the approach adopted appears reasonable and has had regard to other similar assessments undertaken in other Authorities, thus adding an element of robustness to the methodology.

We do not propose to review the entire document, but will concentrate of the assessments undertaken around Digswell.



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Area between Oaklands, Welwyn and Digswell.

This assessment is primarily focusing on the western edge of Digswell as opposed to the eastern edge, but it is clear that area in and around Digswell is rated largely as having high or moderate-high landscape sensitivity, with areas of moderate sensitivity, including Dig1. The assessment reinforces the importance of the A1000 corridor in preventing coalescence between Welwyn and Digswell, whilst the 'visually prominent strongly undulating landform with wooded slopes' and remnant parkland character to the west of Digswell is a highly sensitive landscape.

It is evident from this assessment that development to the west and northwest of Digswell will likely have significant harm to this highly sensitive landscape.

Area between Welwyn, Welwyn Garden City and Digswell.

Again the assessment advises of the significance of the A1000 in preventing coalescence of the settlements, this is joined by regard being given to the Mimram Valley running along the southern end of Digswell and providing the only meaningful separation between these settlements.

Add the significant area benefiting from a local wildlife designation, the assessment recommends a 'gap policy area' to ensure this area is protected and that each settlement retains its own identity.

It is therefore reasonable to conclude that development is unlikely to be deemed acceptable to the south of Digswell, without resulting in coalescence of Welwyn Garden City and Digswell.

Area between Digswell and Burnham Green.

The assessment focuses on the gap between Burnham Green and Digswell, the area is largely shown as having a moderate sensitivity, but also constrained by wildlife sites, Priority Habitats and woodlands. Accordingly, the assessment recommends that this area should be protected by a 'gap policy'.

In addition, the report concludes that development within this area will result in a reduction in the gap between Digswell and Burnham Green resulting in visual, if not physical, coalescence.

It is clear that Digswell, one of the most sustainable villages in Welwyn Hatfield, is highly constrained by sensitive landscape areas and at risk of coalescence with Welwyn Garden City and Burnham Green. The only scope for expansion to this village is the Dig1 site, which is rated as having moderate sensitivity and will not undermine the five purposes of the Green Belt, will not cause any increase in coalescence, and will not undermine the five purposes of the Green Belt.

We look forward to seeing this Local Plan progress through the remaining Examination stages and welcome further engagement in due course.

Yours sincerely,



Liz Fitzgerald
Director