

Examination of the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan 2013-32

Policy SP24 Symondshyde New village

INSPECTORS' MATTER AND ISSUES

Consultation has already been held on this proposal and the supporting documentation that accompanied the submitted plan. Representations that have already been received will be considered and it is not necessary for them to be repeated. Any representors wishing to make further submissions on the matters and questions listed below, particularly in the context of the post submission documents should do so by 5.00 pm on 20 February, 2020

Matter 1 – Vision and Objectives

The plan's spatial vision envisages a new village of around 1,130 dwellings to have been created as an exemplar of sustainable best practice by 2032.

- 1) Is 1,130 dwellings the extent of the development or is more envisaged beyond 2032?
- 2) How is an isolated community containing only 1,130 dwellings expected to be an exemplar of sustainable best practice in the context of:
 - a) Its accessibility to:
 - i) Places of work?
 - ii) Educational facilities?
 - iii) Retail facilities?
 - iv) Community services?
 - b) Minimising unsustainable journeys?
 - c) Minimising the development's carbon footprint and demands upon highway and car parking infrastructure elsewhere?
- 3) Which strategic objectives does the proposal meaningfully contribute to?

Strategic objective 2 seeks to deliver a sustainable pattern of development by reducing the need to travel.

- 4) How would a community living in 1,130 dwellings in a comparatively isolated location, with limited local provision for jobs, community and commercial facilities meet this objective?

Strategic objective 4 supports and reinforces the role of the Borough's villages and neighbourhoods and seeks to create new sustainable neighbourhoods.

- 5) How does this proposal create a new sustainable neighbourhood and satisfy this objective?

Strategic objective 5 seeks to reduce people's impact on the environment by reducing the need to travel.

6) How does this proposal reduce the overall need to travel?

Strategic objective 6 seeks to maximise the opportunities to travel by sustainable transport modes and manage parking demand.

7) How does the proposal meet either of these requirements?

Strategic objective 8 seeks to protect, maintain and where possible enhance the Borough's natural environment.

8) How does the proposal meet this objective?

Matter 2 – Viability

9) What evidence (give examples if there are any) is there to suggest that a population residing in 1,130 dwellings in a detached location can viably support the following and to what extent:

- a) A two-form entry primary school? (what ratio of pupils to population does the Education Authority now use?).
- b) A neighbourhood centre?
- c) A community hall?
- d) Indoor and outdoor leisure facilities?

10) What form of non-subsidised public transport would be viable for the use of 1130 isolated new dwellings in this location?

11) Has the viability of this site in the context of the capital and on-going maintenance costs of the necessary infrastructure been effectively assessed?

Matter 3 – Sustainability

The reasoned justification for the proposal suggests that one of the aims of the proposal is to achieve new development close to Hatfield that is as sustainable as possible, by providing links to North-West Hatfield where a better range of shopping and community facilities are to be provided.

12) In this context how is the proposal more sustainable than a further urban extension to Hatfield that would be closer to the facilities?

13) Were these alternatives assessed in the sustainability appraisal?

14) If so what was the outcome?

Matter 4 – Green Belt

SKM Consultants, found (on behalf of the Council) that this site made a significant contribution towards safeguarding the countryside from encroachment and maintaining the existing settlement pattern.

- 15) What elements of that assessment are not correct to an extent that enables the Symondshyde proposal to be found sound?

At paragraph 138 the National Planning Policy Framework says that where it has been concluded that it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development, plans should give first consideration to land which has been previously-developed and/or is well-served by public transport. There are three locations within the Borough, outside of the two towns, that are very well served by public transport through their railway stations and where there is undeveloped land within walking distance of these transport nodes.

- 16) Has the suitability of this land for development been assessed in the sustainability appraisal as an alternative to Symondshyde?
- 17) In that context, is the allocation of this part of the site justified, effective and consistent with national planning policy?
- 18) Do exceptional circumstances exist to release the land at Symondshyde from the Green Belt and if so, (other than Welwyn/Hatfield's housing need), what are they?

Matter 5 – Historic Heritage

There are a number of historic heritage assets, either on or close to the site. In particular, Symondshyde Farmhouse, Brockett Park and at Lemsford. In preparing Local Plans the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires Local Planning Authorities to recognize that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource that should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 also requires them to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings.

- 19) To what extent has the proposal had regard to the available heritage evidence?
- 20) In this context would the development be harmful to the settings of the heritage assets?
- 21) If not, why not?
- 22) Would any harm be substantial and if not what weight should be given to it?
- 23) Has the impact of development on the setting of the heritage assets been given adequate consideration?

Matter 6 – Minerals

In Section 13 the NPPF seeks to facilitate the sustainable use of minerals. Minerals Safeguarding Areas are to be defined and appropriate policies adopted in order that known locations of specific mineral resources are not needlessly sterilized by non-mineral development. There are known mineral resources either under or in the vicinity of this site.

- 24) Are there definitely no safeguarded minerals under this site?
- 25) To what extent are measures in place to ensure that minerals of local and national importance that underlay or are in the vicinity of this site, are extracted before they become sterilized by development or cannot be extracted if residential development is occupied close by?
- 26) Could such considerations delay the implementation of development at this site?

Matter 7 – Land Stability

At paragraph 121 the NPPF says that Policies should ensure that sites are suitable for their new use taking account of ground conditions and land instability. There is evidence of sink holes and or/similar ground instability in the area.

- 27) Has there been a comprehensive geophysical assessment of the ground conditions underlying this site?
- 28) If not why not?
- 29) If so, is there any evidence of potential ground instability?
- 30) If there is, what is the potential extent?
- 31) What is the risk of ground conditions necessitating remedial action either before development can take place or whilst it is under construction?
- 32) What is the risk to any development timetable that might be advanced for the development of this site from ground instability?