



**WELWYN
HATFIELD**

**Colin Haigh
Head of Planning**

Reply to: address as below
Date: 10 February 2020

Melvyn Middleton
Planning Inspectorate
c/o Programme Officer
louise@poservices.co.uk

Dear Sir

Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan

As you will recall, Welwyn Hatfield submitted a Local Plan for 12,000 homes in 2017, with a justification that green belt harm and infrastructure constraints prevented the borough from achieving its objectively assessed need for housing.

During your subsequent examination hearing sessions you have indicated that the plan is not sound as currently submitted and encouraged us to identify additional sites and/or fully justify that there are sound planning reasons why the borough cannot accommodate more development.

Last year we commissioned a Stage 3 Green Belt Study to look more closely at the scope for any opportunities for and likely harm of further development in green belt locations.

We also carried out a further call-for-sites to make sure that we were considering all possible options, and issued those sites for public consultation to ensure we understood the views of local residents.

All of these sites have been methodically analysed by officers as part of a Housing & Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) and Site Selection Background Paper.

We have also updated our Sustainability Appraisal to understand the full implications of different growth options.

Officers used this evidence to recommend a 'preferred strategy' to councillors that would deliver 15,952 homes over the plan period, through a combination of new assumptions about urban sites, increased capacity on some sites in the Submitted Plan and the allocation of new green belt sites.

All of this evidence was presented to our Cabinet Planning & Parking Panel (CPPP) on 23 January and 29 January and to our Cabinet on 30 January.

Members spent a considerable amount of time considering public questions, debating the options, exploring the impact of further development in the green belt, understanding concerns expressed by residents and weighing-up the risks of not having a sound plan.

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts AL8 6AE
DX 30075, Welwyn Garden City 1

Tel: 01707 357000
www.welhat.gov.uk



They ultimately voted for a strategy that will deliver a total of about 14,011 homes. This is a substantial increase of 2,011 homes over the Submitted Plan target.

The agreed strategy results in the removal of some sites from the Submitted Plan that, based on new evidence in the Stage 3 Green Belt Study, it is now considered will cause higher harm to the green belt, some new urban and windfall assumptions and the addition of some new green belt sites that it is considered will cause lesser harm to the green belt.

Members consider that it is based on sound planning reasons to achieve a sustainable pattern of development and prevent unacceptable harm to the green belt.

- Includes 1,446 homes from completions and 1,268 homes from commitments.
- Assumes a windfall figure of 2,253 homes over the plan period. This includes the likelihood that SDS3 Wheat Quarter is capable of accommodating more units, on the knowledge that pre-application advice is currently being sought and that the Planning White Paper will introduce new permitted development rights.
- Proposes to increase the assumption at SDS1 and WGC4 Panshanger to a total of 815 homes.
- Keeps existing 'moderate-high' harm sites in the Submitted Plan. This includes HS15 in Woolmer Green, a number of small sites in Oaklands and Welwyn, SDS2 Birchall Garden Suburb, HS2 to the south of Welwyn Garden City, all of HAT1 to the north-west of Hatfield, HS11 to the south of Hatfield, SDS7 Marshmoor Business Park in Welham Green, HS24 in Little Heath and HS28 in Cuffley.
- Proposes to select a number of new 'moderate' harm sites – namely three sites to the west of Welham Green, a site at Brookmans Park / Bar Bell and a site at Little Heath.
- Proposes provisional capacity for 160 homes at PB1 to the east of Potters Bar, with the intent to engage with Hertfordshire County Council as the landowner and local highway authority during the public consultation period, to identify a viable access arrangement.
- Proposes to remove 'high' harm sites from the Submitted Plan – namely HS22 to the west of Brookmans Park, HS25 to the west of Little Heath and HS29 and HS30 to the south of Cuffley – as Members consider them to result in an unacceptable level of harm to the green belt.
- Does not select any new 'moderate-high' harm sites.
- Does not select any new sites which would lead to the coalescence of settlements – notably between Knebworth and Woolmer Green, between Hatfield and Welham Green and between Welham Green and Brookmans Park.

- Does not select any new sites in Lemsford and Stanborough, which are washed-over villages with few facilities/services.
- Proposes to reduce the assumption for HS6 Gosling Sports Park to 100 homes, in light of a new Sports Strategy which recommends the preparation of a masterplan for the site to consider the future of sporting provision and the opportunity for new homes.
- Proposes to remove HS15 Symondshyde from the Submitted Plan, as Members are concerned that it will prove to be an unsustainable location for development, if measures to provide walking, cycling and public transport facilities necessary to make it truly sustainable are not delivered. They consider that there are now more sustainable options for development which are proposed to be added in to the Plan.

It is now intended that this strategy will be issued for six week public consultation. The results will be reported to Full Council in late May for final agreement and hearing sessions on new sites will take place in June 2020.

The examination programme for the hearing sessions does mean that the sustainability of Symondshyde will be debated prior to the conclusion of this consultation and provides an opportunity for Members to receive your findings on the soundness of the allocation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Haigh', written in a cursive style.

Colin Haigh
Head of Planning