

Examination of the Welwyn-Hatfield Local Plan 2013-32

Further sites, for housing development, submitted to the Examination by the Council in November 2020

INSPECTORS' MATTER AND ISSUES

Consultation was undertaken about these sites, following the Council's deliberations on a way forward and in the early part of 2020. All representations received at that time will be considered and it is not necessary for them to be repeated verbatim.

Any representors wishing to make further submissions on the matters and questions listed below, should do so by 5.00pm on Friday 12 February.

Welwyn Garden City

Matter 1 - Site Han40a, Town Centre North – Campus East

This site is on the edge of the town centre, adjacent to the east coast railway and is currently used for car parking. It would be redeveloped for high density housing, providing 250 dwellings.

Considerations

The site is currently a well-used car park serving shops and other businesses within the town centre, as well as the railway station.

1. In this context, does the proposal comply with the thrust of Policy SP 16, Welwyn Garden City Town Centre? Provide a reasoned justification either way.
2. What impact would the loss of the car parking spaces have on overall Town Centre provision and would there be consequences for the Town Centre's vitality and viability?
3. Are there comprehensive car parking development proposals in place that would lead to replacement spaces being provided elsewhere?

If so where would these be located and when would they be provided?
4. What evidence is there to confirm that this proposal could be delivered during the plan period?
5. Is the development of this site for housing compatible with the potential use of a nearby site for waste management purposes and the site's proximity to the East Coast Railway?
6. Should some or all of the trees on the site be retained and their retention referred to in the policy criteria?
7. Should the height of the development be controlled through the policy criteria?

8. Would the redevelopment of the campus-west site for housing, in combination with a redevelopment of this site for multi-story car parking and civic uses, result in an overall development strategy that is more likely to protect the Town Centre's vitality and viability?

Matter 2 – Site Hol23, Hollybush Lane Neighbourhood Centre

The proposal would redevelop a neighbourhood-centre and provide 6 dwellings.

Considerations

9. What non-residential facilities are expected to be provided on the redeveloped site?
10. Is it appropriate to introduce parameters that seek to control the nature and extent of the non-residential part of this redevelopment?
11. How certain is the delivery of a mixed-use proposal at this location and thereby what evidence is there to confirm that this proposal could be delivered during the plan period?

Matter 3 – Site Pea104, YMCA, 90 Peartree Lane

The proposal would redevelop a YMCA building to provide 15 dwellings.

Considerations

12. Is the development of this site for housing compatible with the potential use of a nearby site for waste management purposes?
13. What evidence is there to confirm that this proposal could be delivered during the plan period?

Matter 4 – Site Pea97, Former Norton Building, Bridge Road East

The proposal would convert or redevelop an office building to provide 122 dwellings. There is already a prior approval to change the use of the building from office to residential use.

Considerations

14. Should the policy criteria contain parameters to guide the consideration of the future of the building?
15. Given the central location, is the proposed number of dwellings appropriate or is the site capable of satisfactorily accommodating more?
16. Is the development of this site for housing compatible with the use of Martinfield for waste management purposes?
17. Are the proposals consistent with the policies and proposals of the Hertfordshire Waste Plan?
18. Should the policy criteria specify a requirement for improvements in off-site sustainable movement?

Matter 5 – Site Pea102, Bio Park, Broadwater Road

The proposal would redevelop a vacant office building to provide 250 dwellings.

Considerations

19. Should the policy criteria contain parameters that seek to protect the setting of the adjacent listed building?
20. Does the presence of the adjacent listed building constrain the nature of the development and thereby the capacity of the site?
21. Given the central location, is the proposed number of dwellings appropriate or is the site capable of satisfactorily accommodating more?
22. Should the policy criteria specify a requirement for improvements in off-site sustainable movement?
23. What evidence is there to confirm that this proposal could be delivered in the early part of the plan period?

Matter 6 – Site Pea105, 61 Bridge Road

The proposal would redevelop a site used for storage and offices to provide 21 dwellings.

Considerations

24. Is the redevelopment of this site and the consequent preclusion of it subsequently contributing to the meeting of the Borough's waste disposal and recycling facilities justified?
25. Are the proposals consistent with the policies and proposals of the Hertfordshire Waste Plan?
26. Is the loss of the site from use by potential employers justified?
27. When would the site realistically be likely to be able to deliver dwellings within the plan period?

Matter 7 – Site Pea106, 73-83 Bridge Road

The proposal would redevelop an employment site to provide 235 dwellings.

Considerations

28. Is the loss of the site from use by potential employers justified?
29. Is the development of this site for housing likely to prejudice the use or continued use of neighbouring sites for waste management purposes?

30. Are the proposals consistent with the policies and proposals of the Hertfordshire Waste Plan?
31. Should the policy criteria specify a requirement for improvements in off-site sustainable movement?
32. When would the site realistically be likely to be able to deliver dwellings and is there evidence to demonstrate that the proposal could be delivered within the plan period?

Hatfield

Matter 8 – Site HSW94, College Lane

The proposal would develop allotment gardens and other open land with 115 dwellings.

Considerations

33. Are the allotment gardens statutory or non-statutory?
34. Has there been a comprehensive assessment of the need for allotment gardens at Hatfield and a reasoned justification demonstrating that the loss of the gardens on this site is sound?
35. Have the ramifications of air and noise pollution from the adjacent motorway on the potential living conditions at this site been adequately assessed and considered in the context of the potential and viability of the site to provide acceptable living conditions for any future occupants of the residential accommodation?
36. Should the policy criteria make reference to a requirement for the working of any suitable sand and gravel reserves found on the site?
37. Should the policy justification make reference to a requirement to mitigate against the loss of ecological assets from the site?
38. What evidence is there to confirm that this proposal could be delivered during the plan period?

Woolmer Green

The Settlement Strategy classifies Woolmer Green as a small excluded village. These locations are to be secondary foci for limited amounts of new development where this is compatible with the scale and character of the village and the availability of infrastructure.

In the context of the amount of housing already promoted or approved for development during the plan period, is there scope for further development without the overall amount of housing proposed at Woolmer Green becoming disproportionate?

Matter 9 – Site WE100 - 51-53 London Road

The proposal would redevelop employment land to provide 25 dwellings.

Considerations

39. If developed for housing, should there be a planned vehicular and pedestrian link between this site and site HS15?
40. From an employment perspective is Woolmer Green a sustainable settlement?
If not how is the further loss of employment land from this settlement justified?

Welham Green

The Settlement Strategy classifies Welham Green as a large excluded village. These locations are to be secondary foci for limited amounts of new development where this is compatible with the scale and character of the village and the maintenance of Green Belt boundaries. Development should be supported by appropriate infrastructure and the need to travel minimised. The proximity and frequency of public transport, including the location of railway stations are also important considerations?

In this context what would be an appropriate amount of new residential development to be provided at Welham Green?

Matter 10 - Site WeG1, Welham Manor

The proposal would redevelop employment land, mainly used by enterprises associated with motor vehicles, to provide 16 dwellings. The site is within the Green Belt. The Stage 3 Green Belt Assessment considered that the development of this site would result in low harm to the purposes of the Green Belt.

Considerations

41. Should the policy criteria contain parameters that seek to protect the setting of the adjacent listed buildings?
42. Are there any robust highway reasons why this site should not be independently accessed from Welham Manor?
43. Are the job losses that would result from the redevelopment of this site justified?
44. Should some or all of the trees on the site be retained and their retention referred to in the policy criteria?
45. If the site was to be independently developed, is it possible to provide a robust boundary to the Green Belt?
46. What is the planning status and development potential of the land to the north-east?
47. Could this site be developed within five years of the adoption of the plan?

Matter 11 – Site WEG3a, Station Road West

The proposal would develop agricultural land to provide about 70 dwellings. The harm to the Green Belt's purposes is considered to be moderate.

48. Is there any objective basis on which the assessed Green Belt harm could be challenged?
49. Would development at this site intrude into the gap between Brookman's Park and Welham Green?
50. Is it possible to provide a permanent and robust boundary to the Green Belt along the southern boundary of this site?
51. What is the planning status and development potential of the land to the north-east?
52. Are there any issues affecting highway safety and the free flow of traffic along Station Road that are incapable of satisfactory resolution?
53. Should some or all of the trees on the site be retained and their retention referred to in the policy criteria?
54. Should the policy criteria make reference to a requirement for the working of any suitable sand and gravel reserves found on the site?
55. Has the site's capacity for residential development been objectively assessed?
56. Should the policy criteria contain parameters that seek to protect the setting of the adjacent listed buildings?
57. Could this site be developed within five years of the adoption of the plan?

Matter 12 – Site WEG10, Dixons Hill Road

The proposal would redevelop an agricultural field with 120 dwellings. The harm to the Green Belt's purposes is considered to be moderate.

Considerations

58. Is there any objective basis on which the assessed Green Belt harm could be challenged?
59. Would the proposal adversely affect ancient woodland?

And if so, could a suitable compensatory strategy be developed?
60. Should some or all of the trees on the site be retained and their retention referred to in the policy criteria?
61. Is it necessary to provide a permanent and robust boundary to the Green Belt along the western boundary of this site?

62. Would the development of his site give rise to severe impacts on highway safety and the free flow of traffic?
63. Should the policy criteria make reference to a requirement for the working of any suitable sand and gravel reserves found on the site?
64. Has the site's capacity for residential development been objectively assessed?

Brookman's Park

The Settlement Strategy classifies Brookman's Park as a large excluded village. These locations are to be secondary foci for limited amounts of new development where this is compatible with the scale and character of the village and the maintenance of Green Belt boundaries. Development should be supported by appropriate infrastructure and the need to travel minimized. The proximity and frequency of public transport, including the location of railway stations are also important considerations?

In the context of the amount of housing already promoted or approved for development during the plan period, is there scope for further development without the overall amount of housing proposed at Brookman's Park becoming disproportionate?

Matter 13 – Site BrP1, Bell Lane

The proposal would develop a field with about 100 dwellings. The harm to the Green Belt's purposes is considered to be moderate.

Considerations

65. Is there any objective basis on which the assessed Green Belt harm could be challenged?
66. Should the policy criteria contain parameters that seek to protect the setting of the adjacent listed buildings?
67. In the context of the site's proximity to retail and community facilities and frequent public transport, is this a sustainable location for housing development?
68. Should all of the trees on the site be retained and their retention referred to in the policy criteria?
69. Should the policy criteria make reference to a requirement for the working of any suitable sand and gravel reserves found on the site?

Little Heath

The Settlement Strategy classifies Little Heath as a small excluded village but acknowledges that it is a northern extension of Potters Bar. These locations are to be secondary foci for limited amounts of new development where this is compatible with the scale and character of the settlement and the availability of infrastructure. There are infrastructure and service provision issues associated with Potters Bar. In these circumstances what would be an appropriate amount of new residential development at this settlement during the plan period?

Matter 14 – Site LHe 4/5 Videne and Studlands Hawkshead Road

The proposal would develop largely open land with about 35 dwellings. The harm to the Green Belt's purposes is considered to be moderate.

Considerations

70. Is there any objective basis on which the assessed Green Belt harm could be challenged?
71. In the context of the site's proximity to retail and community facilities and frequent public transport, is this a sustainable location for housing development?
72. Are there any perceived infrastructure constraints that are incapable of resolution before the end of the plan period?
73. Should the policy criteria contain parameters that seek to protect the setting of the adjacent listed buildings?
74. Should some or all of the trees on the site be retained and their retention referred to in the policy criteria?
75. Has the site's capacity for residential development been objectively assessed?
76. Is the suggested new Green Belt boundary in the most appropriate location?
77. Is there scope to extend the development area or the Green Belt boundary to the north or north-east?