

## **Examination of the Welwyn-Hatfield Local Plan 2013-32**

**Potential sites, for housing development, in villages excluded from the Green Belt that have limited or no proposals for residential development.**

### **INSPECTORS' MATTER AND ISSUES**

**Consultation was undertaken about these sites, following the Council's call for sites in early 2019. 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.**

**The Plan's Settlement Strategy says that the small excluded villages 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. The plan also seeks to deliver sustainable development through minimizing the need to travel and by directing growth to those areas with good transport networks.**

**Notwithstanding this, Digswell, which contains a railway station and Oaklands/Mardley Heath, have no or limited residential development proposals. Without proper justification, the plan is unsound in this context. The Inspector has therefore decided to examine the submitted site(s) within or adjacent to these settlements, in order to test the soundness of their rejection by the Council.**

### **Digswell**

#### **Matter 1 - Site Dig1, East of New Road**

This site is currently used for agricultural purposes and has no physical features defining its south-eastern boundary, other than the route of a public footpath. The site is within the Green Belt and the potential harm through development, to its purposes, was assessed as moderate in the Stage 3 Green Belt Review. The proposal would develop the site for residential purposes.

#### **Considerations**

The site is close to Tewin Water Registered Park and Garden and to Digswell viaduct, which is a Grade II\* listed structure.

1. To what extent would there be harm to these heritage assets? Would it be substantial?
2. Is the harm capable of remediation by appropriate landscaping, with or without earth mounding?
3. Is there any objective basis on which the assessed Green Belt harm could be challenged or the weight attached to it changed?

4. Could an appropriate new boundary to the Green Belt be established that could endure and have less impact on the wider Green Belt than the existing one?  
  
If so, how would this be achieved?
5. How many dwellings could the site deliver.
6. Would there be any adverse ramifications for local infrastructure, services or facilities that could not be resolved during the plan period?
7. Would the impact on highway safety and/or the free flow of traffic, following the site's development, be severe?
8. Are there any flood risks that are unresolvable?
9. What impact would the proposal have on ecological assets and to what extent could this be mitigated or compensated for?
10. Should some of the trees on the site be retained and their retention referred to in the policy criteria?
11. Is the site's location sustainable in the context of its accessibility, on foot or by cycle, to retail and community facilities and frequent public transport?
12. Are there any other matters that weigh against this site being proposed for residential development?

## **Oaklands/Mardley Heath**

### **Matter 2 – Site OMH6, Land East of Danesbury Park Road**

The proposal would remove open land, formerly used as pasture, from the Green Belt and develop it for residential purposes. A larger parcel that included more open countryside, was assessed as making a moderate-high contribution to the Green Belt's purposes.

#### **Considerations**

13. Should the harm applied to the larger Green Belt parcel be applied to this site? Either way provide an objective justification.
14. Could an appropriate and defensible boundary to the wider Green Belt be established? If so how and where?
15. Would there be any adverse ramifications for local infrastructure, services or facilities that could not be resolved during the plan period?
16. Are there any flood risks that are unresolvable?
17. Would the impact on highway safety and/or the free flow of traffic, following the site's development, be severe?
18. What impact would the proposal have on ecological assets and to what extent could this be mitigated or compensated for?

19. Is the site's location sustainable in the context of its accessibility on foot or by cycle to retail and community facilities and frequent public transport?
20. Would the proposal clearly be deliverable within the first five years following adoption.
21. Are there any other matters that weigh against this site being proposed for residential development?

### **Matter 3 – Site OMH7, 22 The Avenue**

The proposal would redevelop a commercial property, largely used for the parking of vehicles and which is washed over by the Green Belt, with 2 dwellings.

#### **Considerations**

22. What justification is there for the retention of this site and the wider area containing built development as land washed over by the Green Belt?
23. Would the impact on highway safety and/or the free flow of traffic, following the site's development, be severe?
24. What impact would the proposal have on ecological assets and to what extent could this be mitigated or compensated for?
25. Is the site's location sustainable in the context of its accessibility on foot or by cycle to retail and community facilities and frequent public transport?
26. Would there be any adverse ramifications for local infrastructure, services or facilities that could not be resolved during the plan period?
27. Would there be unmitigable harm to living conditions on the site as a result of noise or atmospheric pollution from the nearby motorway?
28. Given the character of the surroundings, is it likely that this site, if redeveloped, would contain sufficient dwellings to warrant its status as a Local Plan proposal?
29. Would the proposal clearly be deliverable within the first five years following adoption?
30. Are there any other matters that weigh against this site being proposed for residential development?

### **Matter 4 – Site OMH9, Rear of 19-23 The Avenue**

The proposal would develop the rear gardens of four properties for residential purposes. The site is within the Green Belt and a larger area, of which it is a part and included more open countryside, was assessed as making a moderate-high contribution to the Green Belt's purposes. The site could accommodate about twelve dwellings.

## **Considerations**

31. Is there any objective basis on which the assessed Green Belt harm could be challenged, or the weight attached to it reduced?
32. Could an appropriate and defensible boundary to the wider Green Belt be established?
33. Would the impact on highway safety and/or the free flow of traffic, following the site's development, be severe?
34. What impact would the proposal have on ecological assets and to what extent could this be mitigated or compensated for?
35. Should some or all of the trees on the site be retained and their retention referred to in the policy criteria?
36. Is the site's location sustainable in the context of its accessibility, on foot or by cycle, to retail and community facilities and frequent public transport?
37. Would there be any adverse ramifications for local infrastructure, services or facilities that could not be resolved during the plan period?
38. Would there be unmitigable harm to living conditions on the site as a result of noise or atmospheric pollution from the nearby motorway?
39. Are there any flood risks that are unresolvable?
40. Would the proposal clearly be deliverable within the first five years following adoption.
41. Are there any other matters that weigh against this site being proposed for residential development?