

WELWYN HATFIELD LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

Response to EX228 (Symondshyde; Dec 2020)

Tarmac Trading Ltd.

1. We strongly support the Council's proposed removal of the Symondshyde allocation from the Plan.
2. The Inspector referred in his interim report (EX212) to the "detached location" of this site (para. 84 and 94), its "comparatively isolated location ... with poor road links" (para. 84), "the proposal's relative unsustainability" (para. 84) and "this isolated site" (para. 94).
3. We echo these observations of the Inspector. By contrast, BGS would comprise a sustainable urban extension of Welwyn Garden City, having none of the isolation, detachment and unsustainability that characterises Symondshyde.
4. Any easterly enlargement of Symondshyde in an attempt to increase its sustainability would unduly harm the Green Belt, undermining its purposes of preventing urban sprawl, settlement coalescence and countryside encroachment. A suitable replacement Green Belt boundary for any enlarged allocation remains elusive. In addition, any easterly enlargement of Symondshyde has not been underpinned by sufficient assessment of its effects on landscape character, visual amenity, biodiversity and the Council's planned Green Corridor.
5. Given the lack of existing infrastructure at Symondshyde, any development in this location would require significant new infrastructure. Delivery of the scale of new infrastructure required is not sustainable when compared to an urban extension location such as BGS, which can readily plug into the extensive infrastructure already available in the adjacent Welwyn Garden City.
6. In this respect, the Inspector referred in his interim report (EX212) to "the additional work" submitted by the Council on Symondshyde, which demonstrated to his "satisfaction, that a viable public transport system, with frequent services, could be eventually established" (para. 88). Unfortunately, in pronouncing his satisfaction in that respect, the Inspector did not have regard to the analysis of Tarmac's retained transport consultants, David Tucker Associates, which formed part of our response to the autumn 2020 consultation and which we attach to this response (**Appendix 1**), for the Inspector's ease of reference.
7. Objectors to the allocation have raised concerns about the condition of the land at Symondshyde and whether it is suitable for development. Chalk dissolution has been highlighted. No intrusive investigations appear to have been undertaken to demonstrate that the condition of the land enables the site to be developed safely. In contrast, the BGS allocation is underpinned by extensive intrusive investigations demonstrating that those parts of the allocation proposed for housing and complementary land uses can be safely developed.
8. For all these reasons, the full BGS allocation should be prioritised over any part of the Symondshyde allocation.