



Homes
England

Statement of Common Ground

North East of Welwyn Garden City (Land at Former
Panshanger Aerodrome)

Homes England

Historic England

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

April 2021

Introduction

1. This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) is a jointly agreed position statement between Homes England, Historic England and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (The Parties) in relation to the draft Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council Local Plan (The Local Plan). In particular, this statement relates to the proposed development of the former Panshanger Airfield (The Site) and the masterplan attached to this Statement at **Appendix 1**.
2. The intention of this Statement is to confirm to the Local Plan Inspector the agreed position in respect of the development of the Site and its development in accordance with the masterplan prepared to support the mixed-use redevelopment comprising up to 845 dwellings, Local Centre, Community Hub and associated Public Open Space together with the provision of 12 Gypsy & Traveller pitches.
3. In addition, at the Local Plan Examination Session looking at the Site, the Inspector requested that the Council and Homes England investigate the potential to accommodate additional dwellings to help meet the Councils Housing Land Supply with specific reference to land to the north west within the ownership of Homes England. This is currently being reviewed but both Historic England and WHBC have significant concerns relating to the suitability of land in this location for development. Historic England consider there may be insufficient land to mitigate the harm to heritage assets and WHBC have additional concerns relating to development on land identified as 'very high harm' and 'essential' in the Stage 3 Green Belt Study EX99. Homes England have undertaken to submit further information and an additional meeting between Homes England, Historic England and the Council will be undertaken within the next 4 weeks to agree a position on the potential to extend the allocation to include this land. This will be the subject of a further SoCG once the Parties have met to discuss the opportunities and constraints of this part of the site

Background to the Site

Planning History

4. The planning history of the Site is well documented and includes the grant of Outline Planning permission in February 2020 (LPA Ref 6/2018/0873/OUTLINE) for the erection of up to 650 dwellings (including 40% affordable homes), Primary School, Local Centre/Community Hub along with 6 Gypsy & Traveller pitches and associated Public Open Space (Phase 1). Since this permission was granted, Homes England have now acquired the Site and consequently is able to bring forward the wider allocation now being proposed by the Council in the Local Plan review which is ongoing.
5. Policy SP18 allocates Phase 1 and a proposed main modification proposes Phase 2 for development. In his note dated 17 March 2021, the Local Plan Inspector has recommended that the Council reconsider the need for housing and development sites necessary to accommodate the Council's Full Objectively Assessed Need (FOAN) in order to make the Plan sound. Should the Council not be able to meet its FOAN, then there is a strong possibility the Plan will be found unsound leading to an even higher housing supply being required in accordance with the NPPF 2019.

Areas of Agreement

6. Homes England consider that the Site can accommodate up to 845 homes in accordance with masterplan attached at **Appendix 1** together with the increase in Gypsy and Traveller pitches to 12 along with the requisite increase in social infrastructure and Public Open Space.
7. Homes England met on 26 March 2021 with representatives of Historic England and the Council in which it was agreed that the masterplan attached at **Appendix 1** is acceptable in landscape and heritage terms subject to the landscape buffers shown being a requirement of the Planning Policy to ensure that adequate screening can be accommodated to protect the setting of heritage assets and the wider landscape. It is therefore **AGREED** that the extent of developable area identified in the masterplan at **Appendix 1** should form the basis for Policy SP18 and the future development of the former Panshanger Airfield. Therefore, the eastern edge of the proposed Green Belt boundary could move from the line shown on the Council's initial strategy plan to follow the existing hedge line as shown on the proposed masterplan at Appendix 1. Alternatively, consistent with the Council's normal approach the Green Belt boundary could move to encompass the increased developable area as shown on Appendix 1 with the Green Belt buffer and landscaping lying within the Green Belt.
8. In addition, with respect to the potential for delivering additional homes at the site (as requested by the Inspector at the Local Plan Hearing Session 9) it is **AGREED** that while Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and Historic England have voiced significant concerns regarding the impacts on the historic environment and the Green Belt both Parties will consider the further information to be provided by Homes England and review whether land to the north west of the Site has any potential to accommodate up to an additional 50 dwellings.

