



## **Leverstock Green Village Association**

### **St Albans City and District Local Plan Examination**

#### **Matter 7- The Broad Locations for Development – Specific Matters (policy S6 (i) to (xi)**

Main Issue- whether the detailed policy for each broad location for development is justified, effective and consistent with national policy

East Hemel Hempstead (South) S6 (iii) (A major urban extension of Hemel Hempstead)

**1 Is the site suitable for housing and are there any specific constraints or requirements associated with it, or the need for mitigation measures?**

- 1.1 East Hemel Hempstead (South) is located within designated Green Belt land and this should be considered a significant constraint to development. The site was considered as part of the 2014 Green Belt Review which looked at this area in the assessment of Site S2. Figure 1 shows the entirety of the site and highlights Site 2b in yellow as an area recommended as potentially suitable for release.
- 1.2 This area of the site infills development from the built-up boundary of the adjacent urban area up to the M1. The remainder of Policy S6 iii site 'East Hemel Hempstead (South)' is not recommended for Green Belt release in the Green Belt Review, as a result of the area being constrained by having an open landscape character which would make development visually prominent from both a local level but also from some mid-range views from land to the east of the M1 motorway. The study instead recommends that landscape features, planting and hedgerows should be retained in this area, in order to 'reduce the visibility of any future development from the key transport corridor and wider countryside' (para 4.6.10, Green Belt Review, 2014).

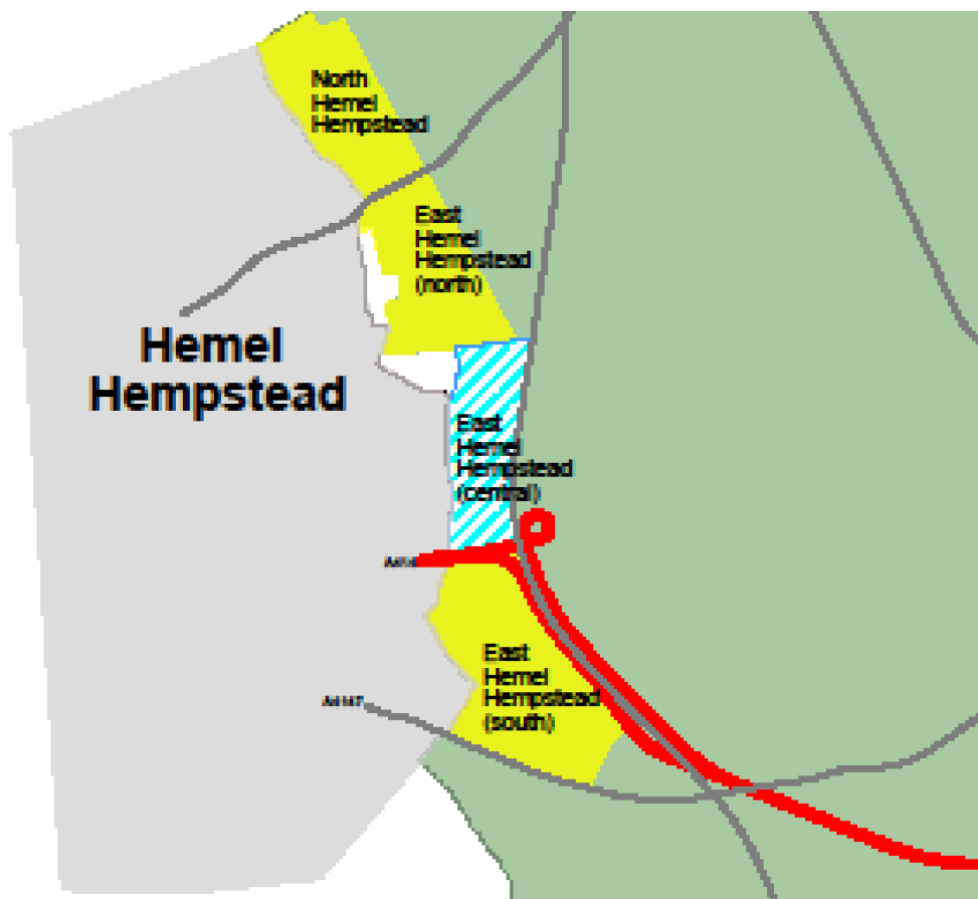


*Figure 1: The yellow area indicates the area of East Hemel Hempstead (South) considered appropriate for Green Belt release as recommended by the Green Belt Review (2014)*

- 1.3 The site is also constrained by heritage assets within the vicinity of the site. Westwick Row, located within the broad location for the site, is home to a number of Grade II listed buildings. There are also a further number of heritage assets adjacent to the site's boundary. The Gorhambury Grade II Registered Park and Garden is also located close to the site. These constraints will be discussed further in the response to questions 9.
- 1.4 Further constraints include the sites proximity to the M1 and the associated issues that this would cause in relations to noise and air pollution. The BPA pipeline also runs through the north of the site from south east to north west.

**2 What evidence is there to demonstrate that the proposed broad location is capable of delivering 2,400 dwellings? (200 of which are after the plan period)**

- 2.1 The 2016 Publication Draft of the Local Plan<sup>1</sup> allocated this area of land for 1,000 houses. Leverstock Green Village Association understands that a need has arisen within the area for new houses to accommodate growth and that the scale of growth has necessitated some Green Belt release across the District. It is considered that dwelling numbers of circa. 1,000 would provide for much the needed homes, however at a scale that complements the village and surrounding area. The 2018 Draft Local Plan introduces additional land release for a further 1,400 dwellings and the full extent is shown in figure 2. LGVA contend that this addition is excessive and unsupported by robust evidence.



*Figure 2, map showing the full extent of the North and East Hemel Hempstead Broad Locations in the 2018 Local Plan*

<sup>1</sup>

[https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/Images/CD%20014%20St%20Albans%20Strategic%20Local%20Plan%202016\\_tcm15-67032.pdf](https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/Images/CD%20014%20St%20Albans%20Strategic%20Local%20Plan%202016_tcm15-67032.pdf)

- 2.2 As discussed in q.1 and displayed in figure 1, only the area highlighted in yellow is the area which has been recommended for release from the Green Belt, in the Green Belt Study (2014). The 2018 Draft Plan displays a substantial increase in area than originally proposed as displayed in figure 2 and there has been a lack of additional evidence to support this.
- 2.3 The Plan and associated Policies Map should therefore redraw the boundary to the East Hemel Hempstead (South) site to ensure that it complies with the Green Belt Review. This would make sure that all development is kept within the area recommended for Green Belt release to ensure that development is appropriate for the area.
- 2.4 We would again emphasise that we are very firmly of the opinion that the only land which is suitable or necessary for release from the Green Belt is the original area earmarked in the Green Belt review and shown in yellow in Figure 1.

#### Capacity Analysis using the Green Belt review (2014)

- 2.5 Leverstock Green Village Association has substantial subsequent concerns relating to the policy support for the delivery of 2,400 dwellings on the East Hemel (South) Broad Location under Policy S6 iii).
- 2.6 Paragraph 4.6.2 of the Green Belt study states that solid yellow areas 'represent the locations where (sic.) development would take place, including residential and supporting land uses (e.g. public open space; schools and other infrastructure as required).' It is quite clear that 2,400 dwellings cannot be delivered on the solid yellow area identified for release from the Green Belt in the Green Belt Review (2014) along with supporting amenities at a suitable density for the surrounding area.
- 2.7 It is noted that the 'Broad Location Non-Green Belt Area' of the East Hemel (South) area has been substantially increased to 115ha in the emerging Local Plan. Annex 1 of the document provides indicative calculations of developable areas for residential and non-residential uses. Residential uses are indicated on an increased area of 59 hectares (achieving 2,360 dwellings at approximately 40 dwellings per hectare). It remains the case that this area substantially exceeds land identified as potentially suitable for release from the Green Belt.
- 2.8 LGVA therefore reiterate that the size of the area should be reduced to the area recommended for release through the Green Belt Review (2014) and the number of dwellings are significantly reduced to approximately 1000 homes.

#### SA appraisal findings

- 2.9 It is also not considered that the impact of increasing dwelling numbers by 140% from the 2016 Strategic Local Plan to the 2018 Local Plan has been fully considered in the SA.
- 2.10 The site was previously allocated in the 2016 Strategic Local Plan in Policy SLP13 a), which required the development to deliver a minimum of 1,000 dwellings. Given that the dwelling allocation has significantly increased by 1,400 dwellings to 2,400 dwellings, it

is expected that there would be significant changes in the assessment of impacts in the SA.

- 2.11 However, the SA does not conclude that there are significant differences between the allocation of fewer dwellings in the 2016 SLP and the 2018 Local Plan.
- 2.12 For two objectives, the 2018 SA assesses that the larger development would be marginally more sustainable than the smaller development assessed in the 2016 SA. Differences are shown for the 'Soils' objective where the 2016 SA assesses 'significant adverse effects' and the 2018 SA assesses the soils objective as 'unsustainable'. The assessments for the landscape & townscape objective also differ between 2016 and 2018, with the assessment of the effect on landscape changing from 'significant adverse effects' to 'unsustainable'. This is curious given that the site is situated on the same area.
- 2.13 There are only three objectives where the 2018 SA predicts marginally more unsustainable effects for the significantly larger development (revising the assessment from 'very sustainable' to 'sustainable'): 'equality/social inclusion', 'sustainable prosperity and growth' and 'fairer access to services'.
- 2.14 LGVA therefore does not consider that the SA has fully considered the impact of increasing the dwellings by 140%.

Option	SA Objectives																			
	1. Biodiversity	2. Water resources	3. Flood risk	4. Soils	5. GHG Emissions	6. Climate Change Proof	7. Air Quality	8. Previously developed land	9. Resource Efficiency	10. Historic environment	11. Landscape/ Townscape	12. Health	13. Sustainable Locations	14. Equality/ Social Inclusion	15. Good Quality Housing	16. Community Identity	17. Crime and Fear of Crime	18. Sustainable Prosperity and Growth	19. Fairer Access to Services	20. Revitalise Town Centres
Policy S6 iii) East Hemel Hempstead (South)	x	-	-	x	✓	-	✓	x	✓	?	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓

Figure 3- 2018 Sustainability Appraisal for East Hemel Hempstead (south)

Policies (Abridged)	Timescale (Short/Medium/Long term)	Sustainability Appraisal Objectives													
		Biodiversity	Water quality/quantity	Flood risk	Soils	Greenhouse gas emissions	Climate change proof	Air Quality	Use of brownfield sites	Resource efficiency	Historic & cultural assets	Landscape & townscape	Health	Sustainable locations	Equity & social exclusion
SLP13 b) – East Hemel Hempstead (South)	ST	x	-	-	xx	✓	-	✓	x	✓	?	xx	✓	✓	✓
	MT	x	-	-	xx	✓	-	✓	x	✓	?	xx	✓	✓	✓
	LT	x	-	-	xx	✓	-	✓	x	✓	?	xx	✓	✓	✓

Figure 4- 2016 Sustainability Appraisal for East Hemel Hempstead (South)

2.15 Overall, it is considered that insufficient evidence has been provided to justify the increase in land released from the Green Belt and the subsequent increase in dwellings by 140%. LGVA contend that St Albans Council must provide additional evidence to support this level of development on the site.

### **3 What arrangements have been made for joint working between the Council and Dacorum Borough Council to deliver the proposed broad location?**

3.1 The Duty to Co-operate Statement (2019)<sup>2</sup> recognises that the East Hemel Hempstead Broad Locations have required and will continue to require substantial joint working with Dacorum Borough Council and others. The statement also goes on to state that St Alban's Council and Dacorum Council as well as Hertfordshire County Council and Herts Local Enterprise Partnership have been successful in receiving official government garden town status and funding for Hemel Garden Communities (in which East Hemel Hempstead (South) is part of this wider development). The development comprises of being located half within St Albans (as per the draft Local Plan) and half within Dacorum (as per emerging Local Plan), aims to deliver up to 11,000 homes and 10,000 jobs.

3.2 This emphasises the need for cross-boundary strategic planning, and thus why work on the South West Hertfordshire Joint Strategic Plan (JSP) is important to agreeing an overall strategy for the scale and distribution of growth across the sub-region. However, the St Albans Local Plan has progressed ahead of the JSP and does not give due consideration to the need to work effectively with neighbouring authorities. It also points to evidence not being provided that justifies the scale and distribution of growth in the submitted Local Plan and, if growth to the East of Hemel contributes towards the Dacorum requirement, how and where the consequent shortfall in meeting St Albans' own need will be accommodated.

3.3 It is also noted that there is no Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) between St Albans District Council and Dacorum Borough Council. There is an unsigned 'Draft' SoCG between the five local authorities that comprise the South West Hertfordshire group (**CD007**), including Dacorum Borough Council. However, this is a SoCG in relation to the preparation of the South West Hertfordshire Joint Spatial Plan (JSP) and the next round of Local Plans to be prepared within that framework. The timetable for the JSP set out in the Draft SoCG (**CD007**) shows that the preparation of the JSP is still in the early stages with the Issues and Options consultation expected in February 2020.

3.4 While there is evidence to suggest that the two councils intend to collaborate through the development process, there does not appear to be any set arrangements for joint working between the councils for the delivery of the proposals at this broad location.

### **4 Should the policy refer specifically to the provision of sports facilities?**

4.1 Policy L28 identifies a number of different types of priority provision which is required in the East/North Hemel Hempstead Broad locations in order to meet the future needs of

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/Images/CD%20028%20SADC%20Duty%20to%20Co-operate%20Statement%20April%202019\\_tcm15-67182.pdf](https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/Images/CD%20028%20SADC%20Duty%20to%20Co-operate%20Statement%20April%202019_tcm15-67182.pdf)



the area. It does not stipulate which of this priority provision will be required in each broad location.

- 4.2 In the event that approval is given for any development in East Hemel South, the policy should therefore have regard to the potential impacts of the sports facilities on the area and should include specific detail by way of mitigation.

**5 What are the timescales and funding sources for the necessary improvements to junction 8 of the M1?**

- 5.1 SACDC should respond to this question. We note that Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan 2018-2031<sup>3</sup> includes enhancements to M1 Junction 8 within the scheme table under the category of transport improvements at East Hemel Hempstead. The timeframe is allocated as 'medium term' which is equal to 5-12 years. The developer is cited as being the lead promotor for this. LGVA is firmly of the opinion that all infrastructure developments and improvements including enhancements to M1 Junction 8 must be carried out and in place before any development is permitted.

**6 What is the justification for the 3% self-build figure?**

- 6.1 The cumulative level of housing which has been allocated to self-build throughout the entirety of the Local Plan equates to 370 dwellings and there is no justification within the policy or anywhere else in the Local Plan for the 3% self-build figure.
- 6.2 LGVA considers that self-build requirements are minimal in East Hemel South and recommends that the policy should reflect this in respect of this location.

**7 Should the specific location for the primary school within the site be identified?**

- 7.1 As discussed in the response to Q.1, Leverstock Green Village Association contend that development should not occur to the south of the site and therefore this limits the developable area of the site. The specific location for the primary school is therefore dependent on the outcome of the examination of the Local Plan and allocated sites.
- 7.2 Notwithstanding the above, it is considered that the location of the primary school should be determined through the master planning process. Given the level of development proposed at this site as well as the nearby Broad Locations, the location of such services should be planned comprehensively, taking into account the existing and planned infrastructure. It is recommended therefore that a high-level capacity analysis study is undertaken to demonstrate that the proposed schools can be comfortably accommodated across the Broad Locations.

**8 How have heritage assets been considered and is a Heritage Impact Assessment required?**

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/about-the-council/consultations/ltp4-local-transport-plan-4-complete.pdf>

- 8.1 Westwick Row, located within the broad location for the site, is home to a number of Grade II listed buildings. There are also a further number of heritage assets adjacent to the site's boundary. The Gorhambury Grade II Registered Park and Garden is also located close to the site.
- 8.2 The heritage assets are acknowledged in the 2018 SA, which states that development could affect the settings of these Listed Buildings and may impact upon the setting of the Registered Park and Garden.
- 8.3 Policy S6 iii) however, does not acknowledge these heritage assets, nor does it introduce any safeguards to protect the heritage assets or their setting.
- 8.4 Paragraph 190 of the NPPF states that:

*"Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage assets conservation and any aspects of the proposal."*

- 8.5 It is not clear whether a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) was conducted when considering this site for allocation. Given the above evidence and discussion, it is clear that a HIA must be undertaken in order to assess the significance of the heritage assets on the site, the impact of the proposal on the heritage asset and measures required to avoid or minimise this impact. This Assessment should be carried out using the guidance contained in 'The Historic Environment and Site Allocations in Local Plans (Historic England Advice Note 3) (2015)'.

**9 What is the justification for the 15 pitch Gypsy and Traveller site here? Should its precise location be identified?**

- 9.1 The St Albans Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment Update – January 2019 identifies a need for 72 additional pitches for households that meet the planning definition. It also identifies a need for up to 5 additional pitches from undetermined households, and a need for 41 additional pitches for households that do not meet the planning definition.
- 9.2 Policy L7 states that provision for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People will be required at East Hemel Hempstead (South), East Hemel Hempstead Central and Park Street Garden Village due to a variety of factors including: proximity to the road network mots used by Gypsies and travellers; development site scale; area topography and landscaping opportunities; and the wide range of uses to be provided in the broad Locations for development. In total, the three broad locations will provide 60 pitches, which is a shortfall of 12 from the identified need of 72 pitches.





- 9.3 Appendix 13 of the Duty to Cooperate 2019<sup>4</sup> document states that: *'on Gypsy & Traveller issues GS advised that this part of Dacorum already has an over concentration of G&T sites and is concerned regarding the two additional sites suggested within the Hemel East application. There needs to be further discussion between the Councils.'* It is therefore considered that further research needs to be conducted to understand the future need of Gypsies and Travellers, taking into account the existing pitches both within St Albans and neighbouring areas, and that the over concentration of pitches in close proximity must be avoided.

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<sup>4</sup> [https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/Images/CD%20028%20SADC%20Duty%20to%20Co-operate%20Statement%20April%202019\\_tcm15-67182.pdf](https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/Images/CD%20028%20SADC%20Duty%20to%20Co-operate%20Statement%20April%202019_tcm15-67182.pdf)