

Local Plan Consultation 2019

The *Digswell Residents Association* have carried out a village wide survey relating to the five sites around Digswell. i.e Dig1, Dig3, Dig4, Dig5 & WGC11.

We received 78 direct responses and have summarised them here. Firstly as general points for all the sites and then as points relating only to separate sites. We are aware that individual residents will have submitted responses via the Council's portal.

The common factors that have emerged from this survey are:

Objections:

- A. **Green Belt:** All these sites are on the 'Green Belt' and as such any development of them would be detrimental to the aims and objective set for this land.
- B. **Education:** The Village has a primary school: St Johns, which is only a single form entry. It is already oversubscribed and adding additional demand on this school is impractical. A whole new 2 or 3 form entry school would be needed in this area if additional housing of any significance was allowed.
- C. **Health Services:** Already the demand on local health services are a stretch. Digswell Residents have to travel to Welwyn Village or parts of Welwyn Garden City to reach a GP – if you can get an appointment. An increase of population in this area would make the situation impossible to live with.
- D. **Trains:** Digswell serves the needs of commuters to London and other places via the railway services from Welwyn North Station. There are considerable problems for rail travellers at present in access to parking (the station car park is full every weekday) and space on the already overcrowded trains. Welwyn North Station is not long enough to accommodate the increased length trains, so these will not be stopping at this station. To increase the demand further is a vital reason for objection to more housing in the local area.
- E. **Drainage:** Adding more housing to the already stretched sewerage and drainage system would increase the problems that already exist.
- F. **Traffic and Pollution:** The road from Hertford to Welwyn through Digswell is an unclassified road and has speed restrictions in place. We have extensive experience of high speeds and traffic density along this and other roads in Digswell. We run a community Drive-Safe programme alerting drivers to excessive speeds and have raised money to have a Speed Indicator Sign (Smiley face) installed. To add in the region of an extra 200 cars travelling in and out of the Village each day would cause grid-lock. Let alone the increased pollution at a time when children are walking to school along the same road.

Site Reference: DIG1. Land East of 2 New Road, Digswell

Many of the conclusions in the 2016 report following the last 'call for sites' should still apply:

Development of Dig1 would have a serious detrimental effect on the setting of Welwyn Viaduct, which is grade II listed. There are a series of views of the viaduct from the public footpath that would form the eastern boundary of the site. These are likely to be the only long views of the eastern side of the viaduct and show its full impressive length. The intervention of housing on the site would seriously detract from its setting.*

Dig1 overlooks Tewin Water Park, a late C18 landscape and pleasure grounds to designs by Humphrey Repton, surrounding a late C18 country house, Tewin Water School with former Stable Block, (formerly listed as Tewin Water) which is a grade II Listed Building standing at the centre of the park, between the River Mimram and a sharp rise in the ground to the north-east.

The park is bounded to the north and east by agricultural land and woodland, which forms the backdrop to the setting of the park and Dig1 makes a positive contribution to its significance.

Due to its steep topography, the site is highly visible in the wider landscape. There are views of the site from within the Registered Historic Park and Garden and along the entrance road from the west. The proposed access to the site would be adjacent to the main entrance of the RHPG and development would seriously detract from the character and appearance of the entrance to the HPG and Tewin Water School. Development would intrude into the setting of the park and it is considered that substantial harm would arise to this heritage asset through change within its setting. The park forms the setting of Tewin Water School with Stable Block, so degradation of the setting of the park would also affect the setting of this listed building.

Conclusion: *The site is not suitable for development due to the substantial impact that it would have on heritage assets in the vicinity of the site, namely on the setting of the Registered HPG and the listed buildings within the park and on the setting of the Welwyn Viaduct.*

The individual residents responses have highlighted much of the same content; *the Impact on the Landscape, Green Belt infringement, Lack of access, More traffic, Drainage overloading, Restriction to school drop-off parking on Harmer Green Lane, Property value blight and as area Digs 1 is at a much higher level than the New Road properties, this would create a significant overbearing on those properties.*

Site Ref: DIG3: Land to the North of Harmer Green Lane, Burnham Green.

The area DIG3 is in fact adjacent to Burnham Green and we are aware that a local Residents group there, are submitting their own response to this consultation. However we can report the findings to our survey in addition to the general points made at the start.

Ribbon Development: This area is in Green Belt territory and would join up the houses in Burnham to those in 'Barnes Wood' Harmer Green Lane. A 'ribbon' development, which is undesirable. This should be classed as over development. There are no residents' facilities in the village: The local grocery shop has closed and apart from the pub all other needs of the residents have to be obtained elsewhere.

Access: There would be access problems as the site is on a blind bend on the road.

Site Ref: DIG4. Land at junction of Digswell Lane and Bessemer Road, Digswell

This site was previously submitted in the last round of site calls. It was rejected then and the conclusions then still stand:

The proximity of the site to two significant noise sources, the railway line and A1000, would result in an unsatisfactory residential environment which would adversely affect the living conditions of future occupants. This site is within the setting of the monumental grade II listed railway viaduct and development in this location would erode the dramatic landscape setting of the viaduct, resulting in harm to its significance. English Heritage therefore recommends that this site is not brought forward for development.*

Conclusion: *This site is not suitable for development due to the detrimental impact that it would have on the setting of Welwyn Viaduct and the adverse impact on residential amenity due to the proximity of two significant noise sources.*

Site Ref: DIG5 and WGC11. Opposite sides of the Hertford Road east of Digswell.

The main concerns from residents to these sites being developed are that in addition to all the general points raised at the start, the issue of traffic congestion, access onto a busy road and 'ribbon development' were raised.

The local primary school is near to these sites and there are already serious problems in traffic congestion, with the school arrivals and departures twice a day. Cars are parking in and between the traffic bollards and along the sides of the roadway for access to the school. Any development around the same area would seriously affect the school operation and restrict the flow of traffic through that area.

Conclusion:

The resident responses were all against the development of any of the five sites, although some did acknowledge the need for more housing within the Local Plan. Three residents considered Dig3, WGC11 and Dig5 as the least damaging sites.

Digswell Residents Association
14th June 2019