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Dear Mark

Consultation on Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan.

Thank you for consulting us on the pre-submission version of the Development Management Policies and Site Allocations DPD. We would also like to thank you for involving us in the previous consultations and informal drafts. As we've been working closely with you on the emerging Development Management Policies we've found that these do cover the majority of the environmental issues and criteria for developments that we wanted to see. Therefore we've been able to find these policies sound. There are some concerns around the evidence base for this DPD however which we may need to discuss further prior to submission of the document.

Waste Water Infrastructure and Capacity Issues

The Water Framework Directive requires that waterbodies reach good ecological status or potential by 2027 and currently many of them are failing to reach this standard. Waste water can have detrimental effects on water quality and is a common problem throughout the catchment. Common concerns throughout the catchment area served by Maple Lodge Waste Water Treatment Works (amongst others) is the impact of excessive nutrients, which are of detriment to biodiversity and low flow levels of rivers. Over 2,000 residential discharges and six large sewage treatment works including Blackbirds and Maple Lodge discharge treated water into the River Colne and its tributaries.

Many of your neighbouring Councils are being asked by us to submit evidence that water infrastructure requirements have been assessed and the growth being proposed within Local Plans is feasible. Dacorum, St Albans, Three Rivers, Watford and Welwyn Hatfield jointly published a Water Cycle Study (Scoping Study) in 2010 which attempted to pinpoint what the potential issues are with waste water capacity and its affect on the water environment across the catchment. The study highlights that the majority of waste water treatment works will require some capacity upgrades to accommodate the potential increases in waste water including Maple Lodge which may require substantial upgrades

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looking at the growth scenarios. The impact on the existing trunk sewer network approaching Maple Lodge and at a localised level whether network upgrades would be required if growth locations are proposed to the opposite side of existing settlements were also highlighted as key issues.

For individual boroughs the recommendations included further detailed work to support the site allocation stage of the Local Plan particularly regarding the provision of sewerage capacity in and around key settlements such as St Albans, Hemel Hempstead, Hatfield and Watford to ensure that adequate sewerage infrastructure is phased and implemented along development sites rather than constructed piecemeal. Such studies would enable Councils to identify any major concerns for proposed site allocations and be able to work with Thames Water to identify solutions or alternatives.

Ensuring that the proposed level of growth can be accommodated, and that future upgrades to Waste Water Treatment works and sewerage networks are taken into account in the location and phasing of site allocations is key to avoiding or minimising any detrimental impact on the water environment. As this is a catchment-wide issue its important that liaison with neighbouring Councils and Thames Water takes place so that the duty to co-operate requirements are met. Although policy SADM18 does assist in addressing these issues by requiring developments to show that they have or can provide infrastructure capacity, we would expect these issues to have been considered strategically as well and that this can be demonstrated by evidence. We realise this has been raised at a late stage so we are keen to talk to you to progress a way forward.

You may also be aware that Hertfordshire County Council are commissioning a Water Project initially focussed on the high level, regional growth impacts on waste water capacity and infrastructure (also water resources) and then further on more detailed studies based on catchment areas. It's important that any future reviews of your Local Plan documents are based on an appropriate assessment of the growth impacts on waste water infrastructure and water resources.

Flood Risk

There are only two sites (H2 Gas Holders Site and H7 Lincolnsfield) that lie within Flood Zones 2 and 3 on our Flood Map for Planning. In both cases there is the opportunity to apply the sequential approach at site level so that the more vulnerable developments such as residential can be located in Flood Zone 1 or the least risky areas of the site for fluvial (and surface water) risk. The sequential approach and requirement for a Flood Risk Assessment is recognised in the site allocation text which is very positive.

There are evidence base requirements however that we cannot find supporting your document which are requirements from paragraph 100 of the National Planning Policy Framework. We have raised in our previous responses the requirement for the flood risk Sequential Test and Exceptions Test. The Sequential Test should be applied to any proposed sites to be allocated in areas at risk of flooding (based on our Flood Map or a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment) to determine whether there are any reasonably available alternative sites the development can go. If a Council concludes there are alternative sites then the proposed allocation would be withdrawn, however, if there are not reasonable alternatives at a lower flood risk the Council would then need to apply the Exceptions Test. The Exceptions Test is normally based on a more detailed (level 2) SFRA and checks if there are wider sustainability benefits of the development that outweigh flood risk and that the development will be safe and not increase flood risk elsewhere. It needs to be clearly demonstrated preferably

within a standalone document how the Sequential and Exception Tests have been applied to sites H2 and H7. The Sequential Test is a test which can be easily undertaken by Policy Officers at a Council and with permission we can provide examples of how it's been applied by other Local Authorities. Without the Sequential Test evidence we have to formally object to the site allocations H2 and H7 however this should hopefully be easily overcome by the submission of a Sequential Test.

In addition your SFRA (2008) will have been based on the Upper Colne Model in 2005 which has since been updated in 2010. Therefore your SFRA/maps will need to be updated to reflect the new Upper Colne Model and include the latest surface water mapping. Also of note is that revised climate change allowances are going to be published in the Autumn likely to be mid-late October 2015. The new climate change allowances will be different in that they will be based on river basin districts rather than a nationally applied figure for peak river flow of 20%. Any updates of the SFRA will need to take into account the new climate change allowances when mapping flood risk across the Council area. Technically the two sites (H2 and H7) should have been supported by a level 2 assessment which basically assesses the site specific flood characteristics such as the depth, velocity, duration and rate of inundation of the flood risk.

Please contact me if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely

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