

Elmbridge Local Plan 2037

Examination: Stage 2 Hearings

Matter 9: Site Allocations

Address: St George's Avenue, Weybridge, Surrey, KT13 0

User ID: 41249725

Prepared as a response to Matters, Issue and Questions (MIQs) for Stage 2 of the Examination

On behalf of Haleon

Date: 20th March 2024

Prepared by:

James Williams BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

M: 07887 627931

E: jwilliams@vailwilliams.com

Introduction

1. This Hearing Statement is for and on behalf of Haleon, as prepared by Vail Williams LLP.
2. Haleon (formally part of GlaxoSmithKline) are the owners of the site at St George's Avenue, Weybridge, KT13 0DE, (Site LAA Reference: US92, Site Allocation reference: WEY33, referred to as 'GlaxoSmithKline' in the Local Plan). Haleon have submitted representations to the Draft Elmbridge Local Plan, including the Regulation 19 stage.
3. This Hearing Statement is concerned with Stage 2 **Matter 9 (Site Allocations)** as set out in the Inspector's Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs) (**ID-005**) and has been prepared on the basis of the submitted Local Plan and the relevant evidence base.
4. Vail Williams LLP observed the Matter 1 Hearing Session (27/2/24) and this Statement supports the representations previously submitted by Haleon under the Regulation 19 stage. This Statement only responds to the relevant questions for Haleon raised within the MIQs.

Stage 2: The Spatial Strategy and the distribution of growth over the Plan period, including the approach to the Green Belt and site allocations.

Matter 9 Site Allocations

Issue 14: Are the proposed site allocations selected using an appropriate methodology based on a proportionate evidence base? Are they justified and effective? Will the allocations address the land use requirements across the Plan period?

8.2 Have the individual site allocations been chosen according to a robust site selection methodology?

5. The proposed site allocation WEY33 is considered robust, the site is available and suitable for residential development. The site is in a sustainable location, in close proximity to the train station and other amenities, including employment opportunities (including the Heights).
6. As set out in the Regulation 19 representations, Haleon are in the process of relocating to the Heights and, therefore, this site is surplus to requirements and available and achievable for redevelopment. Since the Regulation 19 representations in July 2022, there continues to be positive progress regarding Haleon's relocation. Permission was granted in August 2022 (ref: 2021/4257) and the permission has been implemented.
7. Subsequently, a review undertaken by Haleon identified the need for amendments to the proposal to accommodate their specific needs on the site within the Heights. Consequently, a new planning application was submitted to Elmbridge Borough Council on 30 November 2023, reference: 2023/3281. This application is currently pending.

8.9 In terms of the sites which are identified as contributing towards housing supply during years 6-15 of the Plan period, is there a reasonable prospect that the site will be available and could be viably developed at the point envisaged?

8. Haleon are committed to relocating to a new bespoke facility located within The Heights, Weybridge, as the current facilities at St. George's are no longer suitable. The planning permission, commencing development on the site, combined with the current application, clearly demonstrate the site at St. George's will be available for redevelopment following the relocation of Haleon to their new facility at The Heights.
9. In terms of the current programme, construction on site (subject to the current pending application) is due to commence in Q1 2025 and estimated to be completed by Q2 2027. The relocation of staff and transfer of facilities will then be a phased process, with St. George's then being available for redevelopment.
10. Notwithstanding this, there is also the ability to seek planning permission before the site is fully vacated. Therefore, it is reiterated that the site at St. George's will be available for residential development, as identified by proposed allocation WEY33. However, as contained within the Regulation 19 representations and below in response to MIQ paragraph 8.37, it is contested that the site could comfortably accommodate an increase in the number of units to approximately 120. The initial background work associated with the OSP Architecture plans have included affordable housing requirements and could be viably developed.

WEY33 – 8.37: *Is the site capacity as indicated on the LAA justified and should this be reflected in the policy?*

11. It is considered the question in paragraph 8.37 corresponds to Matter 7 and Policy HOU2, relating to the optimisation of sites. In particular, the sustainable location, including the proximity to the train station approximately 400-450 metres distance, would support a higher density on this previously developed site. This is in accordance with the NPPF, including paragraph 125.
12. In terms of density, the LAA identifies the site as 2.58 hectares and, therefore, at the 100 dwellings specified within the LAA, would result in a dwellings per hectare (dph) of approximately 38.7. If this was increased to 120 dwellings on the site, as identified and demonstrated as achievable and suitable via the Regulation 19 submission and report from OSP Architecture, this would increase to approximately 46 dph.
13. The Elmbridge Council Density Study (HOU011) identifies, in relation to Weybridge, that there are opportunities for higher density. Paragraph 4.37 states that *“Weybridge does have more scope to increase density. It has a rail line to London, local job opportunities at Brooklands and access to good local services and their district centre... The Government is keen that high density development is built close to key transport hubs and therefore it could theoretically be a key location for housing”*. The following paragraph, 4.38, identifies that flatted development would appear to be the easiest way to increase density and the previously submitted sketch layout and accommodation scheduled by OSP Architecture demonstrates the site is easily able to accommodate a wide range of units from one bed flats through to four bed homes.

14. The Urban Capacity Study (Troy 2018 – HOU012) identifies, in paragraph 4.33, that *“densities achieved on recent schemes vary across Weybridge, averaging around 130 dph in the district centre and 83 dph around the Queens Road local centre. Elsewhere, and excluding the St. George’s Hill Estate, an average density of approximately 37 has been achieved.”* Table 3 within the Urban Capacity Study contains a “density multiplier”, which identifies that railway station catchments have a ‘low-density’ multiplier of 30 dph and a ‘higher density’ multiplier of 70 dph. District centres, including Weybridge, have a higher density of 100 dph.
15. Consequently, increasing the proposed allocation at St. George’s in Weybridge from 100 to 120 (approximately 46 dph), is not considered over-development and sits within the range identified by the Council’s evidence base. This has been tested and the Regulation 19 Representations demonstrate at least 120 units are achievable.
16. Given the evidence, and policy priority at national and local level, to focus development within sustainable locations, including specific reference to railway station catchments, a modest increase in the number of units at this location is considered justified and would optimise delivery in accordance with Policy HOU2.
17. In addition, the draft Plan has an identified and acknowledged shortfall of housing, as set out in paragraph 3.1 of the MIQs *“and will leave an unmet need of some 2,920 dwellings over the plan period. This is a significant shortfall”* and paragraph 2.22 *“The proposed strategy would not meet the borough’s objectively assessed housing need”*. Therefore, it is considered that an increase in the number of units proposed on the site, which is sustainably located, is previously developed, is surplus to requirements, and has an identified and permitted employment relocation for Haleon (thereby maintaining employment in the area), would assist with maximising housing delivery in accordance with policy.
18. Haleon are supportive of the allocation of WEY33, St. George’s, confirming the site is available for residential development, but, as per the Regulation 19 Representations and as set out above, it is considered the number of units should be increased.

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