

18 September 2018

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**Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan Examination:  
Response to Welwyn Hatfield Stage 3 Green Belt Review**

Dear Louise

I write on behalf of the Royal Veterinary College (RVC) with regard to the Welwyn Hatfield Green Belt Study Stage 3 (August 2018) as part of the Local Plan evidence base.

Please find below our comments on the published Green Belt Study.

**Approach**

The Study sets out a detailed assessment of each parcel's contribution to Green Belt purposes. The parcel sizes are large which reflect the scale of the analysis for the Borough. However, when they are broken down into realistic sub parcels, that are capable of being delivered and reflect land ownerships, the assessment ("comments") changes to reflect the reduced size as does the harm rating. It will be for the sessions considering the villages to further consider this 'grain' of analysis.

The RVC acknowledge that the 'Local Purpose' has been utilised for the Local Plan and at a County level but note that the local purpose has similar objectives as Green Belt purpose 2 "merging of neighbouring towns". There is some potential for confusion between Green Belt purpose 2 and the 'Local Purpose' together with conclusions drawn for purpose 2 where there could be an element of overlapping in the assessment.

**HS22**

Proposed site HS22 falls within parcel P65 and is labelled P65a. It is the only sub parcel of P65.

We concur with the assessment with regard to the whole parcel (P65) given the shape of the parcel that effectively washes over land between Brookmans Park and Welham Green. What is key for a parcel of this nature and size is the sub-parcel itself and the assessment of this.

A clear defining feature in this parcel (P65a) is Bradmore Lane and the distinction between land to the north and south of Bradmore Lane. The Study confirms that open land to the north of Parcel 65a contributes significantly to this separation. The Study notes that P65a has a key defining feature in Brick Kiln Wood that forms a clear western boundary to HS22.

We do not consider that the level of integrity of the Green Belt would be weakened by Parcel 65a being released given the strength of the boundaries to this site including the valley to the south, Brick Kiln wood to the West, Bradmore Lane to the North and the railway to the East. This was confirmed in Welwyn Hatfield Green Belt Review Stage 2 (2014) which considered;

*"Overall the site is clearly defined by a combination of strong and moderate boundaries" and "displays a mixture of urban and rural characteristics".*

We consider that there is no impact on inter-visibility between Little Heath and Potters Bar in terms of Purpose 2.

## **HS24**

Proposed site HS24 falls within Parcel 78 and is labelled 78c.

Within this large parcel is Parcel 78c and part of Parcel 78a both in the ownership and control of the RVC and promoted previously by the RVC for residential development.

Parcel 78c is proposed as an allocated site and classed as moderate-high in relation to harm. We agree as provided in previous assessments that the parcel's release would cause less harm to the integrity of the Green Belt in this location.

Parcel 78a (where RVC ownership is to the West of Hawkshead Lane (BrP6)) is assessed as providing high harm if released for development. As provided in previous representations to the Local Plan (24/10/2016) by the RVC for Site BrP6 (part of Parcel 78a) lies within an area of the wider parcel that is below the east-west crest along Hawkshead Lane that makes a significant contribution to settlement separation.

As the Study provides, stopping development short of the ridge crest would preserve some separation from Little Heath and Potters Bar. We consider that this is significant in terms of the appreciation of the Green Belt in this area given the east/west nature of Hawkshead Lane which reinforces the 'strength' of the ridgeline which is not 'compromised' by north-south roads. Additionally the street pattern of the adjacent development (Brookmans Park) with roads running perpendicular to the contours allows some clear views of the upper parts of the site, with Hawkshead Road on the southern boundary of the site forming the skyline. There is a limited and fragmented view of the upper parts of the site from parts of the landscape west of the railway line and glimpses of site trees from the western edges of Gobions Park, but the site is not perceived as an important component of these views.

The site is not particularly prominent from the adjacent roads, Hawkshead Road to the north and Bluebridge Road to the east. There is no significant intervisibility between the site and Gobions Park.

## **Next Steps**

As a key institution and employer within the borough the RVC is keen to continue to working with Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council in responding to the housing need in the Borough in a collaborative manner that provides a legacy for its neighbouring communities of Brookmans Park and Little Heath.

The RVC will continue to engage with the Local Plan preparation process and as appropriate provide hearing statements and appear at Hearing Sessions for the Local Plan during 2018 and 2019.

Yours sincerely,

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