

Comments on the Stage 3 Green Belt Review Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan
Dated 17th September 2018.

Dear Inspector

With reference to the request from Louise St John Howe dated 24th August 2018 for comments on the Stage 3 Green Belt Review, I have the following comments:

Most local residents are aware of the relatively recent planning decision by the Secretary of State regarding the New Barnfield site (reference 2192045, 16th July 2015, paragraph 18). The Secretary of State was very clear in his reasons for rejection, which included the need to prevent neighbouring settlements merging into one another. It is therefore unclear why, given this ruling, the Green Belt survey has rated the removal of the New Barnfield site (Parcel 53b) from the Green Belt as only having a Moderate impact.

The same issue of coalescence arises between Brookmans Park and Little Heath/ Potters Bar. These two settlements are very different in character and the green belt separating them (which includes the washed over settlement of Swanley Bar) is essential to maintain the local settlement pattern. Currently the development to the north side of Hawkshead Road is still predominantly scattered housing. If however site LHE1 (parcel 80b) were to be released, the character of this stretch would lose much of its openness. If the release and inseting of parcel P79 (Swanley Bar) were also to proceed, it would make it likely that the release of P80a would soon follow leading to coalescence of Potters Bar and Swanley Bar. With only a small gap remaining between Swanley Bar and Brookmans Park (which contains Swanley Bar farm) this would have a very major detrimental effect on the Green Belt purpose in the area. Similar arguments apply to P77 which, if released, would also significantly narrow the gap between Brookmans Park and Potters Bar.

For these reasons I do not agree with the harm ratings of parcels P77 (Low), P79 (Low), P80b (Moderate-Low) and P80a (Moderate). I consider that these parcels all have an important part to play in retaining the local settlement pattern and preventing coalescence of Brookmans Park and Little Heath/ Potters Bar.

If these parcels were released, there would be a major adverse impact on the Green Belt purpose, contrary to the NPPF and contrary to the recent ruling given by the Secretary of State. I do not consider that exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated to justify seeking to squeeze more housing in by narrowing important strategic gaps between settlements.

Ian Stewart