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Planning Inspectorate
c/o Programme Officer

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Dear Sir

Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan Examination – Stage 8 Hearing Session

I am submitter on the draft Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan pursuant to regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations 2012. Please accept this letter as my written hearing statement in respect of Stage 8 Hearings, specifically sessions 41 and 42 as they relate to matters concerning Cuffley and the Green Belt.

As I have reiterated throughout my previous submissions to the Examination and the consultations relating to sites in the Local Plan allocated for release for housing, the Green Belt is of critical importance. The National Planning Policy Framework provides that Green Belt boundaries should only be released for housing in exceptional circumstances, where those exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified.

I am concerned that the objectively assessed housing need ("OAN"), which forms part of the Council's evidential basis for release of land from the Green Belt such as the identified sites in Cuffley, is no longer reliable because of recent drastic changes to the United Kingdom economy caused by both Brexit and, most recently, the global Covid-19 pandemic.

I have recently written to the Council requesting that they conduct an immediate and comprehensive review of the OAN to account for these changing circumstances to ensure the ongoing Local Plan review is proceeding on the basis of the most up to date and reliable evidence available. A copy of this letter is attached. In the event the Council declines my request, I respectfully request that you direct the Council to commission such a review. Failure to conduct a review in light of these changing circumstances risks the soundness of the Local Plan and would be entirely unreasonable in the circumstances.

Yours faithfully

Cyril Shack