

Three Rivers LDF Core Strategy DPD ‘Preferred Options’ February 2009

(Regulation 25 Consultation)

CPRE – The Hertfordshire Society broadly welcomes the proposals put forward in the Core Strategy Preferred Options document. In particular we note the clear and strong emphasis placed on the protection of the Countryside and the Green Belt, and fully support the sequential approach outlined in Policy CP2 (Housing Supply).

We also support the approach which the Council proposes to adopt in relation to small sites and potential future windfalls in paragraphs 7.27 and 7.28. Like the Council, we believe that these sites form a critical part of the overall housing supply. Similarly we support the flexible approach to Affordable Housing provision in paragraph 7.54.

Having said that, Three Rivers is essentially a collection of small and medium sized settlements within a primarily rural district. In that context, we consider that the Council’s aim of protecting the Green Belt would be strengthened by a more robust emphasis on the protection of the Green Belt buffers and wedges which separate those communities. This is particularly critical when considering possible effects of the expansion of both Watford and Hemel Hempstead required by the RSS.

However, we cannot support the Council’s proposed adoption of Spatial Option 3. The key difference between this and Spatial Option 2 is the inclusion of peripheral housing development locations in the Green Belt adjacent to Abbots Langley and South Oxhey which we consider will leave further areas of the Green belt vulnerable to development in the future. Consequently, we urge the Council to adopt Spatial Option 2.

The specific sites to which we refer are Woodside Road, east of Abbots Langley and Little Furze School, west of South Oxhey. In the former case, the site represents a substantial incursion into the Green Belt and, in our view will result in the Green Belt boundary being perceived as the remainder of the land bounded by Woodside Road and High Elms Lane to the west of the St. Andrews Montessori school. In the case of the Little Furze school site, it is bounded on three sides by Green Belt and, if developed for housing, inevitable pressure will come to ‘square off’ the Green Belt boundary between Gosforth Lane and Oxhey Drive. We therefore request the Council to remove both these sites from Policy PSP2 (Development in the Key Centres).

We note the proposed incorporation of the provisions of the current Local Plan Policies GB1, GB5, GB6, GB7, GB8, GB9 and GB10, all of which relate to development in the Green Belt and Countryside, into a new Design guidance Supplementary Planning Document and look forward to considering and commenting on that in due course.