

Standing up for Hertfordshire's countryside

Planning Policy Team
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
Council Offices
The Campus
Welwyn Garden City
Herts AL8 6AE

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

8th July 2011

Dear Sirs,

Core Strategy Consultation: How many new homes?

CPRE will not be responding to this consultation through the Questionnaire issued by the Council as we consider it to be unsound.

The Council's consultation offers five alternative targets for housing growth and outlines Key Issues to consider in the consultation document. However, those key issues do not include information on the potential locations of the development implicit in those options.

This information, however, can be found in the Housing Target Support Paper included in the Supporting Documents for the consultation on the Council's web-site.

When we drew this concern to the attention of the Planning Policy Team on 22 June 2011 we were advised that there is no direct correlation between the documents, and that the Council solely wants to assess the public view on the overall quantum of housing required. We consider this response fails to reflect the actual relationship between the current consultation and decisions on potential locations.

The Housing Target Support Paper schedules specific housing capacities for sites around Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield (Section 2A) and around the villages (Section 2B). It also explores scenarios involving different combinations of these sites (Section 3). As a consequence, it is possible to deduce which sites are most likely to be proposed for development according to which Target is selected by the Council.

Because this information on sites is not being included in the consultation, there is a danger that many people will respond without being fully aware of the impact of those decisions on their neighbourhoods and communities. Equally, those people who have delved into the background detail of the supporting documents, may avoid stating their true preference in terms of housing numbers because of the development locations that are implied by their selection.

We are also concerned by the statement made in the consultation document pre-ambule by the Planning and Business Executive Member that "*there is no need to resubmit comments*

on the Issues and Options paper as they will still be taken into account.” This implies that the Council does not intend to re-consult on the Issues and Options following the current consultation on housing numbers.

If there is no correlation between housing numbers and locations, why is the Housing Target Support Paper included in the Supporting Documents? Equally, if specific growth areas are implicit in the Questionnaire Targets (as they are - viz. “Target 4: Development in the Green Belt could be concentrated around Welwyn Garden City and/or Hatfield through the creation of three new neighbourhoods”) and explicit in Section 3 of the Support Paper, then why are these not spelled out in the Consultation leaflet rather than concealed on the website to which not every consultee has access?

Given the potential impact of each of the targets on the location of development, and the way in which the quantum of housing changes the context for Issues and Options, we consider that the Council should re-consult on the Issues and Options which will flow from any decision on housing targets following the current consultation.

If you wish to discuss the above issues, please call me.

Yours faithfully,



Steve Baker
Planning Manager, CPRE Hertfordshire.

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