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**Standing up for Hertfordshire's countryside**

Peter Atkin  
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17<sup>th</sup> July 2020 (by email)

Dear Mr. Atkin,

**Commons Act 2006: Section 16**

**Proposed Deregistration and Exchange of Village Green Land, Woodcock Hill, Borehamwood**

We are writing to you on behalf of your client, Taylor Wimpey plc as the consultation website for the above proposal is currently experiencing intermittent technical issues.

CPRE Hertfordshire have considerable concerns regarding this proposal which will impact a village green and local wildlife site which is substantially located in the Green Belt. The consultation documentation unfortunately raises more questions than answers. The stated purpose of the proposal is to 'release' part of the existing Woodcock Hill Village Green and replace it with a larger area of land which is then proposed to be designated as part of the village green. The existing land is currently designated, used and maintained as village green. There is no analysis presented on the impact of the release of the land on ecology, local use, Green Belt purposes, or landscape character. There is no cross reference to the Hertsmere open spaces and recreation study. Nor is there a clear explanation as to why your client sees the need to carry out the release of this land. It is specifically stated that "This consultation is not linked to any potential housing development at this site and is solely related to providing an enhanced Village Green for the local community." However, it is later mentioned that if this application to deregister is successful then Taylor Wimpey intends to promote the released land for residential allocation in the emerging Hertsmere Local Plan. Release of this land would facilitate development of site BE6 which was put forward for consideration during Hertsmere Council's call for sites. Quite how it can be said that the consultation is not linked to potential housing development is difficult see. The two are explicitly interrelated.

If your client does intend residential development, trying to disengage this consultation from that intent does not alter the fact that the National Planning Policy Framework is clear that

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President: Sir Simon Bowes Lyon, KCVO  
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Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are “fully evidenced and justified” and such alterations should be carried out through the Local Plan process (NPPF para.136). Consequently, until such time as the Local Planning Authority revise the boundaries the ‘released’ land remains Green Belt.

As mentioned above, the ecology of the released land would inevitably be harmed. All of the village green area has been wild open land for many decades and has developed its own ecology. The proposed additional land, which is essentially the cap of the railway tunnel also has its own ecology. It is hard to determine, without considerably more information, how the proposal will result in ecological enhancements. The consultation also proposes trim trails, kick-about areas, picnic areas and so on. All of these will change the current character of the local wildlife site and it is a moot point whether or not these are enhancements. They are more redolent of urban open space than this semi-wild conservation area where the ancient hedgerows are registered with the Herts Biological Records Centre and the trees are covered by tree preservation orders.

It is claimed that the proposals include the establishment of a management regime for the new Village Green with ongoing management by a Community Trust or Public Body. Again there is no explanation of the need for this. When the village green was originally designated following Public Inquiry in 2007, the Woodcock Hill Village Green Trust was established and a management plan put in place. It is our understanding that the management plan is reviewed and updated as appropriate and necessary work carried out.

In our view this proposal would result in more harm to the Green Belt and damage to the Local Wildlife Site than it would benefit the local community. Consequently we cannot support this proposal.

Yours sincerely,



David Irving

Cc: Oliver Dowden MP, Woodcock Hill Village Green Association, Hertsmere Borough Council - Planning Dept, Elstree & Borehamwood Town Council, Elstree & Borehamwood Green Belt Society.