

## **Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council: Draft Local Plan**

### **Consultation 2016: the Inspector's examination: Stage 2 – Overarching Strategy: Question 5: Green Belt Exceptional circumstances**

#### **Supplementary statement by the Central Hertfordshire Green Corridor Group**

This statement highlights specific issues and concerns that we would like the Inspector to consider in his strategic examination of the WHBC local plan. It supplements our earlier submission of comments on the WHBC plan and our report on the ecosystem services benefits of a Green Corridor in Central Hertfordshire.

1. WHBC have not addressed our questions, concerns and points in our submission and report concerning WHBC's failure to provide convincing and transparent evidence of any "exceptional circumstances" that outweigh the losses of land in the Green Belt from proposed developments in WHBC's proposed Local Plan. So our concerns are all still highly relevant and need to be examined by the Inspector with respect to his Question 5 regarding "what should constitute exceptional circumstances for removing land from the GB"?
2. In particular, we welcomed WHBC's observation that a green corridor is desirable. But WHBC have not carried out any of the work we identified as being essential to take forward their initial important start in preparing the Green Corridor Stage 1 report. Specifically, WHBC still fail to address adequately how long and wide the Green Belt corridor should be. This requires rigorous consideration of the full benefits of the Green Belt's corridor, which our report identifies and provides an initial assessment. We highlight below additional considerations that highlight further these benefits and the breadth and length of corridor needed to sustain them in the GB. WHBC's proposals in the Local Plan do not adequately consider impacts on these benefits. They would adversely impact on the GB by severely threatening the green corridor and the important environmental and social benefits that it could yield for the local community.
3. In the absence of any adequate ecological assessment by either WHBC or the developer of the proposed BGS, Hertingfordbury Parish Council carried out a careful ecological assessment, which they submitted on 7 September to the Inspectors for the WHBC Local Plan and also the East Herts District's Local Plan. This reinforces our initial assessment in our report showing the nature and significance of the environmental assets in the Green Belt and green corridor and their important benefits for the local community, which could be damaged significantly by specific proposed housing developments in WHBC's Local Plan. Moreover, this assessment shows the length and breadth of the Green Belt and corridor needed to support and sustain important ecological assets there.

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