

Subject: WELWYN AND HATFIELD COUNCIL - Stage 2 Examination  
Date: 9 October 2017 at 15:39:28 BST  
To: louise@poservices.co.uk

## **STATEMENT OF RORY CONNOR FRICS**

1. **Housing Market Area** - no comment.

### **2. Objectively Assessed Housing Need**

I remain baffled why the Council has failed to meet the OAN. This is a critical target for national planning and it is quite incomprehensible that the Council has sought to reduce their contribution to 12,500 houses when the original requirement was for 14,500 houses and more objective assessments even suggest that 16,000 is now necessary. I strongly urge the inspector to require the Council to comply with national guidelines.

### **3. Employment**

It is clear the Council's methodology has failed to take into account the employment needs of this area in general and those of young people in particular. This needs to be addressed in the local plan and in my view justifies the higher allocation of housing to 16,000.

### **4. Green Belt Policy**

The Council has not undertaken a comprehensive review of GB policy. The review the Council has undertaken is a summary one designed to keep development away from the villages. Even the conclusions they do reach are inconsistent. A good example is promoting BRP4 into the plan and ignoring the legion of GB and other difficulties attached to that site whilst rejecting other sites which would have minimal or no impact on the GB. The Council should include BRP1, 6, 9, 10, 12, 13 and 14 in the local plan which carry significantly less impact to the GB than sites 4 and 7 which are unsuitable. The Council themselves were able to see that BRP4 was totally unsuitable on at least two previous occasions but

appear inexplicably to have forgotten this.

## **5. Green Belt Exceptional Circumstances**

It has already been established and accepted that GB land can be considered in exceptional circumstances. That is in the NPPF and it is perhaps difficult to imagine any more exception circumstance than our national housing crisis. The Council should bring those sites into development that are least affected by release from the GB and I would therefore restate that sites BRP1, 6, 9, 10, 12, 13 and 14 should therefore be included the local plan as they carry significantly less impact on the GB than BRP 4 and 7.

## **6. Spatial Vision and Settlement Strategy**

The Council do not seem to have any coherent strategy beyond protecting the existing villages from development. The local plan as submitted will create planning eyesores of great magnitude - notably the open land of BRP4 and the new village in open countryside miles from any facilities. These two sites should therefore be eliminated from the plan. On the other hand Brookmans Park in particular has a vibrant economy and good communications including a railway station and must provide its fair share of housing along with all the other appropriate contributors. Accordingly sites BRP1, 6,9, 10, 12,13 and 14 should be placed into the local plan on the grounds of their sustainability. It should also be noted that these sites a far better natural screening than BRP4, 7 and a whole new village in open countryside.

## **7. Overall Development Strategy**

It is not just the obvious unsoundness of the proposed local plan that is unsettling but it seems to me wider issues are being ignored. The Council should be endeavouring to put into effect a plan which addresses the urgency of the crisis which faces us. Our moribund planning system has enabled local planning authorities to effortlessly delay planning applications and this has resulted in an significant under provision of housing in the south east generally characterised by a two decade long rise in house prices. The long and the short of it is that this is bad for our national economy in that it reduces the mobility of labour in all sectors of the employment spectrum and makes home ownership a pipe dream for

most people. Welwyn and Hatfield has a unique position geographically within the country with excellent infrastructure and communications networks. It is surely time for this area to stand up and contribute its proper share of housing resource rather than endlessly ducking and diving to avoid it's responsibility to provide a planning outcome that works for everyone. I earnestly hope this examination process will achieve that outcome.

Michael Connor FRICS  
t/a Rory Connor Chartered Surveyor