

Spatial Vision and Settlement Strategy – Dependence on Welwyn Garden City

In previous versions of the Emerging Core strategy and the Local Plan the settlement strategy policy aimed to try and balance new settlement roughly in proportion to the existing number of homes. This naturally places more homes around the major towns of Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City, but also some around the villages which would ensure their viability in the future. This seems to have been dropped from Policy SP3, but the intention is similar and Policy SP3 contains the following statement, *“Development that would result in disproportionate growth to any of the settlements, conflict with the function and position of a settlement within the hierarchy, which cannot be supported by the necessary infrastructure or result in a loss of services and facilities which are considered to be key to supporting local communities will be resisted.”*

Never the less what seems to have happened with this plan is that a very large proportion of the development has been concentrated in, around or dependent on Welwyn Garden City. This would cause a nearly 50% increase in the residents dependent on Welwyn Garden City and have a massive effect on the infrastructure of the town and its character. The Council have grouped their developments into categories such as WGC, Hatfield, Rural areas etc, but you only need to look at a map to see that many of these will actually be dependent on Welwyn Garden City.

The following Major developments will be dependent on WGC:

The number of Urban Developments planned, homes already built or with planning permission in WGC amount to 2782. If we add in a recent increase of 621 homes at Broadwater Rd, this adds up to 3403 homes. In the Greenbelt:

1. Site WGC4 adds another 650,
2. Site WGC1 south of WGC adds 290
3. Site WGC5 (both WelHat and E. Herts allowances of 1200 and 1350 respectively) adds 2550
4. Site Hat 15 or Symondshyde adds another 1130 who will be dependent on WGC for all but their basic needs and
5. Hat1 (half of whom will almost certainly gravitate to WGC as their nearest major town), adding $1650/2 = 825$ homes.

This gives a total additional 8848 homes in and around WGC which will be dependent on the town centre, trains, shops etc and will inevitably swamp the town, changing its character.

At present, I believe the number of homes in Welwyn Garden City is around 18,000, so 8848 more will cause an almost 50% increase in the number of homes dependant on the Town.

I would like to ask the council to reconsider the distribution of new development in the borough to try and reduce the number which will impact on Welwyn Garden City.