

Representation on behalf of Picture srl

Examination of North Hertfordshire District Council Draft Local Plan 2011-2031

In respect of Matter 7 – Countryside and Green Belt: the Green Belt review and the approach to safeguarded land

Prepared by Keymer Cavendish Limited

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Contents

Matter 7.1

Appendices

- I Picture landholding – GA2 shown on Picture landholding and suggested Green Belt boundary

- II NES 5 1998 plan

Matter 7 – Countryside and Green Belt: the Green Belt review and the approach to safeguarded land (Policy SP5)

7.1 It is not appropriate for Picture to engage in every issue under this matter, but relating to paragraph 7.1 a):

- Picture is satisfied that exceptional circumstances do exist to warrant substantial alterations to the Green Belt on the edge of Stevenage.
- The town was planned in the 'new town' era to accommodate approximately 100,000 people, and with smaller household sizes has still not reached that population. Nonetheless, the town centre and the central road network is constructed to a capacity to serve a larger population and, as has happened historically with Stevenage, on the eastern fringe this has developed northwards from the 1970s The Poplars, the 1980s Chells Manor, the 1990s/2000 Great Ashby NES 1, NES 2 and NES 3 (GA1 in the current plan) and now NES 4 (GA2).
- NES 4 was to have been a substantial strategic expansion of the town brought forward under the East of England Plan, comprising approximately 4,000 houses with the indication that similar levels of growth should continue down the eastern fringe of Stevenage (NES 5).
- Notwithstanding this bold ambition, all the boundaries of NES 1 and NES 2 were 'hermetically sealed' to prevent further expansion to the north and east, thus making the Green Belt defensible and permanent, but in reality impractical in terms of allowing further growth.
- The current position with GA2 is that at approximately 600 houses plus any educational provision, there will be limited highway capacity to serve more houses, but with the possibility of further highway and bus links in the future to the south, further land could be removed from the Green Belt and safeguarded for future development.
- At Appendix I there is a plan of the total Picture landholding upon which is superimposed the current GA2 proposals. It is clear that with further traffic capacity possible in the future it is sensible to push the Green Belt out to a long-term defensible Green Belt boundary formed by Weston Road and by Warrens Green Lane and then southwards to the North Herts/East Herts district administrative boundary. By way of example as to how development might come forward in the future, in cooperation with East Herts, a 1988 plan showing NES 5 is appended with this submission (Appendix II).

- Picture also has the land control along Warren's Green Lane and along part of Weston Road to reinforce these long-term boundaries now with advance planting.
- Emerging planning guidance: from the Department for Communities and Local Government paper issued in September 2017 'Planning for the right homes in the right places', it is clear that development pressures nationally and on North Hertfordshire will continue. The national requirement for one million new homes by 2020, and a further 500,000 by 2022, will sustain the pressure. The new district predictions raise the annual housing requirement from approximately 690 houses a year to 996 – an increase of approximately 44% on current average growth levels.
- In short, the pressures for new homes within North Hertfordshire will continue and the periphery of Stevenage is a sustainable and affordable location in which to locate some of this growth.

Green Belt generally

- The new 'Planning for Homes' September 2017 consultation paper makes frequent reference to protecting Green Belt. However, in counties such as Hertfordshire, where every District is heavily affected by Green Belt, one sees housing delivery being delayed and delayed.
- NES 1 was removed from the Green Belt.
- NES 2 was permitted by Ministerial Edict for release from the Green Belt following planning permission in 2003.
- NES 3 (GA1) was the subject of an outline application in 2010, when Croudace bought the site and housing delivery has now been delayed by eight years.
- It is no coincidence that house prices in North Herts are very high with supply so low. **It is essential** that substantial Green Belt releases are made **now** in excess of the current Local Plan requirements so that Government targets nationally and within Stevenage and North Herts can be met. A future extension to GA2 would assist, as could NES 5 for Stevenage and East Herts.