

*Madam Examiner, on behalf of Stevenage Borough Council I would like to formally welcome you to Stevenage and thank you for giving Stevenage's draft Local Plan 2011-2031 your expert consideration.*

*Over the last 4 years we have been actively and constructively engaging with our residents, members, neighbours and other stakeholders to prepare this plan which we believe meets the aspirations for the town, the need for homes and jobs and supporting services and facilities in the most sustainable way. Through this process we have striven to maximise the Plan's effectiveness within its strategic context. Through the process of evidence gathering, preparation, appraisal and consultation, we have identified the challenges that the Plan should address. The period to 2031 will be the next step in the evolution of the Town. The Plan's strategy recognises the importance of three key elements that it is essential are delivered; regeneration, housing provision and employment growth.*

*The strategy is to deliver a new vision for Stevenage; a vision that has been evolved with our partners and the public. We plan to deliver transformational physical, social and economic regeneration of the original new town. This will be twinned with housing and employment growth, necessarily rolling back the Inner Green Belt boundary.*

*As you will see we are proposing policies for new sustainable neighbourhoods, a revitalized town centre and a remodelled employment area all with the required infrastructure and environmental protections for Stevenage to positively grow.*

*Stevenage has a long proud history of growth and sustainable development stemming from our designation as the first new town just over 70 years ago and this continues through to the proposed policies in our draft Local Plan.*

*The Plan is necessarily ambitious but with its proposals, by 2031 Stevenage will be a demonstrably different and better place. It will be better linked, better served and people will enjoy better life-choices. None of this can be achieved without taking some difficult decisions, but the Council is satisfied that the draft plan as submitted successfully reconciles the often competing strands of sustainable development and is positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy.*

*We welcome the opportunity offered by the Examination to demonstrate the Plan's soundness and in particular to demonstrate that it represents the most appropriate, deliverable strategy for the Council's administrative area for the Plan period.*