

## **Stevenage Local Plan Examination: Stage 2**

### **Statement from CPRE Hertfordshire**

#### **Matter 10 – Employment**

Statement by Stephen Baker, DMS, BSc, DipTP, MRTPI, representing CPRE Hertfordshire

This statement complements our original representations on the Local Plan, which are still relevant except where updated by this statement.

#### **Question 4: What are the implications of the identified employment land needs not being met within the Borough's boundaries?**

1. In seeking to address this Question CPRE Hertfordshire (CPRE) notes that it is also directly relevant to subsequent Questions 5 to 8 which relate to potential employment land provision in three other local planning authority areas beyond the scope of the Inspector's examination of the Stevenage Local Plan. As such CPRE's Statement addresses these issues collectively under the heading of Question 4.
2. The principal potential locations outside the area of the Plan for accessible employment land that could realistically meet the needs of Stevenage, are likely to be within the A1 corridor in the adjacent North Hertfordshire District or nearby Welwyn Hatfield Borough.
3. We note that the Council now proposes the deletion of the reference to Welwyn Garden City from Policy SP3 and paragraph 5.26 as main modifications to the Plan, and we support these amendments, but consider that they should be extended to include references to the Royston Road site at Baldock currently in SP3 (i) and paragraph 5.26.
4. It is clear from the text of the Plan at paragraph 5.27 and the language in the conclusions at paragraphs 2.28 and 2.29 of the Council's Employment Technical Paper Update (ED124), that the amount of employment land that may be needed for Stevenage's workers and businesses in the Plan period is highly unpredictable, and in part aspirational. As such, the Council has not demonstrated the existence of exceptional circumstances to justify the removal of land from the Green Belt for employment development, as required by paragraph 83 of the NPPF, either within Stevenage or elsewhere.

5. Neither Welwyn Hatfield Borough nor North Herts District Council has an adopted local plan that includes provision for employment land solely to meet the needs of Stevenage. CPRE is not aware of any proposals in either of their latest draft Local Plans for provision solely to meet Stevenage's employment needs.
6. In the case of North Herts the proposal now included in the draft Plan, yet to be submitted for examination, for employment land at Baldock, is highly controversial as it lies within the Green Belt, and has yet to meet the test of exceptional circumstances for its release as required by the NPPF.
7. In these circumstances, no certainty of the delivery of employment allocations specifically to meet the needs of Stevenage outside Stevenage can be assumed at present, and the wording of Policy SP3 and supporting text in paragraph 5.26 should be amended accordingly.

CPRE Hertfordshire, January 2017