

Stevenage Local Plan Examination: Stage 2

Statement from CPRE Hertfordshire

Matter 12 – The natural and historic environment

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, and our separate statement in respect of Policy HO3 North of Stevenage.

Question 4: There is a significant amount of local objection to the development of land referred to locally as ‘Forster Country’. Has an assessment of the impact of development promoted through the Plan on the landscape character in this part of the Borough been considered? If so what were the findings?

1. CPRE Hertfordshire (CPRE) objected to Policy HO3 for the development of land on the northern edge of Stevenage both for Green Belt policy reasons, and because of the impact on the land known locally as Forster Country.
2. We consider that the Plan fails to respect the specific requirement of paragraph 109 of the NPPF to protect and enhance valued landscapes, and to observe the key planning principles set out in paragraph 17 of the NPPF to take account of the character of different areas, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.
3. In this context, and in direct response to the Inspector’s Question 4, above, there is no examination or submitted document on the Examination website that assesses the impact of the proposal as set out in the Plan on the landscape character of Forster Country. The Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study (E9a) and its Appendix (E9b) are dated 2005/6, and that Study fails to even identify the existence of a Conservation Area (Figure 8) in the eastern part of the area at that time. It also pre-dated the enlargement of the Conservation Area in 2007.
4. The only relevant more recent impact analysis in the area, is the Heritage Impact Assessment (CH2) but this is not a Landscape Impact Assessment.

5. Accordingly, the likely impact of the proposed North of Stevenage development on the landscape of Forster Country within Stevenage and the adjacent area of North Hertfordshire has not in our view been properly assessed.

6. CPRE therefore considers that the proposal has not been justified by adequate evidence on landscape impact in the Plan or published supporting documents, and that this renders the proposal unsound.

CPRE Hertfordshire, January 2017