

North Herts Local Plan 1027

Hertfordshire Gardens Trust (part of The Gardens Trust, statutory consultee on historic designed landscapes) welcomes the wording of the proposed Policy A on Environmental Protection and applaud the inclusion of the historic landscape within this. We trust that this would include historic designed areas such as parks and gardens.

We agree with the siting of the land allocations for various settlements and applaud the provision of green wedges within towns and protection of views and setting of towns as detailed.

However, we are concerned about the erosion of the Green Belt around Letchworth and the creep of housing and other developments towards neighbouring communities, especially towards Hitchin, specifically at the allocation HT1, which reduces the separation between Letchworth and Hitchin.

We do not welcome the expansion of Stevenage on greenfield land around Stevenage, including west Stevenage.

One of the key tenets of Howard's Garden Cities philosophy was that these garden cities were to be surrounded by Green Belt (at first called Agricultural Belt) and that new settlements should be discrete to preserve this interaction of town and countryside to benefit from the positive aspects of both and reduce the negative aspects. We believe that the proposed site allocations would destroy this (HT1 and LG1 for Letchworth). As Letchworth GC is the first of these cities and has largely preserved this tenet until now (unlike Welwyn Garden City), it is unique and of international significance as a designed landscape.

Further, the New Towns as designated were also discrete 'satellite' towns – for London in the case of the Home Counties. The same Garden City principles of ensuring their own 'Green Belts' and preventing coalescence with other smaller communities with their own distinctive character. Allocation of development at NS1, GA1 and GA2 is contrary to Green Belt principles as laid out in the NPPF and would cause coalescence with Graveley, Chesfield and the outlying greens of Weston parish.

Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study.

The three criteria used: Visual, Ecological and Cultural make no specific reference to historic/heritage landscape, although this is implicit in the conclusions. We would urge that the importance of the historic landscape to the sense of place and the character of our settlements be accorded due consideration.