

# **Knebworth Parish Council**

## **Comment on the Green Gap Assessment**

### **Report by LUC for Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council - August 2019**

Please find below submissions of Knebworth Parish Council in relation to the Green Gap Assessment (Examination Document Ex 160), particularly in relation to a proposed “gap” between the villages of Knebworth and Woolmer Green

Knebworth Parish Council (“The Parish Council”) wholly endorses the proposal to designate a defined “gap” area between Woolmer Green and Knebworth village. The Parish Council has lobbied for many years for the preservation of just such a “gap”. Accordingly, it continues to object (as it has at every stage of the consultation process) to further development of any/all sites located in the corridor between the two settlements, regardless of the size of the proposed site, specifically because of the danger of coalescence and the fragility of the current gap.

The Parish Council believes, as identified in the Green Gap Assessment, that there is ample scope for increased and linked woodland, as well as the creation of footpaths between the two settlements, all of which could not only preserve, but also improve the gap and, ultimately, help to maintain the separation of the two villages and prevent coalescence. Good examples of sites where linked woodland and/or footpaths could help preserve the gap are sites WGR3 and WGR7. A footpath from Knebworth to Woolmer Green already links Knebworth to site WGR7 and is well used by residents of both villages. The path leads through wholly undeveloped land into the wooded area of Mardley Heath Nature Reserve, creating a sense of separation. Even modest development of this site would result in the perception of any gap being eroded. In a similar way, site WGR3 contains a wooded area and a number of trees, which contributes significantly to maintaining the appearance of the gap between the two settlements.

In more specific terms, The Parish Council has previously commented on the fact that the gap along the B197 corridor (where site WGR3 is located) has to some extent already been eroded by the construction of Monread Lodge Care Home on the western side of London Rd. It is to be noted, however, that this building is both single storey, situated in the middle of its site well within the boundary, and is surrounded by trees. As a result, the appearance of the gap has, thus far, been capable of being maintained.

However, the Parish Council also believes that the recent development of the Entech House site has now extended the northern edge of Woolmer Green to its absolute natural limit. This is because, although the Entech House site previously contained buildings, they were sparse and bordered at the boundaries by trees. By contrast, the density of the current development, and its extension to the site boundary, further encroaches on the gap and undoubtedly reduces the visual appearance of any separation between the two settlements.

The Parish Council submits that to fill in any more of the gap, particularly through the development of sites such as WGR3, would effectively leave a gap of less than 500m between Knebworth and Woolmer Green along the B197 corridor. The Parish Council wholly endorses the finding of the

Green Gap Assessment that development of WGR3 would result in “encroachment towards the care home, which could result in these two settlements almost joining”.

In conclusion, The Parish Council endorses the finding of the report that “enough undeveloped land remains to form a physical and visual separation between the two settlements which could be defined as a ‘gap’. The Assessment accurately reflects the importance of this very small separation between Woolmer Green and Knebworth and The Parish Council submits that **any** further development of sites within the proposed gap area would reduce the gap almost to the point of non-existence, eroding the individuality of each settlement.