North Essex Authorities comments on the ATLAS North Hertfordshire New Settlement Study
(EXD/018)

Background and Summary

1. The Lightwood representation makes reference to and relies upon the ATLAS report, a document produced for North Hertfordshire District Council for their Local Plan. A copy of the report was provided to the Inspector by Lightwood after the hearings (ref: EXD/018).

2. This note has been prepared because the conclusions Lightwood have reached are not supported by the ATLAS report. In short the relevant part of the ATLAS report suggests that the larger a community the higher the jobs/homes ratio. Lightwood have treated a jobs/homes figure in the Hyas viability report (prepared for a different purpose) as fixed, and concluded from that that because the ratio is low the community should be small. That is back to front. As ATLAS indicate, as a community grows, the job density increases. To suggest that a derived jobs density figure should somehow caps the scale of a settlement is simply wrong. Job density is a function of the size of the community; the appropriate size of a community is not a function of job density.

3. The NEA have been clear throughout that the SQW/Cambridge Econometrics work provides the necessary evidence on this matter. The relevant examination evidence is that an appropriate jobs/homes balance can be achieved.

4. Mr Smith from Hyas was involved in the preparation of the ATLAS report during his previous employment at the Homes & Communities Agency who commissioned the work. This note relies in part on his views.

Misuse of Hyas Figures

5. Paragraphs 4.46 – 4.51 of the Lightwood representations erroneously rely on the Hyas report figures of 0.38 jobs/homes ratio (West of Braintree) and 0.58 (Colchester/Braintree Borders). The Hyas work does include some job calculations in the appendices, but these were based upon an illustrative land use mix, was completed prior to the SQW work and was intended to inform high level viability testing of the areas of search for Garden Communities only. The footnote to the calculations in the Hyas appendices clearly sets out that the figures do not provide a total
employment forecast. They do not include the construction employment, jobs created in social and community facilities, home workers or jobs held by Garden Community residents in the surrounding area reached by their sustainable transport links.

**Early stage nature of the ATLAS report**

6. The ATLAS report was completed by Mott Macdonald/Turley for ATLAS as a high level, desk based study to inform the general consideration of North Hertfordshire District Council in advance of any further evidence base work. No further new settlement feasibility work, analysis or conceptual development has been undertaken in North Hertfordshire.

7. It was explicitly stated in the ATLAS report that significant further work was required. Indeed, Lightwood quote incompletely from paragraphs 5.11 -5.13 in their statement, missing out the final sentence of paragraph 5.13 which makes the point clear.

**Use of Figure 5.6**

8. Para 4.56 in the Lightwood representations refers to the green elements in Figure 5.6 as being “credible new settlement options”. It gives the impression that the ochre/red areas underneath the 10,000/15,000 homes options in the 0.5 jobs per household line are not credible. That is not what the table or accompanying text says.

9. Paragraph 4.22 in the ATLAS report refers to the green scenarios representing 21 settlement permutations that are considered “as being representative of a potential “hypothetical settlement” in the context of North Hertfordshire”. There is no reference or intent to define the credibility of any specific options in the ATLAS work.

10. The red areas in the table simply indicate that small communities are unlikely to achieve high job densities and large ones are more likely to. As noted above, it is wholly inappropriate to start with a job density and use Figure 5.6 to give an indication of community size.