

Cabinet Housing and Planning Panel  
17 March 2016

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the CABINET HOUSING AND PLANNING PANEL held on Thursday, 17th March, 2016 at 7.30 pm in the Cypress Room, Salvation House, 2 Sterling Court, Mundells, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL7 1FT

PRESENT: Councillors J Nicholls (Chairman)  
S Boulton (Vice-Chairman)

D Bell, M Cowan, M Perkins, P Shah, C Storer,  
K Thorpe and K Pieri

OFFICIALS S Chambers – Head of Housing and Community Services  
PRESENT: S Tiley – Planning Policy and Implementation Manager  
V Hatfield – Parking and Cemetery Services Manager  
S Hulks – Committee Manager

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58. SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor K Pieri substituted for Councillor H Bromley.

59. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors H Bromley and A Thorpe.

60. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 February 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

61. NOTIFICATION OF URGENT BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED UNDER ITEM 15

No urgent business had been notified.

62. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS

Councillor M Cowan declared an interest as a County Councillor in respect of any relevant business on the agenda.

Councillor M Cowan declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in Item 9 on the agenda as a resident of Handside.

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Councillor K Thorpe declared an interest as a Housing Trust Tenant in respect of any relevant business on the agenda.

Councillor K Pieri declared an interest in relevant items on the agenda as a resident of Knolles Crescent.

63. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND PETITIONS

Questions were asked and answered as follows:

Mr P Miller

In Section 16 Welham Green of the Local Plan Public Consultation January 2015 the following is stated in para's 18 and 21 in reference to the Gypsy and Traveller site GTLAA03 The Willows, Marshmoor Lane which is classed as More Favourable and Employment Site WeG4b Marshmoor which is classed as Finely Balanced.

**16.18 GTLAA03 *The Willows, Marshmoor Lane*** is a very small, previously developed site considered to have capacity for a single pitch. It is well contained, and makes no contribution to any of the purposes for including land within the Green Belt. As with GTLAA02, **GTLAA03 would not be available if WeG4b was taken forward.**

**16.21 WeG4b** is one of several options for land in the Green Belt at ***Marshmoor***. WeG4b would involve a mixed use development of some new housing (up to 120 dwellings) and a significant amount of land for employment. **If the entire site was taken forward for development it would subsume Gypsy and Traveller sites GTLAA02 and GTLAA03, preventing them from being taken forward as well.**

Are the Panel aware that an Appeal Decision Hearing was held on 2 September 2015 by Stephen Brown MA(Cantab) DipArch RIBA an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government in relation to The Willows, Marshmoor Lane, North Mymms, AL9 7HT Ref: APP/C1950/W/15/3029003.

The appeal was made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission for a replacement dwelling following destruction by fire. The appeal was made by ethnic Gypsy Tom Harbour against the decision of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council against planning application ref. S6/2014/1867/FP dated 20 August 2014 which was refused by notice dated 6 November 2014.

The appeal was allowed on 22 February 2016 and planning permission was granted for a replacement dwelling following destruction by fire at The Willows, Marshmoor Lane, North Mymms, Hatfield AL9 7HT in accordance with the terms of the application and the plans submitted with it, subject to conditions.

Site GTLA003 is stated as being 'Previously Developed', this is clearly not now the case.

**Will the Panel now confirm that WeG4b will not be taken forward in accordance with the statements in the Local Plan Public Consultation Section 16 Para's 18 and 21.**

RESPONSE

**Planning permission was recently granted on appeal for a replacement dwelling at The Willows. The dwelling is to be located on the southern part of the site. It is the**

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**northern part of the site that has been promoted for Gypsy and Traveller development (site GTLAA03).**

**The development allowed on appeal does not preclude development on site WeG4b.**

**Cabinet Housing and Planning Panel has yet to make a decision on which sites to recommend to take forward for allocation in the Local Plan.**

**Mr M Bailey**

Question 1

Does the council believe that parking is adequate in Harwood Hill and what will the council be doing moving forward after this proposal to address the real issue. If there was enough parking, residents would not be forced to park on grass verges, pavements and junctions. From the Knightsfield and Haldens Parking Survey 2012, a report 4 years out of date and with questionable data, it details 255 spaces for Harwood Hill and surrounding roads. The parking consultation was sent out to 385 residents. If each house has at least 1 car, that leaves a shortfall of spaces for the neighbourhood already and the proposed parking restrictions will make it worse.

**RESPONSE**

Where possible the council will always try and increase parking provision. However, it is not the Council's responsibility to provide parking for every vehicle in the borough.

The proposed Traffic Regulation Order for this area is mainly double yellow lines to be introduced at junctions.

Parking in such locations is prohibited in the Highway Code for safety reasons. However for this to be enforced by the Council's enforcement team, double yellow lines are necessary.

Question 2

In response to 3.5.f on page 43. The amount of cars displaced from the proposed parking restrictions will be 2 per junction, as 4 junctions are affected. It will be a reduction of 8 spaces, double what the council is detailing.

**RESPONSE**

In the last month a council officer undertook four surveys to calculate the number of vehicles which were affected. These surveys were taken at 6am, 8am, 2pm, 11pm and at anytime only four vehicles were parking in the locations which the Council are proposing to introduce yellow lines.

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It is also an offence to park on a junction at night with no lights on, which is enforced by the Police.

Ms S Williams

Question 1

If the officer's recommendation is accepted, and additional yellow lines are installed in Homewood Avenue and surrounding roads, despite the large number of objections submitted (see Appendix D), how much will this cost? And has the potential cost of removing any associated street signage, and burning off the yellow lines from the road been factored in, should the proposed six month 'pilot' or monitoring period demonstrate that the scheme is not warranted?

RESPONSE

In the last five years, looking at all the parking controls which have been implemented, the Council has never had to remove controls after the six month monitoring period because they were no longer needed. They have been amended, but not removed. The Council have existing budgets which would be used if this was to be the case in this location.

Question 2

What methodology will be used to re-consult residents (see para 3.7) and how will the success or otherwise of the scheme be gauged? And at what estimated cost?

RESPONSE

Traffic Management Act 2004 outlines the guidelines/process for how Councils carry out consultation with regards to parking controls.

As with all consultations, the Council will look at the responses from residents in each area/road before making an informed decision on how or whether to proceed.

The only estimated costs that can be provided are the advertisements of the formal proposals, this would be in the region of £500-£800 depending on the size of the advert.

Ms H Birch

**Why have residents' serious concerns about displacement parking not been addressed at all by the Council who in response to these concerns simply say that "Any displacement issues will be addressed during the six month monitoring period..."?**

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See page 135 of the Report (paragraph 3.6). The Council's response effectively dismisses the issue. Objection letters to the Council during the formal consultation included one from a Brookside Crescent resident that said: There are "few train users" who park in Homewood Avenue. "Implementing the proposals will push the parking into Brookside Crescent". Ref: Appendix D, **page 211**.

#### RESPONSE

This area is one for five in which residents have been consulted and proposals have been formally advertised. If the proposals which are recommended are approved and are introduced, this situation is likely to change.

Work will begin consulting residents in a number of roads of which Brookside Crescent and Homewood Avenue are two, who have requested for the single yellow line to be extended or for a different type of restriction.

Ms J Vickers

If budget and planning restrictions are preventing a solution, could you consider relaxing the planning restrictions, to allow parking services to put in bays to improve the neighbourhood. As it stands cars are currently having to park on pavements and verges and that is before you set in place the parking restrictions. Proper areas of parking will ensure all remaining grass areas, stay intact.

#### RESPONSE

Parking Services are working with the Council's Planning Department to look at an alternative scheme to increase parking in this area.

The proposed Traffic Regulation Order for this area is mainly double yellow lines to be introduced at junctions.

Parking in such locations is prohibited in the Highway Code for safety reasons. However for this to be enforced by the Council's enforcement team, double yellow lines are necessary.

Ms J Russell

Question 1

Why is it necessary to have restrictions at the access to Cringle Court Garages now that Cringle Court has just erected an electronically controlled barrier across its garage entrance, this effectively prevents people blocking their entrance.

#### RESPONSE

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The barrier has been constructed within the properties curtilage. This doesn't affect the proposed restrictions, as the proposed restrictions will prevent parking around the entrance bell mouth which residents reported were the issue. Both the Fire & Rescue Service and the Council waste collection vehicles require unhindered access to this area.

Question 2

Will these restrictions in Coopers Road cause people to park in unrestricted adjoining roads such as Frampton Road, Thornton Road, School Road and Hatfield Road?

RESPONSE

There is always a degree of parking displacement when new restrictions are introduced. This will be monitored as part of the review process.

Question 3

Why is it necessary to have a very small restriction outside No. 55 Coopers Road as a very large tree on the pavement and a concrete bollard also on the pavement at the entrance to Alma Court Flats already prevents people from parking in the access area to Alma Court.

RESPONSE

The concrete bollard and large tree referred to are on private property. The proposed restriction is on public highway and has already been foreshortened to still allow a vehicle to park outside No 55, but also allow the necessary turning movement required for large vehicles. As at (1) above, both the Fire & Rescue Service and refuse collection vehicles again require unhindered access to this area.

Please note that where more than one question has been submitted by a resident, only one was asked and answered at the meeting, the others being answered in written form.

64. LITTLE HEATH, POTTERS BAR - JUNCTION PROTECTION SCHEME

Members received a report which provided details of the results of the informal consultation, the formal consultation and the recommended course of action for Little Heath.

Six objections had been received to the proposals, as detailed in paragraph 3.6 of the report.

Members knew the area and commented on some of the issues with regard to the narrow roads and the lack of space for crossovers and hardstandings.

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The recommendation within the report had been prepared based on officer visits to the area and residents' requests. The primary objective of the scheme was to improve the road safety around junctions and there was an existing risk of road traffic collisions and injury to pedestrians.

Member asked whether there had been any correspondence with the local pub. They were informed that there had been no objections forthcoming.

RESOLVED

That, having considered the objections, to recommend to Cabinet to proceed with the creation of the Traffic Regulation Order to provide a junction protection scheme.

65. KNIGHTSFIELD AND HALDENS, WELWYN GARDEN CITY - JUNCTION PROTECTION SCHEME

Members received a report which provided details on a proposed Junction Protection Scheme for Knightsfield and Haldens.

The purpose of the proposals was to discourage parking too close to junctions, parking inside bus stops and possible locations for constructing new parking spaces in the verge and nearby open spaces.

The report set out the results of the four informal consultations, the formal consultation and the recommended course of action.

A total of eight formal objections were received from the four areas and these were summarised in the report.

Members were informed that efforts had been made to increase the number of parking bays in the area, but the Planning Department had refused an application for eight parking bays.

It was noted that, should the Panel approve the recommendation within the report, work would not take place until a decision had been made on the provision of additional parking bays about which discussions were taking place.

It was agreed that the junction protection should go ahead, but that the provision of additional parking bays be deferred pending discussion between Parking Services and Planning..

RESOLVED

That, having considered the objections, to recommend to Cabinet that, subject to resolution of the issue with parking bays, a Traffic Regulation Order should be created for the junction protection scheme.

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66. HANDSIDE - THE WAY FORWARD, NEXT STEPS

Councillor M Cowan left the room for the duration of this item.

Members received a report which detailed the proposed a programme of investigation of parking issues in the area which had been identified in the parking questionnaires completed by residents and some businesses in September 2015.

Consideration was being given to issuing evening and weekend season parking permits for residents.

It was noted that it was intended to separate town centre parking issues from those in the rest of Handside.

Members were informed that Parking Services proposed to consult with residents in the following order:

1. Longcroft Land and the surrounding roads (East of Parkway)
2. Welwyn Garden City town centre
3. North of Barleycroft Road and Applecroft Road
4. The remaining roads in the ward.

RESOLVED

To recommend to Cabinet to adopt the work programme proposed for Handside Ward, on the investigation of parking issues.

67. CUFFLEY - SINGLE AND DOUBLE YELLOW LINES OUTCOME PROJECT

Members received a report which provided them with the results of the informal consultation, the formal consultation and the recommended course of action for parking services work in Cuffley.

The report advised that the introduction of double and single yellow lines had been proposed and outlined in the consultation. Residents had requested that some of the proposed lines be removed and others added and Officers tried to include these requests in the recommended proposal.

Further consultation during the six month monitoring period would take place regarding possible amendments to the order in a number of roads which would feature Cranfield Crescent and Homewood Avenue. A residents' scheme could be introduced in these roads.

Members were informed that, where a residents parking scheme was introduced, visitor vouchers could be obtained which were provided at cost price, approximately 50 pence daily. Concessions were available for Doctors and Carers, the latter of which were provided with free parking.



RESOLVED

To recommend to Cabinet to proceed with the creation of the Traffic Regulation Order for a junction protection scheme, as amended, in response to objections received.

68. PARKING IMPROVEMENT POLICY

Members received a report which detailed the process that Parking Services would follow when seeking approval to carry out parking improvements.

The main change to the policy was detailed in paragraph 3.9. This stated that informal advice would be sought prior and then there would be a formal application. This would ensure that the process was transparent for members of the public.

Further discussions would take place on the policy, which would include transparency of decision making.

69. DRAFT DELIVERY PLAN - WELWYN HATFIELD COMMUNITY HOUSING TRUST 2016-2017

Members received a report which introduced the final draft of the proposed Delivery Plan for Welwyn Hatfield Community Housing Trust's (the Trust) activities in 2016-2017.

A series of briefings for Members was being organised.

RESOLVED:

To recommend to Cabinet the approval of the final draft Delivery Plan for 2016-2017 as set out in Appendix A to the report.

70. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN 2016 TO 2046

Members received a report which introduced the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2016 to 2046. The Plan sets out the framework for delivery of services and improvements.

It was noted that detail had not yet been provided regarding changes from Government in the Housing and Planning Bill and how these would impact on the Plan.

Members noted that the Trust sought to retain housing stock at 9,000. This would be achieved by replacing Right to Buy properties through the Affordable Housing Programme. A full delivery plan would be produced in June 2016 for the

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Affordable Housing Programme. Officers advised that Right to Buy figures were lower than expected.

Whilst this would be a thirty year plan as required by government, the key focus is for the first five years of the plan which would be refreshed annually.

Members raised the following points:

- The closing and opening figures on page 312 were not consistent
- Page 313 would be more helpful if it included net income in addition to total income
- Page 324, 9.2 – to include information about the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016 to 2021.
- Page 326 appears to include repayment of additional debt. Officers confirmed that an assumption had been made in the Medium Term Financial Strategy that additional borrowing would take place, primarily to cover the shortfall created by the mandatory rent reduction. The Plan would be updated to ensure this was clear.
- The report gives a positive message and the Business Plan is ambitious.
- Was there a possibility that Housing Associations in the area would look to merge to achieve economies of scale? Officers responded that there were ambitions within the Trust to look at opportunities of this nature as this would overcome issues of quality management and communication. Management Services could be offered or indeed taking on of housing stock from Housing Associations.

RESOLVED:

To recommend to Cabinet approval of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2016 to 2046, subject to the points raised at the Panel meeting.

71. RESPONSE TO TECHNICAL CONSULTATION ON IMPLEMENTATION OF PLANNING CHANGES

Members received a report which provided them with information on the technical consultation on implementation of planning changes.

Officers highlighted the potential impact of the changes being proposed to:

- Fees

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- Permission in Principle
- Brownfield Register
- Small Sites Register
- Neighbourhood Plans
- Local Plans
- Planning Performance
- Competition
- Section 106 Dispute Resolution

The report detailed the proposed responses to the consultation.

Members commented as follows:

- There was some concern regarding the loss of democratic control.
- Permission in Principle was a foolish concept and could result in development being held up.
- Allowing competition for planning applications could result in decisions being taken by outsiders who did not know the area.
- Removing validations from the power of Planning Authorities could result in fewer Planning Officers as Junior Planners they would not gain the experience needed to progress in their careers, so resulting in too few Planning Officers to deal with bigger applications.
- Fees do not cover the cost of providing the service – the Council should be looking at ways to gain the power to set fees at a level to cover costs.
- Introduction of registers could result in problems should anything not be registered correctly.
- The Small Sites Register sounds like “garden grabbing” which was something that the government previously said they wanted to avoid.

Members asked whether the announcements in the budget negated some of the proposals. Officers agreed to look into this.

Members requested Officers to strengthen the responses to the consultation to reflect the viewpoint that the proposals were not sound.

**RESOLVED:**

To authorise the Head of Planning in conjunction with the Executive Member for Planning to respond to the consultation. The response to reflect the comments made by the Panel as above.

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Meeting ended at 9.50pm  
SH