

Cabinet Housing and Planning Panel
20 July 2016

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the CABINET HOUSING AND PLANNING PANEL held on Wednesday, 20th July, 2016 at 7.30 pm in the Cypress Room, Salvation House, 2 Sterling Court, Mundells, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL7 1FT

PRESENT: Councillors S Boulton (Chairman)
M Perkins (Vice-Chairman)

D Bell, H Bromley, M Cowan, G Hayes, M Holloway,
S Johnston (substituting for D Bennett), P Shah and
M Spinks

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors J Dean (Leader of the Council), and R Trigg (Executive Member for Governance, Community Safety, Police and Crime Commissioner and Corporate Property).

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Head of Planning (C Haigh)
Planning Policy and Implementation Manager (S Tiley)
Principal Planner (S Chivers)
Principal Planner (P Everard)
Governance Services Officer (R Burbidge)
Governance Services Officer (S Hulks)

22. SUBSTITUTIONS

The following substitution of a Committee Member had been made in accordance with Council Procedure Rules 19-22.

Councillor S Johnston for D Bennett.

23. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor D. Bennett.

24. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2016 were not available and consideration of them was deferred.

25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS

Councillor M Cowan and Councillor S Johnston both declared an interest in items on the agenda as appropriate by virtue of being members of Hertfordshire County Council. Councillor S Boulton declared an interest by virtue of being a member of North Mymms Parish Council.

26. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND PETITIONS

(a) Public Petition – Stop Symondshyde Green Belt Development

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 42 a petition was presented and the petition organiser, Mr. J Gardner addressed the meeting.

‘Welwyn Hatfield Council are considering a major redevelopment of 1130 dwellings in the Green Belt adjacent to Symondshyde Great Wood. We strongly oppose the suggested development and ask you not to proceed with it into the consultation. It would destroy the rural and historic character of the local countryside and overload the local country lanes.

More specifically:

- The loss of recreational resources for walkers, cyclists and horse riders;
- Impacts wildlife;
- The site would be a major encroachment into the Green Belt corridor which is contrary to Government policy;
- The impact on local lanes, Coopers Green Lane and Marford Road;
- It adjoins Sandridge parish.’

(b) Public Questions

Notice of the following questions had been received in accordance with Council Procedure Rule No. 31 -

1. Question to the Chairman, Councillor Stephen Boulton, from Mr. Peter Miller, Water End Residents Group

‘During the Local Plan process this Panel and the Planning Officers have consistently reiterated their desire to protect the Green Belt and to “Leave no stone unturned” in their assessment of sites.

North Mymms Parish Council (NMPC) recently submitted a considered proposal for a development at WeG8 New Barnfield in conjunction with Hat11 that would satisfy the proportional distribution of the OAN for North Mymms and minimise the harm to the Green Belt in the Parish by developing a brown field site in accordance with the NPPF.

There was no mention of this proposal at the last CHPP meeting on the 13 June, presumably because in the HELAA, WeG8 was found to be unsuitable because part of the site is an allocated waste site within the Hertfordshire Waste Development Framework.

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The HELAA states that no decision has been made by the waste authority to alter the site allocation and because of the uncertainty of uses by the landowner (HCC) the site is considered unsuitable.

We find this perplexing because HCC are the promoters as well as the landowners of the site and one would assume that the significant financial benefits of developing the entire site for residential use would be a prime motivator for altering the site allocation.

Before the Panel rubberstamp the proposed submission, will you please satisfy yourselves that absolutely “no stone has been left unturned” with regard to New Barnfield and that there has been sufficient dialogue between WHBC and HCC?

It is extremely important that you do this because the NMPC proposal for WeG8 has now been given substantial weight by the inclusion of adjacent HAT11 in the proposed submission and you now have the very real and genuine opportunity to save the large open areas of Green Belt in North Mymms that have been proposed at BrP4 and BrP7.’

The Chairman read the following answer to the question:

‘Welwyn Hatfield has had a number of meetings with the Minerals and Waste Planning Authority regarding New Barnfield. The County Council currently has no plans to review the waste plan and the site remains allocated for waste uses in the recently adopted Waste Site Allocations Local Plan. Whilst Hertfordshire County Council property department has promoted the site for residential use, this is on the basis that at some point in the future it may no longer be required for waste management facilities. At this point consideration would also need to be given to whether the site should revert to its former use as a secondary school, given the expected demand for additional places over the plan period.’

2. Question to the Chairman, Councillor Stephen Boulton, form Mr. John Gardner

‘Does the CHPP accept that the inclusion of the HAT15 Symondshyde site as an allocation in the Proposed Submission Local Plan risks having the Plan found unsound on the grounds that the proposal is not justified and is not consistent with national policy?’

The proposed development of 1,130 dwellings as a new village in the middle of the Green Belt between Hatfield and

Wheathampstead/Sandridge is not justified when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence. The proposal represents inappropriate development in the Green Belt, contrary to the Green Belt purpose of safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, and no exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated.

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The Welwyn Hatfield Housing Sites Selection Background Paper 2016, which formed part of the basis on which decisions were taken at the CHPP meeting on 13th June, gave as the reason for allocating the HAT15 site that it was an “opportunity to deliver a free-standing village and make a significant contribution to the need for housing alongside community infrastructure”. This is a completely inadequate justification for allocating this site for development.

The Minister of State for Housing and Planning, Brandon Lewis MP issued a letter on 7th June 2016 stating that *“The [National Planning Policy] Framework makes it clear that inappropriate development may be allowed only where very special circumstances exist, and that Green Belt boundaries should be adjusted only in exceptional circumstances”* and *“We have been repeatedly clear that demand for housing alone will not change Green Belt boundaries.”*

The HAT15 proposal is not consistent with the following provisions in the NPPF:

- Achieving sustainable development – NPPF paragraph 8 requires that economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously, yet the Symondshyde site is not environmentally sustainable on numerous counts, which together outweigh any economic and social benefits.
- Promoting sustainable transport – NPPF section 4.
- Meeting the challenge of climate change – NPPF section 10.
- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment – NPPF section 11.
- Protecting Green Belt land – NPPF section 9 sets out the purposes of the Green Belt and emphasises its openness and permanence.
- NPPF paragraph 14 states that Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs, unless specific policies in the NPPF indicate development should be restricted. Footnote 9 to para 14 lists land designated as Green Belt as a restricting factor.

Does the CHPP not consider it remarkable, in light of NPPF para 14, that paragraph 7.3 of the Director (Governance)’s report to the CHPP meeting on 13th June and paragraph 8.3 of the report to the 20th July meeting both state that there is a risk of the Local Plan being found unsound if it does not meet the Objective Assessment of Need, yet no mention is made of the adverse impact of using Green Belt land for this purpose?’

The Chairman read the following answer to the question:

‘The Council does not accept that the inclusion of Hat 15 (Symondshyde) as a housing allocation in the draft Plan risks having the Plan found unsound. National planning policy in the NPPF (at paragraphs 14 and 47) is clear that local planning authorities should use their evidence base to

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ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for housing in their area, as far as is consistent with the policies set out in the NPPF itself.

Specific policies in the NPPF indicate that development should be restricted in certain cases, and Green Belt designation is identified as one such case. As previously reported to this Panel however it is not possible for the Council even to come close to meeting its objectively assessed needs for housing without releasing significant areas of land from the Green Belt. Whilst noting the statement of the former Minister for Housing and Planning concerning Green Belt boundaries, the adverse socio-economic effects that would result from a failure to meet objectively assessed needs for the borough by a very substantial margin constitute in the Council's opinion the exceptional circumstances necessary to alter Green Belt boundaries. Paragraph 83 of the NPPF explicitly provides for this.

The adverse impact of releasing land from the Green Belt was considered in the Site Selection Background Paper which was reported to the last meeting of Cabinet Housing and Planning Panel. The Risk Management Implications at paragraph 7.2 refer to the need for the plan to be justified by the evidence and this includes evidence on the impact to the purposes of the Green Belt and the Green Belt boundary.

In terms of the choice of Hat 15 as one of the areas proposed to be released from the Green Belt in addition to other substantial urban extensions at Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City and smaller sites adjoining the villages, the Council has had full regard to the findings of technical studies including the Green Belt Review and the Landscape Capacity and Sensitivity Study in undertaking site selection. Any development of Hat 15 would be accompanied by a package of sustainable transport measures, as well as measures to mitigate any effects on adjoining areas of woodland and nature conservation interest. For these reasons the Council does not accept that the allocation of Hat 15 for housing would be inconsistent with policy in the NPPF paragraphs identified in the question.

Appendix B to the report considered by this Panel on 13th June addressed the impact on the purposes of the Green Belt resulting from the release of land from the Green Belt. Paragraph 7.2 of that report and 8.2 of this report refers to the risk of the Plan being found unsound if it is not justified by the evidence. The evidence includes the assessment of the impact on the purposes of the Green Belt.

3. Question to the Chairman, Councillor Stephen Boulton, from Alasdair Buckle of Maddox Associates

'The draft Sustainability Appraisal to the proposed Submission Draft Local Plan (annexed to the current committee papers) concludes in respect of

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Hat2 (former Hatfield Aerodrome) that a contributing factor to not include it in the proposed Submission Draft Local Plan is that “the loss of the country park and community facility until beyond the plan period, and the potential cumulative impact on the road network (if the site was brought forward alongside Hat1 and Hat15 [Symondshyde] during the plan period) are not considered to outweigh the site’s social and economic benefits”. Is the committee aware that, should Hat2 come forward for housing, a meaningful Country Park is deliverable throughout the plan period and beyond, due to a phased approach being synchronised with the proposed minerals extraction? And is the committee aware that the highways impact arising from allocating any homes at Symondshyde would be significantly worse than allocating the equivalent number of homes at Hat2, since there are no opportunities to connect to the existing sustainable transport network at Symondshyde, which is isolated from all major employment sites?

The Chairman read the following answer to the question:

‘With regard to the provision of a ‘meaningful country park’ throughout the plan period and beyond, it is accepted that proposals have been put before the Council by the landowner showing phasing arrangements for the mineral extraction and how certain areas of country park could be made available for public access during mineral extraction and during the construction of housing on Hat 2. These areas are significantly smaller, however, than envisaged at the time of setting up the planning provisions for Ellenbrook Park in 2000, and of course the development of Hat 2 itself would permanently remove about one-third of the originally intended park area. No convincing landscape, ecology or recreation benefit has been offered by the landowner sufficient to compensate for this loss in area.

On the question of transport, there is no evidence from the Council’s own modelling work or from any other source that the overall impact on the local highway network from development of Hat 15 (Symondshyde) would be worse than that of a similar number of dwellings at Hat 2. Clearly as part of any development of Hat 15 a comprehensive package of sustainable transport measures, including bus, cycling and walking links, will need to be delivered and this will mitigate highways impact. However HAT2 is closer to a number of facilities and services than HAT15 and therefore offers more opportunities for trips to be made on foot or by bike.’

27. WELWYN HATFIELD DRAFT LOCAL PLAN PROPOSED SUBMISSION 2016

The report of the Director (Governance) presented the Proposed Submission Local Plan to the Panel for their consideration. Members noted that Appendix A comprised the draft Local Plan, Appendix B the Policies Maps, Appendix C the Sustainability Appraisal Report and Appendix D the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

The Panel also received a presentation from the Head of Planning which explained that the UK had a plan-led planning system and the Council had a

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duty to prepare Local Plan. The Council also had a duty to co-operate with adjoining authorities and other bodies. The Local Plan covered the period 2013-2032 and contained strategic vision, site allocations and development management policies. Policies Maps showed allocations and designations and there was a Sustainability Appraisal as well as an Infrastructure Delivery Plan. Once adopted, planning applications would have to be determined in accordance with Local Plan policies, unless material considerations indicated otherwise.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) expected Local Plans to deliver sustainable pattern of development –

“Local Plans should meet objectively assessed need for development, unless any adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh benefits, when assessed against policies in the Framework as a whole or specific policies indicate development should be restricted.”

Consultation responses had favoured that growth be more fairly distributed to towns and villages around the borough; raised concerns about impact of growth on green belt and infrastructure; warned against risk of settlements merging; and queried scope for new settlements.

However, exceptional circumstances existed to release land from the green belt as there was a significant shortfall against objective assessment of need and socio-economic impacts of not meeting housing needs and not creating new jobs.

The results of the Objective Assessment of Need were as follows -

Economy Study

Independent consultants recommended the need for 5.4 hectares (138,000 square metres) of new employment land over plan period
Proposed Submission identifies sites for 116,400 square metres new employment land on urban and green belt land

Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)

Independent consultants recommended the need for 12,616 - 13,433 new homes over plan period
Proposed Submission identifies sites for 12,082 new homes on urban and green belt land

With regard to sources of housing supply, the target was based on objective analysis of suitability, availability and achievability of all promoted urban and green belt sites and subjective analysis of green belt purposes, transport issues, infrastructure capacity, etc.

- Completions 2013-2016 1,057
- Planning permissions and capacity in urban areas 3,546
- Allowance for windfall 1,315

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• Capacity from ASR and green belt sites	6,164
Total	12,082

The target equated to 49% in urban areas and 51% on green belt and Areas of Special Restraint (ASR) sites. Also, the target equated to 74% in Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield and 26% in villages and rural areas.

With regard to sources of employment land, based on objective analysis of suitability, availability and achievability of all promoted urban and green belt sites and subjective analysis of green belt purposes, transport issues, infrastructure capacity, etc the position was:-

▪ Estimated losses (from office-to-housing schemes)	80,700 sq.m
▪ Broadwater Road West	17,700 sq.m
▪ HAT1 North West Hatfield	13,900 sq.m
▪ WeG4b Marshmoor	40,500 sq.m
▪ Net Total	116,400 sq.m

Plus strategic policy to resist loss of existing designated employment land in Welwyn Garden City, Hatfield, Welham Green and Cuffley.

With regard to the position on retail sites based on objective analysis of suitability, availability and achievability of all promoted sites and subjective analysis of green belt purposes, transport issues, infrastructure capacity, etc was that the target to 2026 (not 2032 as there was uncertainty about long-term shopping patterns) was:-

- 9,400 sqm in Welwyn Garden City town centre
- 2,000 sqm in Hatfield town centre
- 500 sqm in neighbourhood and village centres
- Small new neighbourhood centres in Birchall Garden Suburb, North-West Hatfield and Symondshyde and small convenience shop in Panshanger

The proposed development strategy was:-

- To maximise opportunities on brownfield sites in towns and villages
- To release green belt to help meet development needs
- To develop urban extensions capable of providing infrastructure and facilities
- To allow more limited growth in and around villages to protect character and identity
- To reinforce the unique garden city heritage of Welwyn Garden City
- To promote pioneering and entrepreneurial spirit to renew Hatfield
- To protect urban open land within towns and villages
- To establish a green corridor between WGC and Hatfield to link various green spaces
- To protect land retained as green belt
- To deliver supporting infrastructure, transport and services/facilities.

The content of the Plan was presented as follows -

- Welwyn Hatfield Now = summary of geography, socio-economic situation, housing, environment and outcome of previous consultation exercises
- Spatial Vision to 2032 = explains long-term vision for the borough
- Borough-Wide Strategic Objectives = to help guide decision-making
- Sustainable Development = guiding principles for sustainable development; growth targets for new homes, employment land and retail space; settlement strategy and green belt boundaries for towns and villages
- Movement = policies for transport and travel
- Centres, Services and Facilities = retail hierarchy of towns and villages; development management policies for shops and community facilities
- Housing = policies for type and mix of housing including affordable housing, specialist housing, gypsies and travellers and self-build and custom-build
- Economy = policies to encourage economic prosperity and investment; and designation of employment areas
- Quality of New Development = policies for high quality design; amenity and layout; parking, servicing and refuse; sustainable construction; flood risk
- Environmental Assets = policies for protection of assets; green infrastructure; heritage; ecology and landscape; urban open land; environmental pollution
- Infrastructure = policies for infrastructure delivery and new schools
- Welwyn Garden City = vision and objectives; policies for historic environment; town centre; retail zones; housing allocations; masterplan policies for Broadwater Road West mixed use site, Panshanger, Birchall Garden Suburb
- Hatfield = vision and objectives; policies for town centre; retail zones; University of Hertfordshire; housing allocations; masterplan policy for North West Hatfield
- Villages = housing allocations in Woolmer Green, Oaklands & Mardley Heath, Welwyn, Welham Green, Brookmans Park, Little Heath and Cuffley
- Masterplan policy for Marshmoor for employment and some housing
- Masterplan policy for Symondshyde new village
- Rural Areas = policy for development within green belt
- Implementation & Monitoring = explains how policies will be delivered and monitored to ensure success
- Housing and Employment Trajectory
- Relationship to 2005 District Plan policies
- Glossary of technical terms
- Policies Maps = 5 maps of borough and 25 inset maps of town, neighbourhood and village centres and major developed sites
- Sustainability Appraisal = of social, economic, environmental effects of plan
- Infrastructure Delivery Plan = identifies infrastructure needs over plan period so it can be actively planned for

The Panel was advised that there were risks to the proposals. The Government has threatened to intervene where plans not submitted by early 2017 and duty to

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co-operate bodies might object to aspects of the plan. Also, the Local Plan might be found unsound if it did not meet national guidance.

A number of landowners/agents were already expressing the view that analysis of sites was wrong or that highway and infrastructure constraints could be resolved and officers had advised that these should be submitted as consultation representations. Third parties might consider judicial challenge to aspects of the plan; an Examination Inspector might require that modifications be made to the plan; and the risk of plan applications for rejected/refused green belt sites being won on appeal.

The proposed timetable was as follows –

CHPP Proposed Submission Local Plan	20 July 2016
Cabinet Proposed Submission Local Plan	2 August 2016
Public consultation for 8 weeks (including exhibitions in Welwyn Garden City, Hatfield, Welwyn, Brookmans Park and Cuffley)	Aug - Oct 2016
Analyse consultation responses	Late 2016
Submission Local Plan (CHPP, Cabinet, Full Council)	Early 2017

At this point the timetable would be out of Council's control, but it was thought likely to be subject to Public Examination in mid 2017 and an Inspector's Report and Adoption in late 2017.

The Chairman thanked Colin Haigh for the presentation and officers for the work they had carried out to date on the Local Plan. Members of the Panel then asked questions and commented on the report during which the following points were made –

- The Objective Assessment of Need was crucial and the need to follow the rules meant that the Council was not a free agent to decide growth target outside Government guidance; that some revisions to the Green Belt boundaries would therefore need to be made;
- There was a need to ensure that the strategy towards the location of new development based on maximising the use of brown field sites was followed in order to ensure consistency with the trajectories shown for housing and employment floor space
- There were a series of references throughout the plan to sites some of which now had changed, e.g. SD55 had previously been HAT1 and could steps be taken to avoid the risk of confusion; would the old or the new designations be used;
- Where gypsy and travellers sites were being proposed these should not be adjacent to housing developments and the use of sites rejected for housing might be considered for this purpose;
- What would happen post 2031, would further incursions into the Green Belt be made and had consideration been given to the development of a new garden city in North Hertfordshire;

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- There were a number of disturbing comments about traffic at a number of locations including the Bridge Road/ Bessemer Road junction which had been the subject of an environmental traffic scheme involving the replacement of traffic light controls with a roundabout. Were more roundabouts proposed to improve traffic flows;
- Two new GP surgeries were proposed but this increase would be inadequate;
- Better public transport was proposed but this came at a time when Hertfordshire County Council was reducing the subsidies for buses.
- Welwyn Garden City Shop-front Design Guide should it be made compulsory and how could compliance be ensured;
- Should more conservation areas be introduced in Welwyn Garden City;
- What was the position with regard to the duty to co-operate;
- Schools data did not look consistent or correct; shouldn't 3 new schools be proposed rather than 1;
- Preservation of retail centres - was the 30% target too low for secondary shopping frontage areas;
- Could consideration be given to the removal of the Hatfield fire station and the Welwyn Garden City fire station sites from the plan and placed in the list of windfall sites;
- Could Symondshyde Village be considered a suitable site given that it had not been in previous consultation documents and there had been insufficient time to consider the proposal. What consultation had there been with the local parish councils and how could it be considered sustainable;
- There would be four new boundaries between Hatfield and the Green Belt was there not a danger of coalescence;
- Infrastructure Delivery Plan terminology, paragraph 3.5 (Local Context) acknowledged there was an infrastructure deficit but the Plan did not address the existing deficit; Should the timescales for delivery of transport infrastructure schemes be reconsidered;
- High View Neighbourhood Shopping Centre - there was no summary and a consequent lack of context;
- The description of Hatfield could be considered patronising and should be reconsidered;

In response the Panel was advised that if there was to be a new settlement in North Hertfordshire then the likelihood was that most of the dwellings there would be allocated to North Hertfordshire residents. With regard to transport infrastructure, the Council was reliant on information supplied by Hertfordshire County Council as highway authority but if it needed to be reconsidered it could be raised with the County Council. With regard to surgeries, whilst the Council could press for the provision of additional buildings there was doubt as to whether the NHS would be able to provide the trained GP's to staff them. The descriptive wording used in relation to Hatfield needed to be reviewed and coalescence of settlements should be avoided. Many meetings had been held with other duty to co-operate authorities and a memorandum of understanding was being sought with the other local authorities particularly with East Hertfordshire District Council. On the referencing of sites, when submitting

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comments people could use either of the terms previously used in respect of sites. Consideration would be given to the inclusion of a table in the document which referred to both.

Panshanger

Following the Panel meeting on 13 June, Councillor Perkins (Executive Member, Planning, Housing and Community) had given a great deal of thought to the loss of the airfield at Panshanger, given the Borough's important aviation heritage. She had also re-read the conclusions of the Housing & Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA). Sport England considered the site to be of regional importance to air sports and it was likely to be confirmed as a regionally significant area for sport, and should therefore be safeguarded for potential use in the future. A third party had promoted the concept of a retained - but relocated - runway; an analysis of the commercial viability of this by an independent consultant indicated that such a facility could cover its revenue costs, but would not be enough to generate a reasonable return on the capital investment.

National guidance required local plan policies to be deliverable. As a result it was not considered appropriate for the Local Plan to make formal provision for a new airfield by allocating the land for that purpose. However, a slight change to the Panshanger policy could create the scope for a relocated runway to be provided by a third party and this would ensure that the Local Plan did not receive an objection from Sport England and many others who would like to see a re-provided airfield.

It was therefore proposed that Policy SP18 for North East of Welwyn Garden City and Policies Map 3 be amended to state that the land currently designated as an Area of Special Restraint be allocated for 650 dwellings, that the Green Belt boundary to the north remained as currently defined on the District Plan Proposals Map, that 75 dwellings proposed on that Green Belt land be deleted from the Plan, and that an additional bullet point be added to the Policy to state that land to the north of the existing Green Belt boundary be left undeveloped and made available for a relocated runway.

It should then be a matter for the Council and relevant landowners to ensure that scope for a new runway was included within the master plan that would be prepared for the site, and that mechanisms for the land to be made available for this purpose be resolved as part of the master planning process or future planning application(s) and associated planning conditions and planning contributions.

It was recognised and accepted that this would reduce the housing target for the borough to 12,007 dwellings. There was some discussion on this proposal.

Councillor Perkins (Executive Member, Planning, Housing and Community) pointed out that the Proposed Submission Local Plan was a long and complex - but necessarily long and complex - document. It had been developed following

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comprehensive evidence studies, and had been through numerous rounds of stakeholder and public consultations to get to its current stage. If agreed by the Panel and by the Cabinet on 2 August, it would be published for another 8 weeks of public consultation and will ultimately be subject to Public Examination by an Independent Inspector.

She expressed thanks to officers for the enormous amount of work that had gone into the process of preparing the Plan and the input from statutory bodies such as Hertfordshire County Council, landowners and their agents, town and parish councils, community groups and members of the public.

The end result would be a Plan that was used to guide the future of the Borough - its towns, villages and countryside - and would be used to determine every planning application that was received by the Council over the next 15 years.

She indicated her support for the spatial vision to ensure that the Borough remained a vibrant place where people wanted to live, work and spend their leisure time, the strategic objectives that would guide decision-making, and the selection of both urban and Green Belt sites where new homes, jobs and shops would be built.

She expressed the view that as many urban sites as reasonably possible had been identified without leading to "town cramming", and tough but right decisions had been made to help meet housing and other needs by releasing some land from the Green Belt.

She also voiced the opinion that the right balance between large urban extensions around Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield had been achieved, where new facilities could be provided and where new residents would be close to shops, jobs and transport links, and more limited releases around villages which would meet future needs without damaging their character and identity.

Symondshyde

Councillor Perkins (Executive Member, Planning, Housing and Community) commented that in response to previous stages of public consultation, there were many who raised the scope for an entirely new community, rather than more extensions to towns and villages. They felt that such a scheme could provide much needed housing as well as community facilities and infrastructure such as a primary school.

It was important that the demand for growth was balanced with the need to protect the environment, a requirement for a green buffer between the Symondshyde development and the adjoining woodland was included, which resulted in the number of homes being reduced from 1,400 to 1,130.

Symondshyde Village was promoted as a new community as part of the Local Plan consultation exercise in early 2015. The Council hosted two drop-in events in October and November 2015 to highlight all of the new sites that had been

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promoted as part of the consultation period, including this one, and Gascoyne Cecil as landowners/promoters of the site also hosted their own 10 day charette consultation process with local residents.

It was emphasised that there was still time for people to have their say as the Proposed Submission Local Plan would be issued for eight weeks of public consultation from August to October 2016. All responses would be analysed and considered by officers and Councillors, and a final version of the Plan would then be submitted for Public Examination by an Independent Inspector.

Anyone who was concerned that Welwyn Hatfield Council did not give sufficient importance to environmental issues should be reassured by the next item on the agenda for the meeting - a Green Corridor Strategic Framework Plan - which set out the Council's aims and objectives for an east-west green corridor that linked up a number of green spaces between Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield and which was very important given the proximity of these two new towns.

Infrastructure

Many people had expressed concern about the infrastructure and services that would be needed to support growth and attention was drawn to the Infrastructure Delivery Plan which accompanied the Plan and which identified what infrastructure would be needed over the plan period, so that it could be actively planned for in partnership with relevant bodies such as Hertfordshire County Council as the local highway and education authority, and NHS England and the local Clinical Commissioning Group in respect of healthcare facilities and services. People were encouraged to make their comments on this as part of the consultation process.

Masterplanning

The Council wants to make sure that all development that takes place over the next 15 years was high quality. For the large strategic sites she believed that it was appropriate to work with the landowners/developers to prepare and consult on master-plans to guide the layout and quality of development and ensure that associated transport links and infrastructure was provided alongside new housing. These would be adopted as Supplementary Planning Documents to ensure that there was clear policy guidance over the long-term.

Consultation

To allow time for these changes to be made, it was proposed that the eight week public consultation period starts on Tuesday 30 August (as the Monday was a Bank Holiday) and run until Monday 24 October.

The selection of five exhibition venues identified in the report of the Director (Governance) was supported as these venues offered good coverage of the Borough and the main places where growth was proposed.

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However, it was considered that there should be a later additional venue to cover Hatfield as the proposed date (31 August) was in the school holidays, although that was the date which Green Lanes School had suggested. This was agreed and would be arranged.

It was proposed and seconded that Policy SP18 for North East of Welwyn Garden City and Policies Map 3 be amended to state that the land currently designated as an Area of Special Restraint be allocated for 650 dwellings, that the Green Belt boundary to the north remain as currently defined on the District Plan Proposals Map, that 75 dwellings proposed on that Green Belt land be deleted from the Plan, and that an additional bullet point be added to the Policy to state that land to the north of the existing Green Belt boundary be left undeveloped and made available for a relocated runway. On being put to the vote it was agreed unanimously.

It was then proposed and seconded that Hatfield Fire Station site and the Welwyn Garden City Fire Station site be removed as housing allocations from the Plan and added to the list of wind fall sites. On being put to the vote it was agreed unanimously.

It was then proposed and seconded that the eight week public consultation period starts on Tuesday 30 August (as the Monday was a Bank Holiday) and run until Monday 24 October. On being put to the vote it was agreed unanimously.

It was then proposed and seconded that the Symondshyde Village development be removed from the draft Local Plan. On being put to the vote there were 4 in favour (Councillors M Cowan, G Hayes, M Holloway and P Shah) and six against (Councillors S Boulton, D Bell, H Bromley, S Johnston, M Perkins and M Spinks) and it was declared lost.

RESOLVED:

(Councillors S Boulton, D Bell, H Bromley, S Johnston, M Perkins and M Spinks voting for and Councillors M Cowan, G Hayes, M Holloway and P Shah voting against)

- (1) That, subject to the foregoing amendments in relation to the Panshanger site, to the Hatfield Fire Station site and the Welwyn Garden City Fire Station site and the timetable for public consultation, the Proposed Submission Local Plan, Policies Map, Sustainability Appraisal and Infrastructure Delivery Plan be referred to the Cabinet for agreement to publish for public consultation under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 as amended.
- (2) That the Local Development Scheme be updated and presented to a future Cabinet Housing and Planning Panel meeting and Cabinet meeting for agreement in line with the programme set out in the report of the Director (Governance).

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- (3) That authority be delegated to the Head of Planning in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning, Housing and Communities to make minor non-material spelling, formatting, mapping and other amendments to the consultation documents where they do not alter the intent of the plan.

28. GREEN CORRIDOR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK PLAN - STAGE 1 REPORT

The report of the Director (Governance) updated Members on the progress of work looking at opportunities to enhance green infrastructure, specifically with reference to the Council's proposal to develop a green corridor running east to west across the borough between Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield (as identified in the previous Local Plan consultation document January 2015). This was being undertaken in the context of proposals for major housing development sites in this area.

A copy of the Stage 1 Green Corridor document was set out at Appendix A to the report which explained the policy and area context for the green corridor, identified the results of consultation with land owners and key stakeholders, and then set out the vision and objectives for the green corridor, identifying projects and proposals that would help to deliver these. Once fully developed, it was intended that the document would provide a framework for taking forward the Council's plans for a green corridor to support the Local Plan, and provide an important element for the master planning of the strategic growth sites around Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield. The following maps were tabled –

- Proposed Location of Green Corridor
- Area Descriptions
- Strategic Green Links
- Existing Rights of Way and Cycle Routes
- Major Development Sites

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet be recommended to approve the content of the Stage 1 Green Corridor document as set out at Appendix A to the report of the Director (Governance) for consultation alongside the Proposed Submission Local Plan, with a view to proceeding to Stage 2 of the Green Corridor proposals, once any responses to the consultation have been taken into account.

Meeting ended at 9.15pm
RB