

Appendix C – Consultation monitoring

This Appendix sets out a summary of the number of responses received to the various consultation documents, and details of how the Council raised awareness of the consultation. Also set out below is an analysis of the demographics of respondents to the consultation using the information provided in the optional feedback form, as well as an analysis of respondent's live using their address which was mandatory to provide.

Responses Recieved

1. Just over 3,100 comments have been made on the five consultation documents:
 - 2,191 comments on the Draft Local Plan Proposed Submission (DLPPS), from 1,245 individuals and organisations;
 - 743 comments on the DLPPS Policies Maps, from 734 individuals and organisations;
 - 140 comments on the Draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan, from 59 individuals and organisations;
 - 36 comments on the Sustainability Appraisal of the DLPPS, from 18 individuals and organisations;
 - 5 comments on the Habitats Regulations Assessment of the DLPPS, from 5 individuals and organisations.
2. Many of the respondents to the Draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan, Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment also responded to the main DLPPS document. Whilst the degree of overlap was more limited for the Policies Maps, some respondents did also respond to the main DLPPS document. The total number of respondents across all three documents was therefore 1,964, of which 1,848 were individuals and 116 were organisations.
3. The number of comments has decreased significantly at this consultation – the 2015 Local Plan Consultation saw almost 5,900 in total. However, the difference can largely be attributed to the splitting of comments between the 'consultation points' to which comments are attributed. In 2015 each housing site had its own consultation point, whereas at this consultation only the 7 Strategic Development Sites had their own – the other sites were grouped under a single consultation point for each settlement.
4. At the same time, the number of respondents to the consultation has increased – the 2015 Local Plan Consultation saw just under 1,600 in total. However, the large number of respondents from outside of the borough at this consultation (see 'Who Responded' section below) means that the number of borough residents responding has fallen significantly, from around 1,350 to 850.
5. In terms of the method of response to the consultation, a vastly higher proportion of responses were made electronically for this consultation than the 2015 Local Plan Consultation – 89.1%, vs 43.4% before. This has been driven by a significantly increased proportion of people making their responses through the online portal (67.4% vs 22.1% before), with a broadly similar proportion making them by email (21.8% vs 21.3% before). This has had significant benefits in

terms of the ease and speed of processing responses, and whilst it has partly been driven by increased uptake in the online system it also reflects the much lower volume of standardised/template letters received at this consultation.

Means of consultation

6. A variety of consultation methods were used to raise awareness of the consultation and engage with key stakeholders, interest groups and the wider community in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement. The methods used included:
 - Advertisements in various local papers including the Welwyn Hatfield Times, Herts Advertiser and Hertfordshire Mercury which cover areas both within and outside the borough, supplemented by press releases and media briefings to generate additional content;
 - Radio interview with the Executive Member for Planning, broadcast on local station Bob FM;
 - Email or letter notification to the several thousands of individuals registered on the Council's consultation database;
 - Email or letter notification to town/parish councils and residents groups including those lying just outside the borough who might consider themselves to be affected by proposals within the borough.
 - The inclusion of a half page feature on the consultation within the summer edition of 'Life', the Council's magazine circulated periodically to all households in the borough;
 - Prominent placement of information about the proposals on the Council's website homepage for the duration of the consultation;
 - Further advertisement of the consultation through the Council's social media channels;
 - A series of consultation drop-in events held in public venues throughout the borough.
7. The consultation documents, supporting documents and a summary and guide to the proposals were all available to view online, at the Council's offices and at libraries, parish and town councils throughout the borough. They were also available at consultation drop-in events held around the borough throughout the consultation period.
8. In total, six events took place – a number of officers and councillors were available at each to explain the proposals. Across the six events, it is estimated that approximately 700 people took the opportunity to view and discuss the proposals. The locations of events were:
 - Panshanger, Welwyn Garden City (Fairway Tavern)
 - Hatfield (Birchwood Leisure Centre)
 - Hatfield Garden Village (Green Lanes Primary School)

- Welwyn (Civic Centre)
- Brookmans Park (United Reformed Church)
- Cuffley (Cuffley Hall)

'Who responded?'

9. The Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) highlights the importance of recognising the borough's diversity, and considering the potential needs of all sections of the community when preparing new plans and policies. The SCI identifies young people, ethnic minorities, and sections of the community living in rural or more deprived areas of the borough as being underrepresented and 'hard to reach'. As part of each consultation, respondents are asked to provide some personal details to allow analysis of the responses and to help to monitor fair access to consultation.
10. The paper and online response forms for all of the consultation documents included a monitoring section, enabling data on individual respondents to be gathered. This data is not held for organisations and companies – given that their interest in the consultation is not generally personal, there is no need to profile them.
11. With the exception of their address, individuals are not *required* to provide any personal data for monitoring purposes on the response form. In addition, a significant number of individuals continue to respond to the consultation by email and letter (albeit at a much lower rate on this consultation than previously), which does not offer an opportunity to collect monitoring data. As such, consultee data is only held for 720 individuals – 39% of the total number of individuals who responded. Whilst this is not as many respondents as might be desirable, it is still sufficient to allow detailed analysis to be undertaken.
12. As with previous consultations, there evidently remain a number of groups who are over-represented in the responses (i.e. there is a greater share of responses from that group than their overall share of the borough's population), and accordingly a number of groups who remain 'hard-to-reach'. This is particularly true of younger age groups and ethnic minorities – a respondent to the consultation is still disproportionately likely to be older, White, and British.

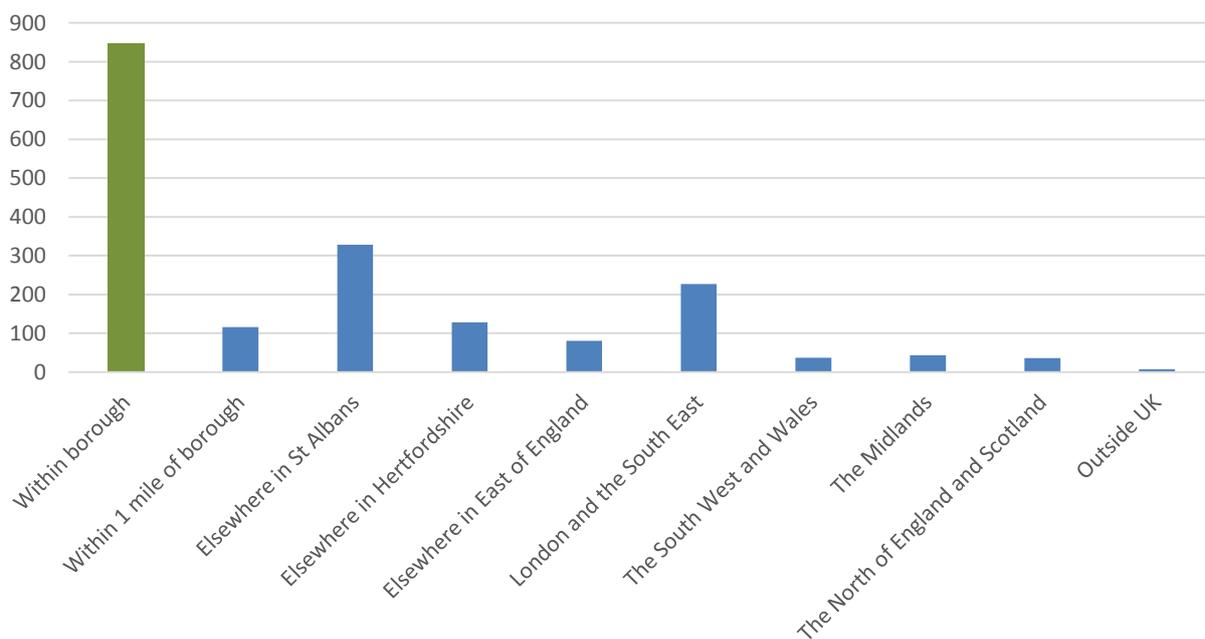
Location

13. Whilst the SCI is primarily concerned with how well represented borough residents are in consultations, a notable dynamic of this consultation has been the large number of respondents from outside the borough. The 2015 Local Plan Consultation Document saw 82 responses from individuals living outside the borough (6% of the total), with around half of those immediately beyond the borough boundary in Potters Bar. At this consultation, 1,003 of the 1,848 individual respondents lived outside the borough – more than half, at 54%. Whilst the overall number of respondents at this consultation has been higher than for the 2015 Local Plan Consultation Document, the changing proportion means that the number of comments from borough residents has fallen by over a third, from around 1,350 to 850.
14. This has been driven by two particular types of comments. The first is a large number of objections to the new village at Symondshyde (site SDS6) from

residents in St Albans District, some of whom live relatively close to the site but most of whom live somewhat further away – notably in Wheathampstead, Harpenden and within the city itself. The second type of comment with a significant number of non-borough respondents is the large number in support of the potential retention of an airfield at Panshanger (site SDS1). These comments have come from a particularly wide range of locations, with a roughly 3-way split between Hertfordshire residents (only a relatively small number of whom live in the borough), residents in London and the South East, and residents of the rest of the UK. The only UK regions from which no responses were received were the North East and Northern Ireland, whilst seven responses came from outside the UK – four from the Channel Islands, one from France, one from Czechia, and one from China.

15. Whilst not as large a component, around another 100 comments came from residents close to but outside the borough boundary, objecting to other proposed development sites close to the boundary. These include residents of Goffs Oak in Broxbourne concerned about development in Cuffley, residents of Potters Bar in Hertsmere concerned about development in Little Heath, and residents of Hertingfordbury Parish in East Herts concerned about the development of Birchall Garden Suburb. The full breakdown of non-borough respondents is shown in Figure 1 below.

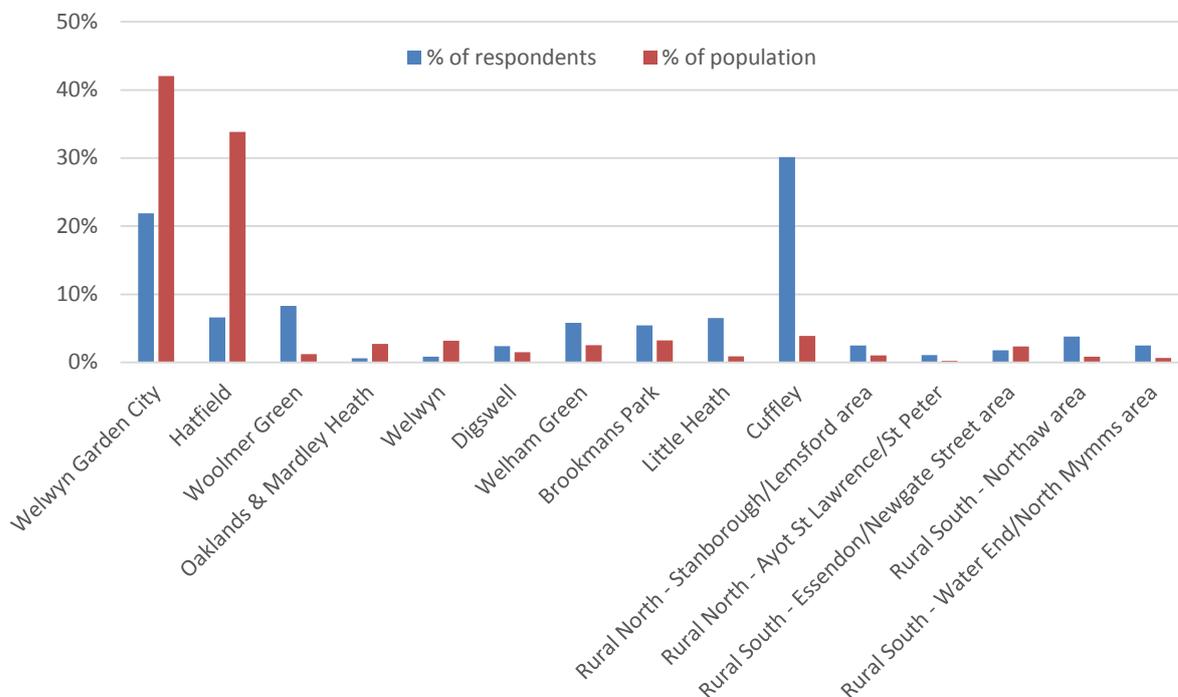
Figure 1 - Location of respondents



16. Figure 2 below considers the proportionality of respondents *within* the borough. The largest number of respondents in a settlement was Cuffley with 255 (30% of the total within the borough), followed by Welwyn Garden City with 185 (22%). However, whilst the vast majority of Cuffley respondents were objecting to development proposed there, a significant proportion of the respondents in Welwyn Garden City were supporting the potential retention of an airfield at Panshanger (site SDS1).
17. Across the borough as a whole there was 1 respondent for every 130 residents, well below the 1:80 ratio on this measure for the 2015 Local Plan Consultation. At this consultation Cuffley scored highest with a ratio of 1:17, closely followed by

Little Heath (1:18) and Woolmer Green (1:19). However, high ratios on this measure were not experienced in all villages – Brookmans Park and Welwyn, which also have proposed levels of growth largely proportionate to their size, saw ratios of 1:75 and 1:500 respectively. Relative to the size of its population Hatfield was the most under-represented settlement, with a ratio of 1:670. However, in absolute terms the smallest number of respondents within a settlement was Oaklands & Mardley Heath, with 5 (a 1:600 ratio).

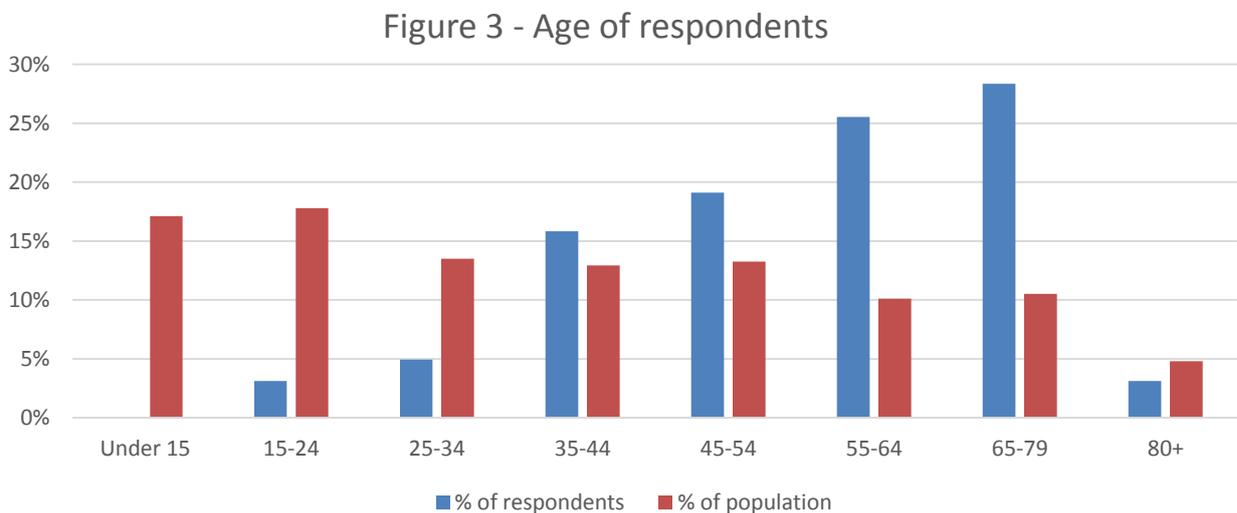
Figure 2 - Proportion of respondents by settlement



18. Following the 2012 Emerging Core Strategy consultation, the borough’s rural community was identified as relatively hard-to-reach. However, the Emerging Core Strategy had been proposing a much more town-focussed development strategy, and so a lack of responses from those settlements – whilst slightly disappointing – was ultimately not unexpected. The more proportionate approach taken in the 2015 Local Plan Consultation Document resulted in a much larger number of comments from villages and rural areas. This resulted in the identification of the inner-urban wards (such as Peartree in Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield Central) – which rank as the most deprived parts of the borough and had seen very few respondents to either consultation – as ultimately being much harder-to-reach.
19. Whilst the number of respondents from inner-urban wards has remained relatively low at this consultation, the numbers of respondents in edge-of-urban wards such as Hatfield South West and Hollybush in Welwyn Garden City is now much lower and the contrast is less stark. Nevertheless, the highest number of responses in the towns is still in the least deprived wards where there is no particular correlation to the amount of development proposed (e.g. Handside and Sherrards in Welwyn Garden City), and so better engagement with residents of the relatively more deprived parts of the borough should remain a priority.

Age

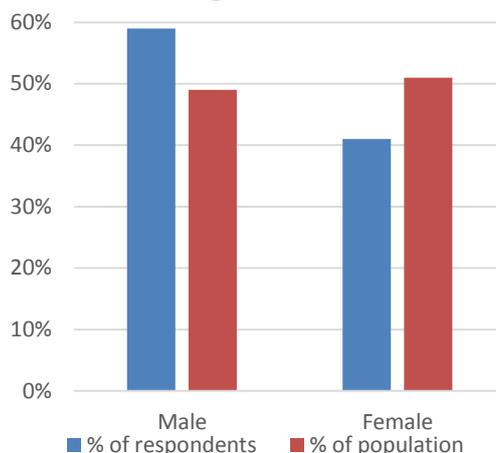
20. Figure 3 below shows the age of respondents relative to the overall proportions of borough residents in those age groups at the 2011 Census. It can be seen that younger age groups are significantly under-represented, whilst older age groups are significantly over-represented. At 28% of responses, despite only making up 10% of the borough's population, the 65-79 age group is the most over-represented.
21. Given the Local Plan's subject matter, it is not unexpected for no under-15s to have responded. In light of the borough's large student population (who are perhaps unlikely to have a long-term interest in the borough), a low level of response from the 15-24 age group – whilst slightly disappointing – is also not unexpected.
22. However, given the ongoing challenges of housing availability which the Local Plan will aim to address, and the ever-increasing average age of a first-time house-buyer who the plan would ultimately benefit, the under-representation of respondents aged 25-34 is a concern. Although the consultation events were reasonably well attended by younger people, this is not manifested in the responses and this age group clearly remains hard-to-reach. What is of greater concern is that respondents to this consultation were generally even older than on the 2015 Local Plan Consultation Document – the proportion of respondents aged 25-34 has fallen from 7% to 5%, whereas the proportion of respondents aged 65-79 has risen from 23% to 28%. However, this change could partly reflect the fact that many of the respondents supporting the potential retention of an airfield at Panshanger (site SDS1) have stated that their interest is as plane-owners – an uncommon asset for younger people.



Gender

23. Figure 4 shows the gender of respondents relative to the overall proportions of borough residents by gender at the 2011 Census. It can be seen that men are significantly over-represented at 59% of respondents, whereas women are significantly under-represented at 41%. This continues an increasing trend from recent consultations of increasing under-representation of women, although with respondents supporting the retention of an airfield at Panshanger excluded the gender split is similar to that at the 2015 Local Plan Consultation (55% male, 45% female). More encouragingly, the gender split for those aged under 44 is almost exactly 50:50.

Figure 4 - Respondents by gender



Ethnicity

24. The ethnicity of respondents is an important criteria to monitor – in previous consultations respondents have disproportionately been White British, which has not reflected the borough’s diversity. Figure 5 below demonstrates that ethnic minorities continue to be hard-to-reach. Despite the 2011 Census showing that 1-in-4 of the borough’s residents are not White British, only 1-in-10 consultation responses came from other ethnic groups – indeed only two of the respondents who completed the monitoring section of the response form described themselves as Black/Black British. The overall ethnic breakdown of respondents is generally very similar to the breakdown of respondents to the 2012 Emerging Core Strategy consultation and 2015 Local Plan Consultation – better engagement with the borough’s ethnic minorities must therefore remain a priority for future consultations.

Figure 5 - Respondents by ethnicity

