

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
CABINET HOUSING AND PLANNING PANEL – 18 FEBRUARY 2016  
REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR (GOVERNANCE)

**HATFIELD 2030+ VISIONING AND RENEWAL PROJECT AND LOCAL PLAN  
VISIONS**

**1 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report updates members on the Hatfield 2030+ Visioning and Renewal project, the feedback on the garden city principles workshop carried out last year on and green chain visioning workshop.
- 1.2 The outputs of these will be fed into the Local Plan.

**2 Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 That the Panel note the report in relation to the outputs of the Garden City Principles workshop, the Hatfield 2030+ project and the green chain visioning workshop which will be taken into account in the development of the emerging Local Plan.
- 2.2 That the panel recommend to Cabinet that the emerging vision and themes resulting from the Hatfield 2030+ project are endorsed.

**Implications**

**3 Financial Implication(s)**

- 3.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

**4 Link to Corporate Priorities**

- 4.1 The preparation of the Local Plan is a corporate target of the council, as part of the *Our Places* priority Business Plan Priority 3 (Meeting the Borough's Housing Needs) sets out that the Council will publish a new Local Plan to ensure a robust and agreed blueprint for future housing and other growth needs in the borough.

**5 Legal Implication(s)**

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising directly as a result of this report.

**6 Climate Change Implication(s)**

- 6.1 No climate change implications have been identified resulting from this report.

**7 Risk Management Implications**

7.1 There are no direct risk management implications associated with this report.

## **8 Policy Implications**

8.1 The Local Plan has to set out a strategy which should be based on a vision and set of objectives. The Emerging Core Strategy set out draft visions for the borough and the Local Plan Consultation document (LPCD) indicated that these would need to be updated. The LPCD also set out a vision for a green corridor between Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield with links to Panshanger Park, the Lea Valley, Ellenbrook Fields Country Park and Heartwood Forest.

8.2 The Hatfield 2030+ Vision and Renewal Project has identified a draft vision for the renewal of Hatfield. This will need to fit with the vision for Hatfield which will be set out in the Local Plan.

## **9 Background**

9.1 Subject to the views of members at the appropriate time, the Proposed Submission version of the Local Plan, envisaged to be put out to public consultation in July 2016, will include a spatial vision, borough-wide strategic objectives and a vision and local objectives for Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield. The public were consulted on these matters in the Emerging Core Strategy consultation (ECS) of October 2012.

9.2 The Local Plan Consultation Document did not alter the visions for Welwyn Garden City or Hatfield but outlined a need to amend the visions for Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield in line with whatever the agreed strategy for growth will be.

9.3 More recently, the Hatfield 2030+ Visioning and Renewal project, run by the Hatfield Renewal Partnership, of which this council is a board member has also begun. The partnership comprises of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, Welwyn Hatfield Community Housing Trust, Hatfield Town Council, the University of Hertfordshire, Goodman, Oaklands College and Finesse Leisure. Last year the partnership carried out wide ranging public consultation with key stakeholders and residents with a view to set out a future vision and priorities for renewal and investment in Hatfield. The Hatfield 2030+ project has identified a vision and set of themes to support the vision to help focus what projects can be taken forward.

9.4 As set out in the report to this Panel in September last year in response to the consultation responses a workshop on Garden City principles was held on 17<sup>th</sup> September to consider how they can inform the Local Plan and help set a framework for new development in the borough.

9.5 In addition a workshop on the concept and vision for a green corridor between Panshanger and Ellenbrook was held in July last year.

## **10 Explanation**

### *Hatfield 2030+*

10.1 The Hatfield 2030+ project was launched in September 2015 with the aim of working proactively with the local community to deliver a strategic plan for the renewal of Hatfield to guide the ongoing transformation of the town for the next 15 years and beyond. This framework can then be used by the partnership (and

others) to help drive activity and investment and provide a strategic context for renewal as well as identifying a portfolio of more specific initiatives/projects that would be intended for implementation over the short medium and longer term. As well as pulling together a common evidence base (based on survey and research work) a programme of community consultation was undertaken to provide opportunities for stakeholders and the wider community to understand local issues, priorities and aspirations.

10.2 Throughout the consultation residents and stakeholders began to highlight a vision for what they want Hatfield to become and aspirations included:

- A 're-balanced' whole community i.e. not segregated into students/in-commuters/residents etc
- An improved town centre offer that is vibrant.
- A range of quality housing.
- Variety in shops, facilities and entertainment provision.
- For Hatfield to be described as 'a *good place*', comparable with other towns, if not better.

10.3 The emerging Vision for Hatfield that has been identified is that of a 're-balanced' new town with a suggested Vision Statement as follows:

*"The Vision for Hatfield 2030+ is a well connected, distinctive, multi-centred and well balanced town, which retains its 'New Town' spirit. Hatfield in 2030 re-balances economic growth and world class education assets with new and rejuvenated affordable housing, excellent community and leisure facilities; set within a series of well-connected urban villages. The town will continue to foster a strong sense of community, enterprise and creativity that embraces new and long established residents, students, businesses and community groups in common cause."*

10.4 Sitting underneath this vision there are five key themes which set a range of renewal objectives. These are:

- Delivering sustainable and successful centres across the town, including the town centre.
- Providing new and improved housing to offer the full range of the housing ladder.
- Promoting an environment for business and enterprise.
- Prioritising place making, public realm and sustainable movement.
- Creating cultural, community and social infrastructure for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

10.5 The next step for the Hatfield 2030+ project is to report back to the community on this emerging vision and seek their response to shape the final outcome. If endorsed by the council, it is envisaged that a vision of this type could form the basis of the strategy for Hatfield in the proposed submission version of the Local Plan.

- 10.6 The focus for the renewal work will need to be in conformity with the strategy set out in the Local Plan but there is also an opportunity to revisit the vision and objectives which were set out in the Emerging Core Strategy to take into account where appropriate the outputs from this work.

#### Emerging Core Strategy Vision for Hatfield

- 10.7 The vision for Hatfield was set out as follows:

*'By 2029 a more positive image of Hatfield will have been created building on the strengths of a more diversified economy, its role as a sub regional destination for employment and higher education and through the regeneration of its town and neighbourhood centres. The development of a new neighbourhood north of Hatfield will have been planned with the necessary supporting infrastructure. Improvements between key public transport interchanges will provide better east/west accessibility. Ellenbrook Country Park will have become established providing a habitat for wildlife and opportunities for access to natural open space. Together these actions will have created a well designed, well connected and cohesive Hatfield.'*

- 10.8 In addition the Emerging Core Strategy (ECS) also proposed a set of local objectives that were developed for Hatfield.

- HAT1: To secure the regeneration of Hatfield town centre and to ensure that the redevelopment reflects the needs of local people.
- HAT2: Provide for an enhanced transport interchange between the town centre, the university, the Galleria and the railway station.
- HAT3: Support the redevelopment of High View neighbourhood centre.
- HAT4: To maximise the benefits of the University of Hertfordshire whilst balancing the accommodation needs of students with the needs of the resident community.
- HAT5: Improve the integration of Old Hatfield with the rest of the town whilst preserving and enhancing this heritage asset.

- 10.9 Representations to the Emerging Core Strategy and Local Plan Consultation Document were broadly supportive of the approach to the regeneration of Hatfield but were critical of the approach to growth and the strategic sites in particular.

- 10.10 It is reassuring that both the ECS vision and objectives and the more recent Hatfield 2030+ vision and themes are complimentary to each other. Whilst these have been produced separately they are clearly picking up on similar issues.

- 10.11 The Hatfield 2030+ vision and themes do not pre-empt any decision yet to be made by the council on the Local Plan and align with the council's approach to the regeneration of Hatfield town centre and the neighbourhood centres.

- 10.12 It is recommended that the council endorses the Hatfield 2030+ vision. and that council as Local Planning Authority will ensure that officers will then consider how the themes and supporting objectives can possibly be aligned, strengthened

or adapted to support the delivery of both the Local Plan and the Renewal Framework for Hatfield.

### Garden City Visioning

- 10.13 The ECS set out an approach that Garden City and New Town heritage should be recognised in new development as part of the strategy for delivering the aspiration to maintain the existing character of the borough's settlements. A number of representations to both the ECS and the LPCD expressed concern that these were not being delivered in the emerging local plan.
- 10.14 Since the Emerging Core Strategy was published, the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA), which grew directly out of the Garden City movement, has sought to influence and respond to this (?) by publishing a series of research and guidance reports which have highlighted the way that sustainable new communities can be created using garden city principles, encourage the UK to rediscover its planning heritage to re-imagine garden cities for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and set out a series of key principles to help create new garden cities.
- 10.15 In order to explore further with stakeholders the issues a workshop was held with representatives from the council, the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA), developers and landowners, residents' groups and associations from Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield, the Welwyn Garden City Society and the Advisory Team for Large Applications (ATLAS). The session used the TCPA's Garden City principles as a starting point. The key themes and outputs from the stakeholder discussion are set out in Appendix B.
- 10.16 Many of the themes that emerged from the discussion are inherent in good town planning practice and have already been captured in policies set out in the Emerging Core Strategy, in particular those relating to design quality, green infrastructure, creating sustainable neighbourhoods and a mix of housing tenures and should be applied throughout the borough. Key themes that also emerged included:
- A garden city is not just about image, it is a whole package of elements, a combination of economics, governance and place making
  - There needs to be engagement, and strong leadership, a clear vision and commitment to achieving it.
  - Suitable mix of community infrastructure located in flexible and highly accessible 'hub' spaces
  - Garden cities were innovative, we must not be afraid of innovation.
  - Creation and maintenance of multi-functional and usable green space which is linked to the wider natural environment.
  - A masterplanned approach can help to provide that leadership by setting out a comprehensive approach to the layout of a site, the mix of uses, the delivery of facilities and services, the provision of open space and good design.
  - Maintenance of open spaces will need to be addressed on the basis that the public sector might have difficulties funding the upkeep of such facilities wherever they are located, it would follow that the solutions to

land value capture and long term stewardship could be applied to new neighbourhoods wherever they might be developed.

- 10.17 The approach to masterplanning the strategic sites is being taken forward in the development of the local plan without prejudice to any decision members may make on what sites to include in the local plan.

#### Green Chain Visioning

- 10.18 Proposals for development of a green corridor received support from the local community and a workshop was set up following the consultation last year to explore in more detail what this might comprise. Key stakeholders were invited to discuss their ideas and aims and objectives for the corridor. They comprised landowners, special interest groups and adjoining local authorities.
- 10.19 The aim of this event was to discuss the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of delivering the green corridor; consider the vision and objectives for this proposal; and produce mini project briefs for potential projects that could be delivered as part of the green corridor. The event was well attended and a number of key themes arose from the discussion. These are summarised below:

#### *Access*

- 10.20 The green corridor needs to: be accessible to both existing and new communities; be permeable and provide north south links in addition to east west connections; overcome existing physical barriers to movement; be easy to navigate with good signage; be safe to use; provide a safe route for wildlife; create new local and strategic links; provide circular routes for walkers and cyclists; provide new and upgraded cycleways that are well maintained and lit where appropriate to encourage safer cycling and provide a route for commuters.

#### *Wildlife Conservation*

- 10.21 The green corridor needs to: protect and enhance this important wildlife corridor by protecting existing wildlife assets (e.g. The Commonswood Local Nature Reserve) and relate to other conservation projects in the borough; prioritise the needs of wildlife and nature along the green corridor over recreational aspirations; provide new animal infrastructure (e.g. badger tunnels and bat boxes) and ensure that there are undisturbed areas within the green chain for wildlife to flourish; ensure the corridor is wide enough and long enough to be usable by different species.

#### *Function of the Green Corridor*

- 10.22 The green corridor needs to: be a well defined stretch of green space containing protect green wedges; leave areas of multi habitat open; promote agri-environment schemes; balance the competing needs and aspirations of different groups; provide opportunities for food production; help prevent coalescence between the two towns; improve existing green spaces; ensure new green spaces are multi-functional; be well managed and maintained.

#### *Delivery*

- 10.23 The green corridor needs to: have a clear vision and objectives; promote community involvement in the delivery and management of the project; involve key stakeholders and local businesses; have funding in place for delivery; have a

marketing strategy in place to raise awareness of the green corridor; secure buy in from land owners; have an online function whereby people can download maps and find out about how to access the green corridor.

10.24 The themes are being explored further in the development of the local plan and setting strategic objectives for the masterplanning of sites

## **11 Equality and Diversity**

11.1 As this report is for endorsing an emerging vision and not yet at a stage ready for adoption an Equalities Impact Assessment has not been carried out.

Anita Ward/ Jenny Smith/ Paul Everard/

29th January 2016

Appendices:

Appendix A Garden City Visioning Event – Key Themes and Outcomes