

Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel  
16 January 2025

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

\* Reporting to Cabinet

Minutes of a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL CABINET PLANNING AND PARKING PANEL held on Thursday 16 January 2025 at 7.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

PRESENT: Councillors R.Platt (Chair)  
L.Gilbert (Vice-Chairman)  
  
K.Thorpe, S.Bonfante, S.Goldwater, T.Kingsbury,  
G.Michaelides, P.Shah, M.Hobbs and J.Quinton

ALSO Councillors  
PRESENT:

OFFICIALS B.Compton, Democratic Services Officer  
PRESENT: M.Pyecroft, Principal Planner (Implementation)  
M.Wilson, Planning & Policy Implementation Manager  
Z.AI-Jawad, Executive Director (Place)  
G.Gnanamoorthy, Assistant Director (Planning)

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151. APOLOGIES & SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Cllr Sunny Thusu and Cllr Lucy Musk. There were no substitutions.

152. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2024 were approved as a correct record.

153. NOTIFICATION OR URGENT BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED UNDER ITEM 9

No notifications for urgent business were received.

154. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

Councillor Tony Kingsbury declared an interest as a County Councillor.

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155. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND PETITIONS

No questions or petitions were received.

156. MARSHMOOR MASTERPLAN SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

The Principal The Principal Planner (Implementation) introduced the supplementary planning document. A Development Framework SPD, containing development principles for the Marshmoor site (also referred to as the Hatfield Innovation Campus by the Landowner for marketing purposes) has been prepared by the Landowner and their consultant team, in collaboration with officers from Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council. These principles ensure the site is planned comprehensively to deliver a high-quality employment site and to ensure that the site integrates as well as possible with the rest of Welham Green. The document has been prepared in line with the Council's Approach to Master planning Guidance note which was endorsed by the Council in March 2024.

During the discussion the following points were raised:

- A Member raised a point regarding flooding within the report and suggested members of the public would like to be reassured about the flooding risk.
- The Principal Planner (Implementation) replied that within the draft SPD there is a flooding map constraints plan. The flooding plan identifies areas most sensitive to flooding in particular the southern area around the smaller of the two parcels which is the closer of the two to the station. This would inform future development and would not be developed on, as per the policy requirement.
- A Member raised a part of the proposal stating that housing should be for employees, and it should be affordable and asked for clarification.
- The Principal Planner (Implementation) responded that the housing would not be part of the borough's normal housing supply. The Landowner has an aspiration for accommodation reserved for people working on the site and it would become part of the offer for people working on the site. Specifically, for those on some sort of placement or short-term contract, instead of having to look for somewhere to rent for six months they can be offered accommodation as part of their package.
- A Member asked if the accommodation would be owned by whoever buys the Industrial units.
- The Principal Planner (Implementation) responded that there would not be industrial units, the site is for science and innovation. He further explained that the dwellings would be in the same ownership and tied to the employment use through a legal agreement.
- A Member asked for clarification regarding the land no longer being considered green belt.

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- The Principal Planner (Implementation) explained that until the local plan was adopted the green belt boundary was the railway line, so it started at the railway line and included part of the site. The site was promoted by the Landowner for employment, and it was seen to be the most appropriate way of meeting the employment requirement through the plan period. The green belt boundary was moved and is now the road rather than the railway line and the whole site has been removed from the greenbelt as a result of the adoption of the local plan.
- A Member requested that when the public engagement event occurs to make sure it is at a place and time where it will engage as much of the public as possible and to let councillors know about the engagement so they can encourage as many residents to come as possible.
- The Principal Planner (Implementation) confirmed they have been in touch with the Landowner and are looking to use the Memorial Hall in Welham Green in the afternoon and evening on a date to be confirmed. This would allow for a large group of users to be able to attend.
- The Planning & Policy Implementation Manager explained that the Parish Council have sent a representative to the liaison group, and they have offered to help with promoting the engagement event also.

RESOLVED:

The Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel unanimously agreed to recommend to Cabinet that

- a) the Marshmoor Masterplan, as detailed in Appendix A, be taken forward for public consultation for a period of six weeks.
- b) any subsequent minor amendments and editing changes that do not materially affect the content prior to consultation be delegated to Assistant Director (Planning) in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning; and
- c) if unanimously agreed by the Panel, for the decision to be taken by the executive member using their delegated powers under paragraph 18.1(b) of the Cabinet procedure rules.

157. LOCAL PLAN EARLY ENGAGEMENT AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME UPDATE

The Planning & Policy Implementation Manager introduced the update report on the early engagement on the new local plan which took place between September 2024 and November 2024, asking for reflections on the challenges and opportunities facing the borough with regard to topics on living, working, environment and movement & infrastructure. The engagement also asked for people's aspirations for the future of the borough.

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During the discussion the following points were raised:

- The Chair thanked the team for their hard work on this engagement and asked if they felt the level of response was adequate or good enough.
- The Planning & Policy Implementation Manager replied that the engagement had also served another purpose in talking about a new local plan coming and when in the Howard Centre there was lot of interest in the timetable. The public were offered an opportunity to comment but they were most interested in the timetable. However, the comments received were good quality.
- A Member commented on one the key themes and specifically the Borough's greenbelt and prioritising development on brownfield sites and retaining the characteristics of the Borough with its two main towns and surrounding villages asked if this came across strongly in the engagement.
- The Planning & Policy Implementation Manager replied that it is a big theme and definitely came out as part of the engagement and will come out again as we go forward.
- The Member responded that it was good to see an acknowledgement of the change in role of, and opportunities within, the town centres.

RESOLVED:

The Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel unanimously noted the outcome and summary of responses of the new local plan early engagement and recommends to Cabinet that the key themes inform the preparation of the Local Plan; and, recommends that Cabinet agrees to the Local Development Scheme being published on the Council's website and for a copy to be sent to the Secretary of State to comply with the Written Ministerial Statement of 12 December 2024.

158. LOCAL PLAN ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2023/24

The Planning & Policy Implementation Manager introduced the report setting out development that has taken place in the borough during the year and over the plan period to date and assesses whether this development meets targets across a number of Local Plan indicators. The AMR covers a range of topics including housing, employment, the environment and infrastructure.

During the discussion the following points were raised:

- A Member commented this was a really important document, full of useful information and people should read it because it draws out what is happening across the Borough. However not all should be treated as gospel, in particular the crime stats can be misleading. For instance, where the crime took place, where it was reported to take place and

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where the arrest was made. Crimes being attributed to ward level is difficult to ascertain.

- The Chair agreed it is a really valuable document and would give a person coming into the council as a new employee an overview of the Borough.
- A Member asked a question regarding retail frontages on page 150 asking if it the 72% was only referring to class E.
- The Assistant Director for Planning confirmed that the table related to the percentage of shop frontages in E classes rather than vacancy so there will be another 28% in non Class E uses.
- A Member asked if the deprivation figures based on figures from 2019 were based on the latest data available.
- The Assistant Director confirmed that the date from 2019 is the most recent information available.
- A Member asked if officers are looking to use AI technology to ensure it reaches as many people as possible and if it could be uploaded in such a way that if people might ask specific questions the data is not just stuck in a document.
- The Planning & Policy Implementation Manager responded that they had seen a tool called Digital Place Portrait as part of the local plan early engagement, whereby you can interrogate things and get more out of it in terms of moving around a map and switching on different layers.
- A Member commented on page 152 of the report regarding evening economy premises in Hatfield Town Centre. On the fourth column, leisure, it says there is only one leisure there and asked if it should be more as there is a snooker club and Laser Quest.
- The Principal Planner (Implementation) replied that Laser Quest came after the cut off which was 31<sup>st</sup> March 24, and that this would be reflected in the next AMR.

RESOLVED:

The Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel unanimously recommend to Cabinet that the AMR be approved for publication, and that the Assistant Director (Planning) be given delegated authority to agree any minor alterations to finalise the AMR, following consultation with the Executive Member, Planning. If unanimously agreed by the Panel, for the decision to be taken by the executive member using their delegated powers under paragraph 18.1(b) of the Cabinet procedure rules.

Meeting ended at 8.10 pm