

NORTH MYMMS DISTRICT GREEN BELT SOCIETY BULLETIN

WELWYN HATFIELD LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION

The Local Plan is in its final phase before it is submitted to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. It will then be subject to public examination by a Planning Inspector – probably in early 2017. We need your support to register your concerns regarding what the Local Plan will mean to North Mymms – the villages of Welham Green, Brookmans Park, Little Heath, and the surrounding areas of Green Belt countryside.

Here is a summary of what is in the Plan.

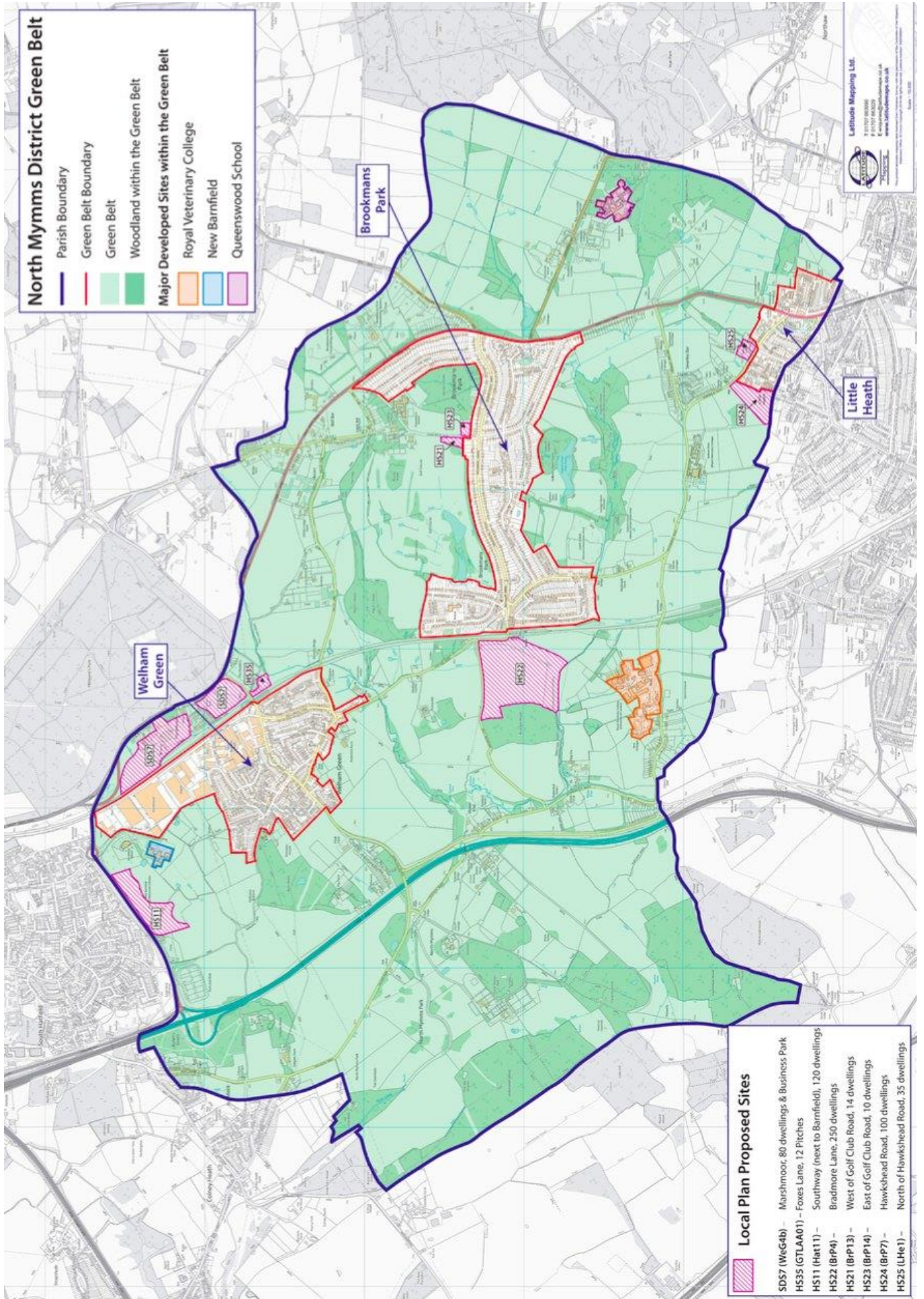
Housing: There are proposals for a minimum of 609 dwellings, potentially more if landowners and developers are successful in challenging the Local Plan. All the dwellings will be on Green Belt, increasing the population of our area by some 30%.

Business Use: The Plan identifies a Strategic Development Site at Marshmoor, to provide approximately 40,500 square metres of business space and around 80 dwellings. The aim is to develop a Life Sciences Park in the Green Belt south of Hatfield.

Green Belt: The development proposals are a direct threat to the Green Belt and the important gap between Potters Bar and Hatfield. The sites at Marshmoor and Brookmans Park are beyond the East Coast main railway line, which is a strongly defensive Green Belt boundary. At Little Heath, the proposals threaten the landscape character of Swanley Bar and Gobions Park.

Water and Drainage: Taken together, these proposals will increase the level of surface water drainage, leading to a greater risk of flooding at Water End. Increased flooding and deterioration in water quality will also threaten the integrity of the Swallow Holes at Water End - a most important geological Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) indeed the best of its type in England.

Road Improvements: There are plans to provide access to the Brookmans Park site to the west of railway, but no other proposals to increase the capacity of existing roads.



The map on Page 2 shows the sites that WHBC have recommended for development in the Local Plan. Together these sites would deliver 609 dwellings along with other sites which have been developed in the past 3 years, together with others which have been permitted. There are also the plans for business development at Marshmoor and a Gypsy & Traveller site.

Although the amount of development is less than suggested in previous consultations, there remains the threat of further incursions to the Green Belt. We anticipate that landowners and developers will seek to re-instate their sites via the Examination process. If they are successful, then the Local Plan would create a platform for developments which would have a devastating effect on our Green Belt and countryside.

Current planning legislation encourages local people to help shape their future. This gives us some rights, provided that our arguments are based on genuine planning issues, not just opinion. To help you, we have prepared some topics or issues that you can use as part of your objections. How you submit an objection is explained on page 5.

At the Examination, the Council have to show that the Local Plan is “sound” under four distinct headings. We have summarised these below - your local knowledge can help.

Is the Plan Positive?

- Has it adequately engaged with local residents?
- Do you feel your comments been listened to and acted upon?
- Does the Plan adequately recognise the infrastructure issues – such as traffic, rail congestion, schooling, health care?
- Can future development be sustained without an increase in infrastructure?
- Are these concerns adequately addressed on the Local Plan?

Is the Plan Positive? Notes to help:

Following the last consultation in 2015, the housing targets have been reduced, but only marginally. Do they meet local needs?

HCC Highways have not come forward with any proposals to increase capacity on local roads, especially the A1000.

Is the Plan Justified?

- Are there better alternatives to what is being proposed (are the designated areas for development the best solution?)
- Is the evidence for the Local Plan reasonable and fair?
- Can the Plan bring any real benefits to North Mymms?
- What do you see as the threats to implementing the Local Plan?

Is the Plan Justified? Notes to help

The Local Plan has forecasted approximately double the average rate of housebuilding compared to other Districts in Hertfordshire. Challenging this target, however, is going to be very difficult. Although the total numbers seem very aspirational and unrealistic, the guidelines for creating these figures have been complied with. In planning terms therefore, because the process has been followed, then the target must be right. It's nonsense, but that is what the Council is saying.

The predicted growth in jobs is just over 1% per annum for each and every year for the next 17 years. The national average is 0.6%. The predicted job figures do not take into account the impact of the British Aerospace redevelopment that has contributed to most of the jobs growth in WHBC over the past 15 years. This historic growth is unlikely to be repeated in the future.

Planning rules dictate that any development must be sustainable (i.e. current or planned infrastructure must be able to cope). Have you had recent experiences that demonstrate lack of capacity in local infrastructure?

When releasing land from the Green Belt, the policy is not to create stand-alone settlements or developments that jut out from the current boundaries. The proposed sites in the Local Plan all fail in this respect.

Is the Plan Effective?

- Does it contribute towards the vision for the Borough? (the Vision Statement can be found at the beginning of the Local Plan)
- Will it deliver a sustainable solution for North Mymms?
- Given your local knowledge, what do you think are the hurdles to delivering this Plan? What could render it ineffective (this could be lack of infrastructure capacity)?

Is the Plan Effective? Notes to Help

Your local knowledge is really important on this. Only local residents appreciate the issues around infrastructure and services capacity (road and rail congestion, schooling, health and social services). The Planning Inspector will match your local knowledge with the assumptions and assessments of WHBC.

You need to tell the Council about the facts around the inadequacy of the current infrastructure and your view on how future developments will make this Plan ineffective.

Is the Local Plan consistent with national planning policy?

This is going to be difficult for most people to judge, as you need an intimate knowledge of the planning system to judge this. The Society has enlisted the help of a planning consultant to assess this issue. All we need from you is your local knowledge and your involvement.

Lodging an Objection to the Plan

You can lodge an objection to the Plan either on-line or by email or in writing on the official response form.

We recommend that you comment on-line if that is possible. If you write or email you MUST complete the official response form otherwise the Inspector may not accept your comments.

ONLINE at: <http://www.welhat.gov.uk/localplan> or Google Welwyn Hatfield Council Website, click on Draft Local Plan Consultation link on front page.

E-mail to: localplan@welhat.gov.uk

If you are not online, you can send your completed response form to: Planning Policy, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, AL8 6AE

Response forms are available at North Mymms Parish Council:
The Council Offices, Annexe to No.1 Bungalow, Bushwood Close, Welham Green,
Hertfordshire, AL9 7YZ Tel: 01707 268418

Or by contacting Planning Policy at Welwyn Hatfield Council Tel 01707 357000

In addition to the Plan itself, The Council has published a Summary and Guide to the Local Plan and Guidance Notes on making an objection. These as well as the evidence base which underlies the proposals can all be found on the Council's web-site

<http://www.welhat.gov.uk/localplan>

Do's and Don'ts of lodging an objection

Do use the on-line consultation link – it is the simplest way, and you can comment on the whole Plan or any individual parts of it.

Do use the correct form - anything else will not be accepted.

Do be as specific as possible – use your local knowledge and quote facts and evidence to support your arguments.

Do encourage as many people as possible to register their objection – the more community involvement, the more the Inspector is likely to listen.

Don't express an opinion – it does not count. Saying something like “I think this is outrageous” will have no influence at all. Only the facts and real life experiences will influence the Inspector's decisions.

Don't be Late – the deadline for lodging your objection (either on-line or using the form) is 5.00pm on 24th October 2016. Anything that is received by the Council after that time will not be accepted.

Don't think this is a done deal – it isn't. There is still much that the Council needs to do to prove that the Local Plan is sound.

What Happens Next?

The Council will collect and collate all the representations for inclusion with their submission. It will be for the Planning Inspector to review them and to decide whether they are material in judging the Local Plan's soundness.

Keep in touch through our web-site <http://www.greenbeltsociety.org.uk/>

and sign up for our email alerts by sending us your email address.

If you are not already a member, please join the Green Belt Society.