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Local Plan

Just before Christmas, after several months of silence, the Council suddenly decided to take the next steps with the Local Plan and agreed to consult on changes to their original proposals (in 2016) which the Inspector has indicated are required for him to sign off on the Plan – or in planning jargon, to declare it to be “sound”.

These changes, called Main Modifications, are now the subject of a consultation which continues until 5pm on 15th February 2023.

All consultation documents are available online at: <https://www.welhat.gov.uk/planning-consultations/local-plan-main-modifications-consultation>

The key changes proposed to the 2016 Draft Plan are:

- The Plan period is to be from 2016 to 2036 instead of from 2013 to 2032
- The number of new homes required is raised from 12,000 to 15,200 over the Plan period.
- The proposals cover only the first ten years of the Plan period with a review required in 2027.
- Sites are identified for 9,460 dwellings of which 5,472 are to be built in the first five years.
- Over ten years, 4,734 dwellings will be built on Green Belt land. Some of these Green Belt sites are included at the Inspector’s insistence despite the Council’s objections.

What did the Councillors think?

Councillors are only too aware of the extent of local disquiet about the proposals and stressed (naively?) that this was just a consultation process - one in which they strongly encouraged residents to take part.

Councillors were not adopting the Plan at this stage. That decision would be made only after consideration of the results of the consultation and not until after the next local government elections in May. (There was a suggestion from some conservative councillors that after May they might no longer form the majority!)

Moving the Plan process forward now would:

- Give the Council certainty over a 10-year period and stop speculative developments during that time.
- Allow the Council the opportunity in 5 years' time to reassess the full housing numbers against new government legislation which may (or may not) be more advantageous than the current ones. It might then allow it to challenge the target of 15,200 dwellings over the full 20-year Plan period.
- Strengthen the Council's hand in fighting some of the speculative applications currently being appealed on the grounds of a lack of a 5-year housing land supply.
- Enable it to argue that the emerging Plan is close to agreement and therefore that the sites in that Plan are the only ones which should be considered.

What do we think?

We think the Local Plan process is a mess and not just for Welwyn Hatfield. It is however the only process there is and unless there is progress there is a strong likelihood that speculative developers, particularly those with sites not included in the proposed Plan will seek to get approval through the planning appeal system. To that extent we support the Council's decision to proceed to the latest consultation.

We most emphatically do not support the revised target of 15,200 for the Plan period. That number of dwellings grossly exceeds what is required to meet the need for the organic growth of Welwyn Hatfield Borough. In the earlier consultations, we and other organisations argued on the basis of the most recent projections from the Office of National Statistics that the normal population increase would justify only 10,000 dwellings over the full 20-year period.

The target number is driven by central government policies not local need. It can only be changed by central government action. Though there has been much recent talk by Ministers

about making changes and legislative changes are proposed, our local councillors were not prepared to take the risk of relying on mere statements.

As far as the proposed sites are concerned, the position is not as bad as was once feared. There is good news for Little Heath with the removal, on Green Belt grounds, of BrP7 but disappointment that BrP4 in Brookmans Park has not only been left in despite the Council's attempt to have it removed, but worse, made bigger because of the Inspector's insistence. (He seems to like sites that are close to railway stations.) Welham Green has more development than was proposed in 2016 but much less (at least for the first ten years) than at one stage seemed likely.

What can you do?

In a word – *respond*.

When approving the proposed changes for consultation, individual councillors express the hope that residents would respond. Whether they have any intention of listening is unclear but only by responding can you let councillors and the Inspector know the strength of local feeling against over development in the borough and tragic loss of Green Belt land.

We believe, as a Green Belt Society, that the total number of dwellings at 15,200, is grossly excessive and does not reflect the genuine need of our community. Unless this number is significantly reduced, there will be even greater sacrifice of the Green Belt and greater pressure on the internal densities within our towns.

What do the Modifications mean for North Mymms?

Total dwellings: 854 - an increase of 365 from 2016 Draft Plan:

Welham Green:	Total dwellings: 304 - an increase of 224 from 2016 Draft Plan
Addition	Land at Welham Manor and west of Station Road (WeG1/WeG3a) 84 dwellings in years 1 to 5 of the Plan.
	Land at Dixons Hill Road (WeG10) 120 dwellings in years 1 to 10 of the Plan.
Alteration	The number of dwellings at Marshmoor will be increased from 80 to 100 as well as employment space to be delivered in years 1 to 5 of the Plan.
Unchanged	Foxes Lane, Dixons Hill Road - 12 gypsy and traveller pitches
Brookmans Park:	Total dwellings: 452 – increase of 178 from 2016 Draft Plan

Alteration	Land west of Brookmans Park Railway Station (BrP4). Site enlarged and provision increased from 250 dwellings to 428 dwellings plus a 2 FE primary school to be delivered in years 1 to 10 of the Plan.
Unchanged	Land west of Golf Club Road (BrP13) 14 dwellings in years 1 to 5 of the Plan
	Land east of Golf Club Road (BrP14) 10 dwellings in years 1 to 10 of the Plan
Little Heath:	Total dwellings: 98 - reduction of 37 from 2016 Draft Plan
Addition	Videne, Studlands, Hawkshead Road (LHe4/5) 63 dwellings in years 1 to 5 of the Plan
Unchanged	Land north of Hawkshead road (LHe1) 35 dwellings in years 1 to 10 of the Plan
Removal	Land south of Hawkshead Road (BrP7) 100 dwellings removed because the site was found unsound on Green Belt grounds.

Land North of Bradmore Way Appeal (BrP12a)

As you know, the developer is appealing the Council's refusal for his planning application for 125 houses and a care home on the field at end of Bradmore Way. The Society is part of a Combined Objectors Group (COG) working with the CPRE Herts and the Brookmans Park Action Group (BPAG) to oppose the Appeal. The COG has appointed Counsel, a Traffic Management Consultant as well as Jed Griffiths, the Society's Planning Consultant. The process is well under way with the Appeal due to be heard by a Planning Inspector at a Public Inquiry on 7 February 2023 at the Council offices.

An appeal for contributions to help fund the costs involved is underway. If you haven't yet contributed, we would encourage you to do so using this link [here](#). If you can take advantage of Gift Aid make your contribution through the CPRE Herts [here](#).

We estimate the cost to be in excess of £25,000 and although we have made an encouraging start, there is still some way to go. Please help if you can.

Development Proposals for Other Sites

Applications have been lodged for development on several sites that are included in the Draft Local Plan. Decisions are pending:

- Land north of Hawkshead Road Little Heath (LHe1) 35 dwellings

- Videne (LHe 4/5) Hawkshead Road Little Heath 63 dwellings
- Land west of Golf Club Road Brookmans Park (BrP13) 9 dwellings

Proposal for Cycle Park and Hotel to keep Potters Bar Golf Course in Green Belt

Since Potters Bar Golf Course closed there have been discussions on what to do with the site. The site is entirely in Green Belt but in its last outing Hertsmere's Local Plan had previously identified the site for 500 dwellings. What is of most concern is that the whole golf course was earmarked to be taken out of Green Belt which could leave the site open to further development, right up to the Welwyn Hatfield boundary.

An alternative proposal, supported by two Hertsmere Councillors from that ward, has been put forward as a community space with a quality 150-bedroom hotel with banqueting facilities and a cycle park. If this was supported the site would remain in Green Belt and provide space for the community to exercise, walk their dogs and enjoy the surroundings.

Hertsmere have indicated that if the idea was supported by the wider community, they would endeavour to keep this area as Green Belt and in turn support this project. Additional information and the opportunity to **show your support** may be found [here](#) and [here](#).

Memorial Tree for Clive Bennett

Many members will remember Clive Bennett, one of our founder members when the Society was formed in 1976. Sadly, Clive passed away in 2018. By way of commemorating his great service to the Green Belt and The North Mymms community more widely, we are planting a tree in his memory. Although we have been delayed by the Pandemic, this will now take place by agreement with the Parish Council at a date to be arranged when we will organise a small ceremony with a commemorative plaque.

AGM and Membership Renewal

We currently have just over a thousand registered members. We are grateful to you for your on-going support.

Our membership year begins on the 1 January 2023 and annual subscriptions (£1 per person) are **now due** and can be made through our website [here](#). Feel free to **add a donation** as many of you do.

Our Annual General Meeting will be held on **Monday 27 March 2023** at North Mymms Memorial Hall, Welham Green at 8pm chaired our President, Gary Mabbutt.

The formal notice agenda and accounts will be posted on our website in due course.

... and don't forget ...

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 - If you have been forwarded this newsletter and wish to be added to our email list, or wish to make changes to your contact details, please visit <http://www.greenbeltsociety.org.uk/update-membership-details/>
 - If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us via the various means shown in the header of this newsletter.
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