

In this issue:

- Here we go again: A new Local Plan for the Borough.
- Green or grey? The government's consultation on the Green Belt and planning procedures.
- Sports amenities: Parish Council Survey
- Green Belt webinar from CPRE London
- NMDGBS membership

A New Local Plan for Welwyn Hatfield

- It may be less than a year since Welwyn Hatfield Council approved a Local Plan to take the Borough to 2036 but already it has begun a consultation for a Plan to replace it by 2027.
- A key difficulty in agreeing the current plan was disagreement over the number of new dwellings that should be built. The Inspector agreed a figure of 15,200 dwellings for the full Plan period to be built by 2036; the Council was able to agree on sites for only 13,400. A compromise allowed the Council to approve the Plan subject to a review within 3 years. But there was no compromise over the figure of 15,200 for the full Plan period.
- Rather than merely review the current plan, the Council has decided to develop a new one to be operative by 2027.
- The Council has commenced what they describe as an "early engagement" aimed at "involving residents, businesses and stakeholders from the beginning of the plan making process to understand shared aspirations and priorities for the Borough."
- At this stage the Council does not wish to get bogged down in an argument about the number of dwellings required – not least because the new government is altering the method of calculation to be used.
- The Council's statement on the consultation says:

"The new Local Plan will set out how Welwyn Hatfield grows and develops over the next 15 years and beyond.

The Council is seeking views on what matters to you and what you think are the key challenges and opportunities for Welwyn Hatfield. Respondents will be able to share their thoughts on topics such as the local economy, transport, infrastructure and the environment.

As part of the early engagement work, a new Local Plan website will go live from 23 September to enable people to share their ideas online. Two drop-in events will be held at the Howard Centre in Welwyn Garden City (3pm to 7pm on Thursday 3 October) and in Hatfield Library (3pm to 7pm on Friday 11 October). Staff from the Council's Planning Department will be on hand to discuss people's ideas and thoughts."

- You can keep in touch and have your say through the Council's website: <https://www.welhat.gov.uk/ourlocalplan>
- The early engagement will run to Monday 4 November.
- The Society will be responding and will post our comments on our website.

Government consultation on the NPPF

- Just before the summer break, the Department for Housing Local Government and Communities launched a consultation on proposed changes to the National Planning framework NPPF. It's intention was to introduce the changes by the end of the year. Whether, given the large number of comments received, this timetable will be kept remains to be seen.
- Though the Green Belt was just one aspect in a consultation about the planning system as a whole, it was the focus of much of the public comment.
- It is encouraging that the government is to retain the Green Belt and the definition of its essential characteristics - but it still wants to make it easier to build within the Green Belt.
- In the words of the consultation: *We are committed to preserving the Green Belt, but its current design can protect poor quality sites while communities face acute shortages of housing. We will empower authorities to release Previously Developed Land and low-quality grey belt sites to ensure enough land is made available for new homes – while continuing to ensure that brownfield development is prioritised, and that development is in sustainable locations.*

- In our view the concept of the “grey belt” is unnecessary and certainly the proposed definition is confusing.
- It is unnecessary because the NPPF already encourages development on previously developed land (or “brownfield” sites) within the Green Belt; the consultation seeks to make development on brownfield a priority.
- The proposed definition is loose and contradictory, open to wide differences of interpretation; “grey belt” will become a “grey area” giving rise to much confusion and debate about planning applications and appeals.
- Our response, prepared with our planning adviser Jed Griffiths, makes these points strongly and can be viewed on our website here. Also available are the responses of CPRE Herts and the London Green Belt Council both of which we are members.

Parish Council Survey on sports amenities

- North Mymms Parish Council is conducting a survey to get the view of all members of the Parish on what sports facilities they currently use and/or would like to see in the future.

The results of this survey will help to give the Parish Council a greater insight into peoples' lifestyle and to develop a strategic sports facility plan for the community.

<https://forms.gle/AKAgRqzXXW4MEFRu6>

- The Parish Council has asked NMDGBS to draw this survey to the attention of its members and we would encourage you to respond.

The Metropolitan Green Belt - CPRE London Webinar

- With our focus on the Green Belt in North Mymms and Welwyn Hatfield it is easy to overlook the fact that “our” Green Belt is just a part of the Metropolitan Green Belt which surrounds London and that our issues are replicated throughout the Home Counties.
- The CPRE London recently hosted an excellent webinar on the future of the Metropolitan Green Belt with presentations by the London Green Belt Council and Chris Berry, planning manager of CPRE Herts.

- You can access the presentations [here](https://cprelondon.us10.list-manage.com/track/click?u=9dbffa3049a62d1a4bb4c56c7&id=b21a8df431&e=ab2d447d43)
<https://cprelondon.us10.list-manage.com/track/click?u=9dbffa3049a62d1a4bb4c56c7&id=b21a8df431&e=ab2d447d43>

Society Membership

- NMDGBS enjoys a strong local support. Numbers have fluctuated over the years, but we currently have almost a thousand members. Traditionally annual subscriptions were paid in January or at our AGM in March, but many members now subscribe through our website with an annual debit so that subscriptions come in throughout the year. It is important for us to be able to track our membership numbers so please will members check that their subscriptions are being processed and that their personal details are correct.
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... and don't forget ...

- Please share this newsletter with your friends and neighbours – and encourage them to join. We shall need all the support we can get as the new local plan discussions get underway.
 - 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:
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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