

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

Core Strategy

Statement of Consultation

Community Representative Workshops

November 2010



Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
Core Strategy Consultation - November 2010

During November 2010, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council carried out a series of events which were attended by invited parish councillors, borough councillors, county councillors and representatives of local groups and organisations. The purpose of these events was to promote debate and receive feedback from local community representatives and organisations with regard to the vision, objectives and development strategy for the borough over the next 15 to 20 years. The events were held on the following dates:

Settlements/areas	Venue	Date
Welwyn and Northern Villages	Welwyn Civic Centre	Saturday 6 th November 2010 9:30am – 1pm
Cuffley, Newgate Street and Northaw	St Andrews Church Hall	Saturday 13 th November 2010 9:30am – 1pm
Brookmans Park, Welham Green and surrounding areas	North Mymms Memorial Hall	Saturday 13 th November 2010 9:30am to 1pm
Hatfield	The Jim McDonald Centre	Saturday 20 th November 2010 9:30am – 1pm
Welwyn Garden City	Free Church	Saturday 27 th November 2010 9:30am – 1pm

Each event included a briefing on the consultation in connection with the emerging Core Strategy including the Issues and Options Paper in March 2009.

In May 2009 the housing target of 10,000 homes, previously set by the East of England Regional Assembly, in the East of England Plan 2008 was quashed in the High Court on the grounds that alternatives had not been assessed, leaving the Borough Council with the task of setting its own housing target based on robust evidence that would withstand examination.

The coalition government revoked all Regional Spatial Strategies in July 2010, as part of its localism agenda, although this decision was subsequently challenged in the High Court. The East of England Plan was finally revoked in December 2012.

These workshop events provided an opportunity for community representatives to have a say in the development of the Core Strategy.

A series of workshops were held at these events

Groups were asked to consider and debate a draft set of local objectives based on the feedback received from the Issues and Options Consultation which took place in 2009.

The draft local objectives are attached as Appendix A.

These were used as a starting point for debate around what the key objectives should be for each of the borough's towns, villages and smaller settlements as well as the rural areas.

The groups were asked to assess how suitable these objectives were to their own areas and to modify or delete them or draft new ones where considered appropriate. The groups were also asked to identify the community benefits of each objective and to provide feedback on the Borough wide vision and objectives, which is attached at Appendix B.

Groups then considered what housing target would be appropriate for the borough, thinking about the consequences of restraining development as well as the impact that growth would have on Green Belt boundaries. The groups were then asked to think about where such development should take place.

The summaries of the workshop groups identifying the issues that were raised are reported on the following pages, together with a list of the organisations that were represented at each event.

Summary of feedback from Welwyn and Northern Villages Workshop

Saturday 6th November 2010

Representatives from the following groups and organisations attended the Welwyn and Northern Villages Workshop:

- Digswell WI
- Welwyn Parish Plan Action Group
- Welwyn Parish Plan
- Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
- Woolmer Green Parish Council
- Ayot St Lawrence Parish Meeting
- Friends of Mardley Heath
- Danesbury Residents Association
- Welwyn Parish Council
- Welwyn Planning and Amenity Group
- Friends of Danesbury Park Local Nature Reserve
- Ayot St Lawrence Society
- Hertfordshire County Council
- Digswell Residents Association

Workshop 1

Large Villages - Welwyn

- Suggested supply of employment opportunities, rather than employment land, should be maintained;
- Maintain existing employment within village – contributes to the vitality and viability of the village;
- Sympathetically designed schemes, in terms of scale, location and compatibility with the existing character of Welwyn would be welcome – large developments would not;
- Any increases in traffic and parking in the village centre would have to be dealt with;
- Local jobs would reduce the need to travel;

- Parish (and Neighbourhood) Plans should form an integral part of the planning process – local objectives for housing, the environment, community safety, traffic and transport, older people and young people are more likely to be delivered this way;
- Need for affordable housing in Welwyn – particularly below £250,000
- Need for starter homes for young people and a better choice of sheltered housing for older people – preferably houses rather than flats (lifetime homes could address this);
- Infrastructure needs in Welwyn – doctor’s surgery almost at full capacity;
- Need to make Welwyn more accessible: improved cycling facilities would help link the villages together and encourage a healthier lifestyle.

Small Villages – Digswell, Oaklands and Mardley Heath, Woolmer Green

- Suggested providing and enhancing local facilities, as well as protecting them;
- Community/village halls, playgrounds and allotments highlighted as important community facilities to be protected;
- Library in Welwyn could be open after 6pm one day a week to allow residents to use it after work;
- Co-location (e.g. with a school) could make facilities more sustainable and accessible - local facilities are important for the character of an area and also important for those who cannot drive and older people;
- Suggested supply of employment opportunities, rather than employment land, should be maintained;
- Highlighted capacity for villages to share employment uses;
- Woolmer Green is a working village and maintaining employment opportunities/land is important to maintaining the viability and vitality of the settlement;
- Widening housing choice a low priority – participants suggested current provision and decided that ‘maintaining housing choice’ would be a more realistic objective;
- Need to review Digswell Character Appraisal – schemes should be sympathetically designed;
- Coalescence (particularly between Welwyn and Oaklands/Mardley Heath and Woolmer Green and Knebworth) should be avoided;
- Separate identities of the villages and access to the countryside should be maintained;

- Crucial for Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council to work with the Parish Councils – working with the Residents Associations also important.

Small Rural Settlements – Ayot Green, Ayot St Lawrence, Ayot St Peter and Burnham Green

- Critical that existing pattern of smaller settlements is maintained - no need to expand;
- Protect existing services e.g. pub as this benefits the community and reduces the need to travel.

Rural Areas

- Development in areas away from towns and villages should be strictly controlled - preserves the open character and diversity of the landscape;
- Coalescence avoided – open space provides amenity benefit for community;
- Important to protect rural buildings and allow re-use where this could contribute to the rural economy (particularly an issue in Ayot St Lawrence);
- Re-use of rural buildings for housing is not acceptable;
- Agricultural land maintained – linked with protecting the rural economy;
- Suggested additional objective of local people being involved in managing and monitoring how money is spent in their area – particularly regarding access and managing the countryside.

Borough Wide Objectives and Vision for the Borough

- Vision should recognise the need to preserve the character of villages and smaller settlements;
- Vision could do more to promote a healthier lifestyle;
- Borough wide objectives agreed with – high quality design, mitigating and adapting to climate change were highlighted as the most important issues;
- Protection of identity and character of areas, particularly smaller settlements, identified as priorities for the Council;
- Separate consultation events to address Gypsy and Traveller site provision at a borough wide level, rather than dealing with them one by one - can be a sensitive issue.

Workshop 2 - Housing

- The Frythe, Welwyn, was suggested as a suitable site for housing development;
- Growth favoured within settlements, except smaller settlements where no overriding need to expand was identified;
- Need for starter homes for young members of the community and a better choice of homes (including sheltered homes) for older people – houses rather than flats;
- Suggested that land probably could be found for housing, but that a local rural exceptions policy could be used if land was not available;
- Potential for some housing next to Welwyn – elsewhere, Green Belt release rejected, particularly where there is a possibility of coalescence;
- The majority of participants expressed the view that currently there is a lack of housing for young people. Housing should be provided for young people as it benefits the community and it can be quite emotive when young people move out of a community;
- The location North-east of Welwyn Garden City was suggested as being suitable for large, low density housing although lack of services in this area is an issue;
- The location South-east of Welwyn Garden City was felt to lack the necessary infrastructure for housing development. There were also concerns raised over its proximity to a local nature reserve;
- The location North-west of Hatfield was identified as being suitable for a large scale development, although two groups were worried about potential coalescence in this area. Concerns were also raised about the distance from the nearest railway station, though it was suggested that a commuter bus could help;
- The location South of Hatfield had the most support for new housing development; though there were concerns over coalescence between Hatfield and Welham Green.

Summary of feedback from Cuffley, Newgate Street and Northaw Workshop Saturday 13th November 2010

Representatives from the following groups and organisations attended the Cuffley, Newgate Street and Northaw Workshop:

- Northaw & Cuffley WI
- Tree Warden
- Northaw and Cuffley Residents Association
- Northaw and Cuffley Parish Council
- Newgate Street Committee
- Friends of Northaw Great Wood
- Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

Large Villages – Cuffley

- Agreed on maintaining a supply on employment land – particularly that which encourages highly-skilled jobs and attracts young people to the village as this will enhance the vitality and viability of the settlement;
- Recognised that Cuffley is a commuter settlement and that many residents work in London;
- Infrastructure improvements are required before any new employment development;
- Support new business development, providing existing employment areas are maintained;
- Any new business units should be sensitively designed and of an appropriate scale – **should not** attract large lorries/HGVs into Cuffley;
- Local jobs would reduce the need for residents to commute and also help to maintain the vitality and viability of Cuffley;
- Borough Council should work closely with the Parish Councils to identify important local issues and ensure a better community “buy-in” with planning issues;
- Concerns about Parish Plans fitting into wider planning framework. Also concerns regarding the lack of time, money, skills and knowledge necessary to produce a plan – a “list” of parish priorities would suffice;
- Two groups agreed on widening housing choice – other group suggested objective should be to ‘maintain’ housing choice;

- Identified need for sheltered housing for older people and affordable starter homes for young people – would allow people to stay in the community;
- New housing development should be sympathetically designed to reflect character of Cuffley and should also provide sufficient car parking space;
- Two groups suggested that objective could include improving and enhancing the vitality and viability of Cuffley, as well as maintaining;
- Identified need for a butchers and greengrocers in village centre – would reduce need for residents to travel;
- Suggested additional objectives regarding: increasingly leisure facilities (particularly indoor), reinstating the 'Best Kept Village' award and retaining the primary school;
- Identified transport priorities including reducing the speed of vehicles through Cuffley, improving public transport to Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield and managing the impact of congestion – concern that Cuffley is an 'approved route' when the M25 is congested or closed.

Small Rural Settlements – Newgate Street and Northaw

- Agreed on maintaining settlement pattern – one group suggested this should be 'village identity' instead;
- Identified allotments as being an important characteristic of Northaw which should be protected;
- Currently a good mix of housing in the villages;
- Additional objective of protecting the primary schools in the villages and this maintains a diverse community;
- Suggested policies to retain village pubs for multi-use or re-use where there is a clear benefit for the local community.

Rural Areas

- Agreed that development should be strictly controlled away from towns and villages to protect the open character and diversity of landscape as these are important aspects of the area and provide the community with amenity space;
- Re-use of existing buildings supported where it will contribute to the rural economy and have a minimal impact on the countryside;
- Agreed maintaining agricultural land and suggested that strict controls should be in place to prevent inappropriate uses e.g. quad biking;

- Access to the countryside is an important characteristic of the area and should be protected.

Borough-wide Objectives and Vision

- General agreement, though concern about use of jargon;
- High quality design in development needs to be eco-friendly – developments that claim to be “green” must demonstrate this;
- Everyone, not just those in deprived areas, should have improved access to health and support services, training and education;
- Support for concentrating growth in towns; but concern for growth in large villages;
- Agreed that the Green Belt should be maintained and protected and that coalescence should be avoided;
- Farm diversification should be supported and encouraged to allow the development of local enterprise;
- Concern over potential location of Gypsy and Traveller sites as this is a sensitive issue in rural communities;
- Desire for Parish Councils to be given greater role in planning to build up community spirit – this should be reflected in the vision for the borough;
- Small-scale villages should be reflected in this vision in terms of providing shops and, in particular, indoor leisure facilities. Public transport improvements to increase access to leisure facilities were also suggested as needing to be reflected in the vision.

Workshop 2 – Housing

- Identified a demand for low-cost market housing, particularly for young families and for older people wishing to downsize but not leave the community – should be a good mix in order to maintain and enhance the community;
- Flats should not be allowed: any new housing should be sensitively designed and whilst there was no identified need for specialist housing, there was a suggestion that a proportion of housing should be built to lifetime home standards;
- Suggestion for a new planned community, allowing for adequate provision of shops and business opportunities;

- No identified location for housing within villages. Development favoured adjacent to the villages – south of Cuffley, beyond Greenfields and south-east of Cuffley, east of the railway line suggested as possible sites. North of The Meadway, east of the railway line also suggested as having potential for housing;
- All groups recognised that a lack of housing would mean that young people would have to move away. However, this was accepted by some participants as the norm in many settlements;
- All groups suggested that there is no ideal location for housing growth. All locations appear to be in areas where there is insufficient infrastructure. One group suggested a new town around Essendon, though it was agreed that the best solution would be to expand Welwyn GC and Hatfield;
- The location North-west of Hatfield would need to overcome the lack of vehicular and pedestrian access to west side of the A1(M). Significant landscaping, including a noise barrier, would be needed;
- The location South of Hatfield would cause coalescence between Welham Green and Hatfield and was consequently not supported;
- The location south-east of Welwyn Garden City was felt to lack the necessary infrastructure required to support growth;

Summary of feedback from Brookmans Park, Welham Green and the surrounding areas Workshop

13th November 2010

Representatives from the following groups and organisations attended the Brookmans Park, Welham Green and the surrounding areas Workshop:

- North Mymms Parish Council
- Gobions Woodland Trust and Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust
- North Mymms Action Group
- North Mymms District Green Belt Society
- Essendon Parish Council
- Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
- North Mymms Parish Plan Steering Group

Large Villages – Brookmans Park and Welham Green (one group felt that this could include Little Heath as well)

- Groups questioned the need to maintain a supply of employment land, particularly in Welham Green. There are vacant units on the industrial estate at present and residents are concerned with the existing levels of noise and air pollution;
- Increase the number of people working from home as this will support local shops and services;
- Village cohesion being destroyed as locals are edged out of local housing market due to the increased prices as a result of employees moving in to the village;
- Borough Council should work with Parish Councils as this will lead to a better community “buy-in” with planning issues. Parish Plan could also provide local design guidance for development;
- Whilst the groups recognised the benefits of a Parish Plan, there were concerns over the costs of plans as well as a lack of the skills/knowledge required to complete one;
- The groups recognised the major housing shortage in the borough and the lack of sufficient infrastructure to accommodate more homes;
- New homes must be sustainable or ‘future-proof’ and sensitively designed. New housing developments must avoid coalescence between settlements;

- Mix of homes needs to be improved – smaller, affordable homes for young people and smaller homes for older residents (to allow them to downsize whilst staying in their community) would be welcome as this could help maintain communities and support local shops and services which are currently struggling;
- Concerns that new homes would not be guaranteed for local people;
- Brookmans Park and Welham Green identified as ideal locations for care home/sheltered housing;
- Agreed that maintaining the vitality and viability of village centres was a priority – participants felt that joint working between Borough and Parish Councils was important in addressing this objective;
- Village centre would help maintain social cohesion which is being lost as more people commute into/out of the villages;
- Transport development needs to be sustainable. Villages often used as a route for main traffic – not acceptable. Parish Plan could be used to address this.

Small Villages – Little Heath

- Loss of shops in Little Heath – protecting and enhancing shops and services a vital foundation for other development;
- Need to maintain supply of employment land in Little Heath a low priority due to relationship with Potters Bar;
- Current housing choice good; objective should be changed to ‘maintaining’ rather than ‘widening’ housing choice.

Small Rural Settlements - Essendon, Bell Bar, Bullens Green, Mill Green, Swanley Bar, Wildhill and Woodside (one group suggested Water End should also be included)

- Maintaining character of the villages vital – maintaining the wider character of small, clustered settlements in the area also important;
- One group identified that Essendon could possibly be considered a small village;
- Local pub and playing fields important aspects of Essendon that must be protected – re-use of housing/rural buildings as community shops would help preserve character and vitality of Essendon;
- Housing for local people and improved access to railway stations highlighted as priorities.

Rural Areas

- Concern that rural areas are often subject to poor planning control and enforcement – these areas should be targeted for development;
- Participants supported the strict control of development away from towns and villages, but conceded that some development would be required to support facilities;
- Re-using existing buildings to support the rural economy was supported, as was re-using buildings for community facilities, if such development would be supported by the community;
- Maintaining supply of agricultural land and promoting access to the countryside supported – participants felt that the countryside could be used for recreation which could help boost the rural economy through tourism;
- Improving rural transport was seen as an additional objective, as was improving rural broadband;
- Protecting footpaths was also seen as a vital objective – links with promoting access to the countryside.

Borough Wide Objectives and Vision

- Objectives generally agreed with;
- High quality design should also be environmentally friendly. Possibility to work with Parish Councils on design guidance for development e.g. Brookmans Park Character Appraisal;
- All areas should have improved access to the health and support services, training and education;
- Need to review Green Belt boundaries and preventing coalescence could be incorporated as one objective;
- Vision needs to reflect that there are two Universities in the borough – Royal Veterinary College has been overlooked;
- Concern that, if a date is set for Green Belt release, developers will wait until then before submitting development proposals rather than taking up previously developed land in towns.

Workshop 2 – Housing

- Participants identified a need for a good mix and balance of affordable homes for local young people and also homes that allow older people to downsize and remain in their communities;
- Growth should be concentrated around towns – where growth does occur in villages, this should be on previously developed land and sympathetically designed;
- If Green Belt land has to be released, coalescence should still be avoided;
- Need to address the lack of enforcement action by the council – unauthorised development (e.g. Bulls Lane) is leading to coalescence;
- Support for plan period of 15 - 20 years, providing continuous reviews are conducted to update figures;
- 2,800/3,000 homes felt to be adequate over 10 years – development must ensure that community facilities are provided;
- Two groups felt development should be focussed on one location, one group suggested that development should be spread;
- The location south-east of Welwyn Garden City identified as having suitable space for development, but in need of significant infrastructure improvements to accommodate growth – this would, however, improve the east-west transport links in the borough;
- The location north-west of Hatfield was identified as suitable for development, though there were concerns that residents here would not use Hatfield town centre. The same concerns were expressed for the location west of Ellenbrook and Roehyde;
- The location west of the redeveloped part of Hatfield Aerodrome was felt to be unsuitable as it would not support the regeneration of Hatfield town centre, could lead to possible coalescence with St Albans, and would attract a large number of student houses;
- The location south of Hatfield was objected to by all groups on the basis of the coalescence it would cause between Hatfield and Welham Green;
- Additional locations suggested for new settlements included Nyn Park (Northaw) and Hillend Farm (east of Home Park, Hatfield).

Additional Comments received post-workshop

- Green Belt society would support a change of use of industrial sites to residential use even on Green Belt land in North Mymms;

- The effect of the Royal Veterinary College on North Mymms should be emphasised.

Summary of feedback from Hatfield Workshop, Saturday 20th November 2010

Representatives from the following groups and organisations attended the Hatfield Workshop:

- St Johns Church
- Hatfield Town Council
- Tenants Panel
- Friends of Stream Woods
- Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

Local Objectives – Hatfield

- Council should pursue the regeneration of Hatfield town centre, ensuring the redevelopment reflects the needs of local people;
- Decision needs to be made soon – if finance is unavailable or restricted, it may be more suitable to scale down the plans and ‘revamp’ parts of the town centre instead (e.g. fix potholes, clear weeds);
- Needs to be better links between town centre, the Galleria and the railway station;
- Participants suggested that the needs of the University, as well as the accommodation needs of the students, should be managed. Hatfield is a University town and the University should not be a hindrance;
- The University needs to integrate better into the town – Hatfield did not grow up with a University and is consequently less able to cope with the effects;
- The University does positively affect the town – sports facilities and public lectures are available for the community, but not necessarily known about. Uno bus service provides a good service for Hatfield. The supermarket and banks in the town centre were attracted and are supported by student money;
- Need for a Landlord Accreditation Scheme in Hatfield to regulate student housing. Concern over the loss of Council Tax from student houses and about parking, litter and noise problems;
- Council, residents and University should work together to provide purpose-built student housing – but student ‘ghettos’ should be avoided;
- Any new housing should be protected (i.e. family homes should remain family homes and not be bought for student lets). Council should continue to investigate the use of ‘Article 4’ powers to control Houses of Multiple

Occupation (HMOs). One group suggested a % target for student housing, similar to the % target for affordable housing the Council seeks in new developments;

- Participants identified that Hatfield has a good range and mix of employment – particularly on the former BAE site. Encouraging shops to Hatfield town centre would increase the number of jobs;
- Need to reduce the high number of people who commute out of Hatfield to work – concern that local people do not have the skills necessary for local jobs. The Council should engage with employers on this issue;
- Hatfield should not rely on big companies. The Council should support smaller firms who are more locally established. Hatfield does not want an over-reliance on one industry again;
- Hatfield has a good provision of homes for older people – particularly the bungalows in South Hatfield. The groups identified that there needs to be more affordable family homes for local people, but that this needed to be balanced with student housing to prevent family homes being bought up for student lets;
- All groups felt it was important that affordable housing should not look like affordable housing;
- All groups were very supportive of the High View redevelopment and the consultation that the council ran;
- Needs to be an improved interchange at the railway station – current situation is dangerous – but is there sufficient space? Would fit into an overall plan for Hatfield linking the railway station and Hatfield House with the town centre and the Galleria;
- An additional objective was suggested regarding protecting/preserving and enhancing the historic setting/heritage of Hatfield and improving the integration of Old Hatfield with the rest of the town;
- All groups agreed that leisure facilities should be maintained and enhanced. Some participants noted that this could involve better integration with the University, but it was also noted that University facilities can be expensive;
- In the current economic climate, it was suggested that the Council should look to enhance existing leisure facilities rather than build new ones;
- The Town Council should publicise free events more widely, including the University. There was a general consensus that students would get involved either by volunteering through the various University societies or by attending the events.

Borough-wide objectives and vision

- General agreement with the objectives, with a few alterations suggested;
- High-quality design needs to reflect the existing character and heritage of areas, particularly Old Hatfield;
- To mitigate and adapt to climate change, it was suggested that the council should focus on encouraging sustainable modes of transport and encouraging new homes to meet eco-standards;
- Brownfield development should be prioritised in the borough;
- All groups criticised the words ‘economic prosperity’ and ‘economic clusters’ as planning jargon which needed to be simplified;
- Minimising the need to travel was seen as important in reducing the traffic pressures in some areas of Hatfield e.g. Comet Road roundabout;
- Improving access to recreation was felt to be particularly important to Hatfield;
- All groups agreed with the vision, though there was criticism over the use of jargon – ‘*strategic green infrastructure to the West of Hatfield*’ was felt to be overcomplicated and could just be referred to as ‘Ellenbrook Park’.

Workshop 2 – Housing

- 15 – 20 years agreed as the appropriate plan period;
- Hatfield should have some development, though community facilities need to be provided as part of this. Infill development that aims to appropriately maximise the density of buildings should be supported;
- Concern about whether new homes can be guaranteed for local people;
- Debate over location of new growth. Some participants felt that the social and economic arguments favoured Hatfield to take a large proportion of growth, providing the transport infrastructure could be improved. Others felt Welwyn Garden City should take its fair share;
- Section 106 agreements and the New Homes Bonus could be used to fund some of the infrastructure improvements;
- The location South of Hatfield divided the groups. One group were undecided, another group opposed coalescence between Welham Green and Hatfield and another group had no real objection to coalescence but thought that South Way provides a good boundary for Hatfield. One group wanted to know whether housing would have priority over a possible incinerator as co-location would not be ideal. There were also concerns about access as South Way is regularly congested;

- The location West of Ellenbrook and Roehyde would provide facilities for the community in Ellenbrook. However, all of the groups were concerned about the lack of vehicular and pedestrian access and the possibility of new houses being bought for student lets. There were also concerns about possible coalescence with St Albans if St Albans District Council target growth near this location;
- The major concern regarding the location West of the redeveloped part of Hatfield Aerodrome was the impact any development would have on Ellenbrook Park. This location would require significant transport infrastructure improvements to address the effects of an increase in traffic on already congested areas e.g. Comet Road roundabout. Concern over potential mineral extraction;
- The location North-west of Hatfield also divided the groups. One group felt that this location would lead to coalescence with Welwyn Garden City – another group felt it was a suitable location that would have less of an impact on traffic in central Hatfield and would provide better services and facilities for Hatfield Garden Village;
- The location south-east of Welwyn Garden City raised concerns amongst all groups about building close to a local nature reserve (Commonswood). Similarly, there were concerns about building near a landfill;
- The location North-east of Welwyn Garden City was supported by two groups, one of which listed it as the location they supported the most. The only concern raised by residents was that any development would need to provide local shops and community facilities to be sustainable and discourage people from driving to other locations;
- There is a shortage of affordable family housing (2 bed) in Hatfield. There needs to be a better balance between family and student housing – this would require joint-working with the University;
- The groups were divided over whether growth should occur within or adjacent to towns. One group suggested growth should occur in towns, whereas another felt that growth adjacent to towns would be required. The third group felt that the best solution would be growth that has less of an impact on traffic;
- Green spaces in towns are important – should not be used for housing;
- Unlikely that land could not be found for housing growth, but if this is the case then communities will be broken up as people have to move away;
- Conversely, one group felt that people could move away to other parts of the borough or St Albans – the impact on communities would therefore be less.

Additional Comments received post-workshop

- Hatfield rail station is not user-friendly. A lift is required for disabled access and for parents with prams coming from London;
- Landlords in Hatfield should be penalised for rubbish left behind by their tenants and other environmental issues, such as noise;
- Hatfield is now populated with shops that do not serve the local community. Hatfield needs shops that will encourage people to spend in Hatfield and not travel to other locations e.g. London, St Albans;
- Any future employment development needs to be balanced with a suitable provision of housing to reverse the 'out-commute' from Hatfield;
- If housing were to be provided in Ellenbrook, a local shop would be required if the development is to be sustainable;
- Need to consider the impact that new housing will have on school places;
- Supports build-to-rent development, but should ensure these go to local people with local jobs to avoid creating another commuter settlement such as Salisbury Village.

Summary of feedback from Welwyn Garden City Workshop

Saturday 27th November 2010

Representatives from the following groups and organisations attended the Welwyn Garden City Workshop:

- Sherrards Park Wood Warden Society
- Mid Valley Road Residents Association
- Welwyn Garden City Society
- Welwyn Hatfield YMCA
- Tenants Panel
- Welwyn Hatfield Environmental Network
- Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

Local Objectives – Welwyn Garden City

- All groups agreed that the unique heritage of Welwyn Garden City – including aspects of the Garden City and the features of the New Town development – should be protected and built upon/enhanced;
- The Estate Management Scheme is an integral part of maintaining the quality of the “place” and should be mentioned in a spatial plan;
- Need to balance the heritage of the town with the current needs of residents;
- Importance of neighbourhoods to the character of Welwyn Garden City – particularly the local shopping ‘hubs’;
- The most important features of Welwyn Garden City identified as: accessibility to recreation, the integration of housing, green space, work, retail and leisure and the space, light, trees and landscaping that are prominent features of the town centre;
- One group were concerned with the objective to maintain and improve the town centre’s role as a leading shopping destination – one group felt that the word ‘shopping’ could be removed;
- Need to expand to compete with other town centres – concern over the possible expansion of Stevenage and the direct competition with St Albans. Need to expand but not necessarily increase size –provide for town’s needs. Retail development at the Broadwater Road West site would fragment the town centre;

- Need to improve the range of shops (too much reliance on John Lewis, Debenhams and Waitrose) and the physical environment in the town centre;
- Need to increase car parking in the town;
- Any expansion needs to be well-linked – suggestion of pedestrianising Stonehills and also creating drop-off/pick-up points and short-stay bays (20 minutes) to recognise that many of the older population in the town drive;
- Suggestion of developing an evening economy but no universal consensus;
- Local employment is an important characteristic of Welwyn Garden City – objective should reflect the need for a balance and mix of employment land;
- ‘Class B’ uses (offices, industrial, and storage/distribution) should not always be a priority. Council should examine other forms of employment in the town’s employment areas e.g. specialist companies/manufacturing;
- Employment development needs to be accompanied by facilities (e.g. gym/crèche) that are required by local people;
- Groups were split over the issue of flexibility – some argued that employment land should be flexible for different employment uses; others argued that land should be designated for specific employment uses;
- All groups agreed on the need to deliver a range of housing although one group suggested ‘enable’ rather than ‘deliver’;
- New housing must respect the design and heritage of the Garden City whilst addressing the changes in households/lifestyles;
- Need for affordable homes – groups identified that this should ideally include smaller homes suitable for young families and/or for older people to downsize;
- Welwyn Garden City needs to maintain its character, design and layout as these contribute to a good quality of life;
- Need to reduce car trips and to encourage the use of public transport, walking and cycling.
- Participants also identified that the quality and maintenance of green spaces and hedges could be improved;
- Suggestion by one group that increasing leisure facilities – a bowling alley and/or nightclub – would benefit Welwyn Garden City if well-designed. Leisure facilities could be concentrated in the Stanborough/Gosling areas.

Small Rural Settlements – Lemsford and Stanborough

- Suggested 'consider' rather than 'maintaining' settlement pattern. Settlements need to be flexible to accommodate possible growth. May be an opportunity to provide a shop to serve Lemsford and Stanborough;
- Important that any growth is justified by local needs and benefits the local community.

Rural Areas

- 'Strictly' controlling development away from towns and villages may limit options for growth;
- Green Belt must be retained to prevent coalescence;
- The re-use of farm buildings should not necessarily be limited to supporting the rural economy, providing the needs of the local community support this. Any re-use should benefit the local community;
- Agreement of two groups on the need to maintain agricultural land and other appropriate uses. One other group agreed providing that the land would not be needed for growth.

Borough-wide objectives and vision

- General agreement, with some additions rather than alterations. One group, however, strongly disagreed with the objectives as they had no input from local people;
- Council should promote the formation of voluntary groups e.g. Neighbourhood Watch and the development of community meeting places;
- Everyone, not just those in the most deprived areas, should have the opportunity to access better health and support services;
- Suggestion by one group to develop an evening economy to increase the vitality and viability of towns – should target young people. Some groups felt more strongly than others about the need for an evening economy and whether it was appropriate or necessary in Welwyn Garden City;
- Minimising the need to travel is an important consideration for development;
- Suggestion by one group to create a condensed, bullet-point version/simple statement of the vision for the public. This would be supported by a separate

document outlining how the Council will achieve this vision. Need to reduce jargon and unnecessary adjectives to make it more understandable;

- Concern about the lack of infrastructure to support development;
- Concern about the release of Green Belt.

Workshop 2 – Housing

- Concern that Welwyn Garden City does not have a Parish Council and does not feel as though it is represented as well as other areas. Suggestion of a 'Neighbourhood Forum' for residents to meet and discuss concerns;
- Need for affordable housing that can adapt to changing lifestyles – particularly 2 bed 'starter' homes for younger families and homes to allow older people to downsize whilst remaining in their community;
- However, one group indicated that there is no need for 2 bed properties – 3 and/or 4 bedroom properties have the highest demand;
- Need for a good mix and balance of houses and flats;
- Suggestion that housing need/demand be assessed using a neighbourhood-based approach;
- All locations should be examined for possible housing growth, though the towns and villages should be prioritised;
- Limited space for development within Welwyn Garden City – 'edge of town' locations need facilities and infrastructure to ensure they do not become isolated and/or dependent on travelling by car;
- Lack of housing would lead to (predominantly younger) people moving away – community would become older. This would have a negative effect on community facilities e.g. schools;
- General concerns about flooding and lack of infrastructure (particularly sewage) affecting new development. New development needs to echo the Garden City ethos and incorporate green spaces to be successful;
- The location North-east of Welwyn Garden City was not supported by any group. Participants were concerned about the loss of the airstrip (which residents want to keep) and the loss of views from Moneyhole Lane Park;
- The location South-east of Welwyn Garden City was not supported by three groups, though one group identified it as the 2nd best. There were concerns about building close to the Commonswood nature reserve and the Cole Green Lane landfill site. There were also concerns about possible coalescence if East Hertfordshire District Council chose to expand in this location. However,

the group that supported this location identified that the land had little merit after being spoilt by the landfill site;

- The location North-west of Hatfield was the most supported. Whilst there was concern over coalescence of Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City, the groups felt that the land has little merit and would provide facilities for Hatfield Garden Village. A buffer zone would be required to offset the noise and sound pollution of the A1(M). One group suggested this location is of a suitable size to create a mini eco-town with opportunities for renewable energy sources and high quality landscaping;
- The location west of the redeveloped part of Hatfield Aerodrome was not generally supported due to the effect the development would have on Ellenbrook. The location would, however, support the redevelopment of Hatfield town centre;
- The location west of Ellenbrook and Roehyde was not supported by three groups, although one group rated it as the 2nd best location. Concerns were raised about issues of flooding, the increase of traffic and the effect of the development on Smallford;
- The location South of Hatfield was identified by one group as being suitable as the current land has no merit. However, the other groups identified that development would cause coalescence between Hatfield and Welham Green which they did not support;
- Other locations suggested included east of Welham Green and also west of Brookmans Park as both these locations are close to railway stations. The Frythe, Welwyn was also suggested.

Additional Comments received post-workshop

- Need to account for longer life-span of those with learning difficulties. Sheltered accommodation should be provided for those with learning difficulties whose carers can no longer provide them with a home;
- Care services need to be accompanied by special transport and parking facilities;
- The facilities used by those with learning difficulties include the College in Welwyn Garden City Town Centre. The plan for the future should include a local college that includes facilities and support for those with learning difficulties;

- There is concern amongst carers that the Douglas Tilbe Centre may close. The facility is used by people with learning difficulties in Welwyn Garden City. The plan for Welwyn Garden City should include a day centre;
- People with learning difficulties also use Campus West and the Mill Green Museum. It is therefore important to include leisure facilities in the plan for Welwyn Garden City;
- Concern that Tesco application, if successful, would undermine shops and GP service at Peartree;
- Possibility of creating a retail park at Hunters Bridge car park and putting car park in Broadwater Road West site to attract people over the railway bridge;
- Evening economy: younger people won't use Campus West for cinema because films are put on later than cinemas at Hatfield and Stevenage (parking there is also free);
- Should consider releasing land for employment - the location south-east of Welwyn Garden City may be more suitable for industrial use due to the former landfill;
- Need to restrict lorries entering town to improve the environment;
- Land for housing – to the rear of the YMCA and close to the town centre e.g. Broadwater Road West;
- Taxi rank dominates Howardsgate. Should consider re-routing buses down Howardsgate so that older people can get off outside main entrance to Howard Centre;
- The location south of Hatfield may be more suited to student accommodation;
- Potential for development at 'The Forge' (near Tewinwater Farm, Hertford Road), adjacent to the B1000;
- Need to encourage University of Herts. to provide new student accommodation and release housing stock from students.

How the council used the workshops

The council took the views expressed at the workshops into account when developing the spatial objectives for the Emerging Core Strategy.

They may also be used as a starting point for the development of future Neighbourhood Plans.

The following provides examples of how the views expressed at the workshops were incorporated into the Emerging Core Strategy, concentrating on the key points made by the workshop groups.

There was much discussion in the workshop groups about where the broad locations for growth should be, but no overall consensus was reached. Welwyn and the Northern villages identified land north west of Hatfield and also the location north east of Welwyn Garden City as suitable for development.

Cuffley, Newgate Street and Northaw favoured development adjacent to, rather than in the villages; one group suggested a new town around Essendon, although it was generally agreed that the best solution was to expand Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield.

Brookmans Park, Welham Green and the surrounding areas identified the location north west of Hatfield and south east of Welwyn Garden City as suitable for development. Two groups favoured focussing development on one location, another group suggested that development should be dispersed throughout the borough.

The Hatfield workshop groups had differing views on the location for new development. Some participants considered that social and economic arguments favoured Hatfield as the chosen location for a large proportion of growth. Other participants considered that Welwyn Garden City should take its “fair share” of development.

The Welwyn Garden City workshop suggested that all locations in the borough should be examined for possible housing growth, although town and village locations should be prioritised. None of the groups supported the location north east of Welwyn Garden City. The location north west of Hatfield was the most popular location with the groups.

The workshop groups identified the need for new development to be sustainable, such as minimising the need to travel, improving cycling facilities and encouraging walking, and promoting health. Policy CS 1 “Delivering Sustainable Development” along with the Spatial Vision and borough wide strategic objectives establishes that sustainable development is the key principle guiding the development of the Core Strategy.

The need for affordable housing and the importance of lifetime homes was identified and this was incorporated in Policy CS 7 “Type and Mix of Housing”.

The need for appropriate infrastructure to serve any new development was raised and this is addressed both by Policy CS 12 Infrastructure Delivery and in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

The workshops identified the need to provide and enhance existing local facilities in the borough’s villages. Policy CS 20 “Villages and Rural Areas” states that the Council will support the retention of existing facilities in rural areas. Policy CS 6 “Community Services and Facilities” states that the council will address gaps in existing provision, which will include both the provision of additional facilities in rural areas and the improvement of existing facilities.

The need to provide and enhance local facilities in the local neighbourhoods was identified. Policy CS6 “Community Services and Facilities” incorporates this, together with the suggestion to co-locate facilities.

Woolmer Green was identified as a working village where it was important to maintain employment opportunities. Policy CS 8 “The Local Economy” proposes to designate an additional employment area at London Road, Woolmer Green, to protect the employment land in this area.

All the workshops identified the need for new development to be of a high quality design and this is incorporated in Policy CS 9 “Good Quality Design”.

The need for new development to protect the character and identity of the existing area is included in Policy CS 9 “Good Quality Design” states that the council will encourage a strong sense of place by addressing the character and context analysis. New development should reflect the distinctive local character of the towns (garden city and new town movement) and the unique range of villages in Welwyn Hatfield.

An additional objective for Hatfield was suggested, of improving the integration of Old Hatfield with the rest of the town, whilst preserving and enhancing the historic setting and heritage. This was adopted as Objective HAT5 to “improve the integration of Old Hatfield with the rest of the town whilst preserving and enhancing this heritage asset.”

The problem of family homes being used as student accommodation was raised and it was suggested that purpose built student accommodation should be built to overcome this. Policy CS 17 “University of Hertfordshire” states that the council will support proposals to concentrate new student accommodation on campus.

Policy CS 17 also recognises the economic development and community benefits associated with the presence of the University of Hertfordshire and the need to balance this with the impact of the University on the surrounding area, which were other issues raised at the workshops.

The Welwyn Garden City workshop groups all agreed that it was very important to protect and enhance the unique heritage of Welwyn Garden City. This is incorporated in Policy CS 13 “The Historic Environment of Welwyn Garden City”.

There was a great deal of support for the redevelopment of the High View neighbourhood centre and the consultation that the Council ran from the workshop held in Hatfield. The council adopted the High View Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in April 2011 to provide a planning framework to guide the redevelopment of the centre, to provide a mixed use development including housing, retailing, services and community facilities

The Hatfield workshop groups all supported the regeneration of Hatfield Town Centre. This remains a priority for the council and Objective HAT 1 for Hatfield states that it is the council’s objective to secure the regeneration of Hatfield town

centre and to ensure that the redevelopment reflects the needs of local people, including local jobs. This objective is incorporated in Policy CS 16 “Hatfield Town Centre”.

Whilst the economic turn down has delayed the planned regeneration of Hatfield Town Centre, the council have been carrying out interim improvements and have secured funding from the government’s Portas Pilot scheme, to enhance Hatfield Town Centre.

The workshop groups made other points which were not directly related to the emerging Core Strategy, but which nevertheless, have been taken forward by the Council. These included the identification of The Frythe, Welwyn, as a suitable site for housing development. Planning permission was granted for housing development at The Frythe in December 2012.

The issue of controlling the number of family sized homes becoming HMOs occupied by students by the use of an Article 4 direction was suggested. In January 2012, an Article 4 direction came into effect in Hatfield, which means that planning permission is now needed when owners intend to turn a dwelling house into an HMO for three to six occupants in Hatfield. The council’s published Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Document in February 2012, which will be used to determine planning applications for HMOs.

The suggestion of a Landlord Accreditation scheme was also taken forward; the Partnership Accreditation for Landlords (PAL) Scheme was launched in January 2012 as the first scheme of its kind in Hertfordshire.

Appendix A: Draft local objectives for discussion

Group _____

Workshop 1a (i)

LOCAL OBJECTIVES - LARGE VILLAGES

(WELWYN)

Objectives for the borough's towns and villages reflect their position in the settlement hierarchy and their distinct development needs and local characteristics.

Objective 1

Maintain a supply of employment land to provide local job opportunities.

Community benefits...

Objective 2

Work with the Parish Councils to help take forward priorities identified in Parish Plans.

Community benefits...

Objective 3

Widen housing choice, delivering a range of housing types, sizes and tenures to help meet housing needs and demand.

Community benefits...

Objective 4

Maintain the vitality and viability of village centres.

Community benefits...

Group ____

Workshop 1a (ii)

**LOCAL OBJECTIVES - SMALL VILLAGES
(DIGSWELL, OAKLANDS AND MARDLEY HEATH, WOOLMER GREEN)**

Objectives for the borough's towns and villages reflect their position in the settlement hierarchy and their distinct development needs and local characteristics.

Objective 1

Protect facilities and services which provide an important community function and support the adaptation of existing facilities where community benefits can be enhanced.

Community benefits...

Objective 2

Maintain a small supply of employment land to provide local job opportunities.

Community benefits...

Objective 3

Widen housing choice, delivering a range of housing types, sizes and tenures to help meet housing needs and demand.

Community benefits...

Objective 4

Work with Parish Councils to help implement priorities identified in Parish Plans.

Community benefits...

**LOCAL OBJECTIVES FOR OTHER SMALL RURAL SETTLEMENTS
(AYOT GREEN, AYOT ST LAWRENCE, AYOT ST PETER AND BURNHAM GREEN)**

Objectives for the borough's towns and villages reflect their position in the settlement hierarchy and their distinct development needs and local characteristics.

Objective 1

To maintain the existing settlement pattern.

Community benefits...

OBJECTIVES FOR OUR RURAL AREAS

Outside the towns and villages, the borough's landscape is characterised by large areas of countryside, much of it open. Land here is often used for farming, the keeping of horses and other uses compatible with the countryside. The objectives for these rural areas are:

Objective 1

To strictly control development in areas away from towns and villages in order to protect the open character and diversity of the landscape.

Community benefits...

Objective 2

To provide for the re-use of existing buildings where this supports the rural economy whilst maintaining the character of the countryside and environmental quality.

Community benefits...

Objective 3

To maintain a supply of agricultural land and land for other uses appropriate to the countryside.

Community benefits...

Group _____

Workshop 2

1. Identify what you feel are the housing needs and demands for your area, e.g. small / large family homes, flats, affordable, specialist housing etc.
2. Where do you think new housing should be provided, e.g. within villages only, adjacent to villages?
3. What happens if no land comes forward for housing within your villages; how would this affect local housing options? Would people need to move away for a different housing choice, how would this affect your communities?
4. Thinking about longer term growth in the borough, which could mean the creation of a new neighbourhood of say 1,500 or 3,000 new homes, is there a location (or locations) in the borough that you consider has benefits over any other?

.... Why?

(Note: Assume we are looking at a 20 year time horizon. Maps will be provided on tables).

Appendix B

Borough wide objectives and overall vision for the Borough.

Group _____

Workshop 1b

BOROUGH-WIDE OBJECTIVES

The borough-wide objectives will help to realise the vision for the borough and ensure that development is planned for and carried out in a sustainable way. The objectives provide a framework for the spatial strategy and for developing targets and monitoring indicators.

There is a further layer of objectives which recognise the distinct development needs and local characteristics of our settlements.

The borough-wide objectives are:

Sustainable Communities and Development

- To help people enjoy a good quality of life.
- To ensure a high quality of design in new developments.
- To increase opportunities for people living in our most deprived areas gain access to the health and support services, training and education.
- To make best use of existing infrastructure and provide a framework for securing improved or new infrastructure.
- To mitigate and adapt to climate change and its effects.

Managing Delivery

- To concentrate new development within the main towns and large villages, in particular on previously developed land.
- To prevent coalescence between towns and villages.
- To provide for our development needs over the plan period.
- To ensure that our green belt boundaries will not need reviewing again before 2031.

Town, Neighbourhood and Village Centres

- To maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of our town, neighbourhood and village centres.

Rural Communities

- To help sustain the rural economy and the vitality of our villages.

Economic Prosperity

- To promote economic prosperity.
- To maximise economic opportunities associated with the University
- To support key economic clusters.

A VISION FOR WELWYN HATFIELD

Responses to the Issues and Options consultation called for a more locally distinctive, settlement focussed and deliverable vision. The revised draft Vision for the borough says:

The Local Development Framework will play a key role in ensuring that the borough continues to be a place where people choose to live work and invest in an attractive, healthy, safe environment.

Good housing conditions and access to a range of job opportunities, services and community facilities will help our communities to be healthy, safe and inclusive and improve the quality of life for those living in our most deprived wards.

Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield will be the main focus for key services and major leisure, shopping, culture, housing and employment opportunities. The borough will have a vibrant local economy, which makes best use of the benefits associated with having a university in the borough.

Any new retail development required to reinforce the role of Welwyn Garden City will take place within the town centre and be designed to enhance the character of the conservation area. Investment in Hatfield Town Centre will create a more vibrant centre of which people can feel proud. Small-scale shops, services and community facilities located in our neighbourhood centres will help to serve the needs of local communities. The larger villages will be the centres for local shops, services and community facilities for their parish areas.

New development will be sensitively located at accessible locations within Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield and within the borough's larger villages, making best use of existing infrastructure and providing new or enhanced infrastructure where this is required.

By XXXX, a planned release of a limited amount of land from the Green Belt will have taken place but only where our housing and employment needs cannot be provided for within the existing towns and larger villages. The distinctive character and identity of our towns and many villages will be maintained by preventing coalescence.

An / The urban extension(s) to the west/north/south-east/north-west of xxxxx will create (a) new sustainable neighbourhood(s). Development here will build upon the principles of the Garden City and New Town movements and respect the characteristics of adjoining settlement(s). New and improved access to the countryside and a network of green infrastructure will be provided.

The borough will play its part in addressing climate change through the efficient use of natural resources, securing high quality sustainable design and managing and preventing the risk of flooding. Improved opportunities for travelling by public transport, walking and cycling will be in place.

The quality and diversity of the natural and designated historic environment in both urban and rural areas will be protected, maintained and enhanced. An improved network of green infrastructure will be provided, including an area of new strategic green infrastructure to the west of Hatfield.