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Please ask for:  
Gurdip Paddan

\* Reporting to Cabinet

20 January 2020

Dear Councillor

You are requested to attend a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL CABINET PLANNING AND PARKING PANEL to be held on Wednesday 29 January 2020 at 7.30pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

Yours faithfully



Corporate Director  
Public Protection, Planning and Governance

**AGENDA**  
**PART 1**

1. **SUBSTITUTIONS**

To note any substitution of Panel Members in accordance with Council Procedure Rules.

2. **APOLOGIES**

3. **MINUTES**

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2020 (previously circulated).

4. **NOTIFICATION OR URGENT BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED UNDER ITEM 8**

5. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

To note declarations of Members' disclosable pecuniary interests, non-disclosable pecuniary interests and non-pecuniary interests in respect of items on this Agenda.

6. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND PETITIONS (Pages 5 - 10)

Up to thirty minutes will be made available for questions from members of the public on issues relating to the work of the Committee and to receive any petitions.

7. LOCAL PLAN PROPOSED ALTERATIONS - ADDITIONAL SITES

Report of the Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) on the Local Plan proposed alteration – additional sites. The purpose of this report is to consider which new sites should be proposed to the inspector for inclusion in the Local Plan.

**Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel Documents can be viewed on the following link – [23 January 2020](#)**

8. SUCH OTHER BUSINESS AS, IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIRMAN, IS OF SUFFICIENT URGENCY TO WARRANT IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION

9. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Panel is asked to resolve:

That under Section 100(A)(2) and (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be now excluded from the meeting for item 10 (if any) on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of confidential or exempt information as defined in Section 100A(3) and Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act (as amended).

In resolving to exclude the public in respect of the exempt information, it is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

**PART II**

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS OF A CONFIDENTIAL OR EXEMPT NATURE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN

Circulation: Councillors S.Boulton (Chairman) J.Quinton  
S.Kasumu (Vice-Chairman) D.Richardson  
A.Chesterman A Rohale  
B.Fitzsimon P.Shah  
G.Hayes P.Zukowskyj  
T.Kingsbury

Co-opted Members:-  
Tenants' Panel Representatives  
To be appointed

Corporate Management Team  
Press and Public (except Part II Items)

**If you require any further information about this Agenda please contact Gurdip Paddan, Governance Services on 01707 357349 or email – [democracy@welhat.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@welhat.gov.uk)**

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## **Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel Public Questions on 29 January 2020**

### 1. Oliver King

“Can the Chairman clarify why they think that the proposed stepped housing trajectory will be acceptable to the Inspector, despite the fact that the Inspector has clearly advised that there is a requirement for 800 units per annum and that any shortfall in meeting the annual target between 2016 and when the plan is adopted needs to be made up within the first five years of adoption of the plan? Is the Chairman concerned that this approach could further delay the adoption of the plan as a consequence of the inspector concluding that the Council’s targets and strategy are unrealistic and not effective and therefore unsound?”

### **Welwyn Hatfield Response**

An assumption that delivery could be significantly higher in early years of the plan period, is likely to be unrealistic. Targets will be lower in initial years as constraints on certain sites, such as the need for infrastructure delivery or land availability, will affect lead-in times.

A stepped target is consistent with National Planning Practice Guidance, which states: “A stepped housing requirement may be appropriate where there is to be a significant change in the level of housing requirement between emerging and previous policies and/or where strategic sites will have a phased delivery or are likely to be delivered later in the plan period”

As the stepped approach is consistent with national policy and the planned housing requirement would be met within the plan period, it is not considered that this should introduce any delay to the adoption of the plan.

### 2. Tasneem Abdulla

“The village of Swanley Bar has been recommended for inseting, and Site SB1 is located to the immediate eastern edge. There is good connectivity to public transport and amenities such as children’s play areas and the footpath network. The promoter has identified a number of development scenarios which range in quantum but also their prominence. The two smallest options (for 30 and 60 dwellings) are highly discrete and have no discernible ramifications for further coalescence or to change the open nature of the area as viewed from key gateways including the A1000.

The LUC analysis fails to accept that these smaller and more discrete scenarios would result in lesser Green Belt harm, which we think in this context is not realistic. These more modest scenarios cannot be conducted to be any higher than Moderate-High and should therefore be allocated as an Option 1 site.

The site’s release for either of these two scenarios would provide up to 60 dwellings and all of these can be completed in years 1-5. This is a highly sustainable site which has good connectivity and the benefit of existing local services. Can the Chairman agree that it would be sensible to allocate SB1 as a highly deliverable site, with the potential to provide strong boundaries which

can be made permanent through the extension of footpath routes that can be offered up for adoption and be highly defensible?”

### **Welwyn Hatfield Response**

The small settlement of Swanley Bar has not been recommended by officers for inseting within the Green Belt.

All of the three site scenarios considered (SB1, SB1a and SB1b) fall into a ‘high’ harm parcel in Green Belt terms. The area covered by these sites is important for protecting separation between settlements and is important for preventing unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas. On this basis, the allocation of any of these site scenarios is not supported.

#### 3. Jonathan Collins

“Site WGC11 is a site which has been deemed as having only a Moderate Harm to the Greenbelt. It is in a very sustainable location being against the development boundary of existing houses in Haldens (along Margery Wood) and in close proximity to Welwyn Garden North Train Station, the Waterside Academy School, Haldens Park Playground and Haldens Sports and Social Club.

Historic England were consulted on the plan but stated they only had the resources to consider a few sites and only by looking at maps as a desktop assessment without a site visit. They stated that “this site would have the potential to impact the setting of the Registered Park and Garden [Tewin Water]”.

Heritage consultants did visit site and they concluded “the allocation would preserve what is significant about the heritage asset, taking note of setting relationships. Therefore, the allocation will not cause detriment to the setting of the Registered Park and Garden.” However, officers have excluded this site on Heritage grounds before the other aspects could be considered.

It is clear when standing on the site that it cannot be seen from Tewin Water as it is within a valley and hidden behind two lines of mature trees either side of Hetford Road (even in winter).

The nearby Panshanger extension site (WGC4) is on an open plateau overlooking the surrounding landscape, a topographical feature making it suitable for an airfield. Historic England note that the site is visible from the Grade II star Registered Park and Garden of Panshanger. With only a fraction of Grade II designations being star rated, the sensitivity and vulnerability of this site is at a greater level than Tewin Water. Despite this, Historic England recommend that “Careful consideration would need to be given to the scale of buildings and boundary treatment in this area, together with the siting of houses in relation to the northwest edge of the airfield’s plateau and views up from the River Mimram valley.”

On this basis it seems inconsistent that a similar approach could not be taken with WGC11, the Dobermann Club, where the site is not visible from Tewin Park. Therefore, we have arranged a pre-application site meeting with Historic

England who will be undertaking a more thorough appraisal including a site visit on Tuesday 28 of January. This will establish whether this site is appropriate for inclusion in the Local Plan assessment.

At last week's Panel meeting, it was said that the inclusion of Panshanger airfield and the extension site "has the most negatives of all sites in terms of sustainability". In contrast, WGC11 is a sustainable alternative that is only one of a few sites that has only moderate green belt harm and is readily deliverable. Therefore, would the chairman agree that this site should be included in the Draft Local Plan?"

### **Welwyn Hatfield Response**

Both Historic England and the Council's conservation advisor considered this site. Both raised concerns. The site lies opposite the Grade II listed Tewin Water Registered Park and Garden which was designed by the English landscape designer, Humphry Repton and dates back to the 18th century. The site forms part of a rural, (largely) undeveloped 'buffer' between the Registered Park and Garden and the built-up areas of WGC. It is considered that development here would undermine the rural character of the site and the valley, and would be detrimental to the setting of the Registered Park and Garden. It is recommended by officers that the site is not allocated.

As the site has not been assessed as suitable in the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment it has not been subject to a sustainability appraisal assessment.

#### 4. Andrew Newland

"Site Cuf17 is located to the immediate south of the Ridgeway which forms a well established residential road leading out of Cuffley. The Ridgeway is washed over by Green Belt in the current Local Plan.

The LUC report has identified that the inseting of the Ridgeway would result in moderate-high harm to Green Belt and therefore do not recommend that it should be inset. The proposed scheme at Cuf17 has then been rejected as it would not be contiguous with defined settlement boundary.

The developer has identified a number of scheme scenarios including those which are very modest and visually discrete. The scheme has scored well in relation to all elements with the exception of some views in respect of Green Belt harm. The LUC report on landscape sensitivity is favourable and identifies lower harm than several sites with draft allocations.

We do not agree that it is realistic that the inseting of existing built form in this location can represent a level of Green Belt harm that is unacceptable. The Ridgeway should be inset and form part of Cuffley.

Once inset, we feel that the smaller development scenario for Nyn Manor is very discrete and should be supported resulting in limited (if any) additional Green Belt harm. The site's release for either of the two smaller development scenarios would provide up to 375 dwellings and all of these can be completed in years 1-5. LUC have accepted that the release of the entire site would create

limited landscape sensitivity, so the release of a smaller site would be acceptable on that basis and perform more strongly in terms of Green Belt matters.

Can the Chairman agree that it would be sensible to allocate Cuf178 as a highly deliverable site, with the potential to provide strong boundaries which can be made permanent through the extension of footpath routes that can be offered up for adoption and be highly defensible.”

### **Welwyn Hatfield Response**

The site does not adjoin an existing urban boundary and development in this location, which lies some considerable distance from the services and facilities which are located within the village centre of Cuffley, would not direct growth to the most sustainable locations within the borough. Accordingly, site Cuf17 failed Stage 1 of the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment and is not recommended for allocation.

#### 5. Mark Aylward, Director ATP

“Site Wel16 is located to the immediate southwestern edge of Welwyn, very close to St. Mary’s Primary School and other village amenities. The scheme has been promoted for a considerable period and HCC Highways have agreed that with proposed highway improvements to School Lane it is deliverable. The scheme for 95 homes has scored well in relation to all sustainability elements – better than any other site in Welwyn. The promoted site was originally larger and has been reduced in scale, removing elements that were more open and distant from the village centre but can introduce new footpath links to improve route choices and provide a defensible boundary. In the LUC reports from August 2018, the site was identified within a parcel including a draft allocation site and the release of both was concluded to represent moderate-high harm. For some reason, in the Addendum report the Wel16 site was re-packaged alongside the much more open Wel14 site and in combination found to be High harm. This made the LUC analysis much less granular, the opposite of what the Inspector had requested. The original LUC analysis was pitched at the right level of granularity and concluded Moderate-High harm it should thus be identified as an Option 1 site in accord with the Council’s methodology.

In contrast, the proposed Draft Allocations north of Welwyn are all Moderate-High sites constrained by major technical issues with no evidence supplied in terms of the deliverability of the necessary highway works. At the last CPPP meeting, Cllr Kasumu read out a statement which admitted that “no evidenced studies have been carried out”. These require the construction of a new bridge over Singlers Marsh, which is designated as a ‘Local Nature Reserve’ by Natural England and ‘Local Wildlife Site’ by HCC to “provide protection from development”.

The introduction of this bridge and access junction required for the increased volume of traffic will damage this fragile chalk-stream habitat and change the character of the historic common land. We would also note that even if the new bridge can be delivered, the walking route from these new sites to the primary school is substantial and involves crossing several junctions- it is not a



sustainable walking route to a school. It is also regrettable that there is a lack of clarity of the terms of any land deal which impacts on deliverability and probity.

Can the Chairman agree that it would be more sensible to allocate WEL16 as a highly deliverable, sustainable and achievable site for homes in Welwyn which would better retain the village character whilst provide much needed housing for local people? Can the Chairman also point to evidence showing that the infrastructure works needed for the sites to the north of Welwyn is genuinely deliverable and would be acceptable in policy terms?"

### **Welwyn Hatfield Response**

WEL16 has been assessed as high harm in the Green Belt Study (stage 3). The Option 1 (recommended scenario) does not propose allocating any new high harm sites.

Technical work has been carried out to demonstrate that the widening of the bridge is deliverable. The Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment and the Site Selection Background Paper summarise the evidence.

#### 6. Judith Watson

I have been following these proposals with interest whilst, at the same time, re-reading my father's Presidential Address to the Institution of Municipal Engineers in 1964 (66 years ago and still totally relevant) in which he refers to The South East Study published in 1963 by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, and the largest single piece of social planning ever attempted by a democratic country. Two points in particular are relevant to the position that we find ourselves in today: "...we may find that Parliament itself will be producing schemes for quasi-nationalised control of local authorities..." and, "... it is dangerous, especially in the field of engineering and planning to regard towns or even regions as isolated entities". He also states how difficult it had become for a Borough to regulate for both urban and rural affairs.

This has a significant ring to me when I note that my village of Woolmer Green does not have a Ward Councillor living in the village, nor is there one of our Ward Councillors on the Planning and Parking Committee. I would like to ask the panel how many of them have actually travelled down the B197 from Woolmer Green to the A1M around 8 to 8.30am? This morning it took me 1 hour! Has anyone on the panel estimated the increase in congestion as the result of the proposed new housing in Woolmer Green? I would like an answer. Is there really the necessity for increased housing growth in a toroid, which mainly means the Green Belt, around Welwyn Garden City due to its protected status? I am still very worried about the planned erosion of our countryside and I hope the answers to my questions will be communicated to Mr Middleton."

### **Welwyn Hatfield Response**

Transport modelling has been carried out to consider the cumulative impacts of growth arising from different combinations of sites and the impact on congestion.

The 2012 National Planning Policy Framework states that 'development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds 'where the residual cumulative impacts are severe.' The 2019 version of the National Planning Policy Framework amends this part of the Framework to include reference to there being 'an unacceptable impact on highway safety'. The transport modelling carried out to date would not support such a conclusion.

As the Inspector has already commented this is a very high bar.

The extent to which land should be released from the Green Belt is being debated tonight and will be considered at the examination. The Inspector has already stated that exceptional circumstances exist for its release.

Non – CPPP Members Wishing To Speak

Steve Markiewicz  
Duncan Bell  
Malcolm Cowan