

MEDIA RELEASE

Award winning film-maker lends support to Green Belt campaign

Emmy award winning film-maker Nick Morris from Wheathampstead, has made a striking video regarding a controversial proposal by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, to build 1,130 houses at Symondshyde, in the heart of Green Belt land between St Albans, Hatfield and Wheathampstead.

Nick, who has described the plans as “slicing through the countryside”, lent his support to the campaign group *Save Symondshyde* after learning about the late stage plans from the council, which was approved as a possible housing site at their Cabinet Housing and Employment Planning Committee in June this year. The proposal is part of the council’s draft Local Plan, which once adopted, will give the go ahead for 12,085 new houses in the Welwyn Hatfield District. Currently the plan includes 1,130 houses at Symondshyde and a further 1,650 houses close to Hatfield Garden Village.

St Albans own independent cinema, The Odyssey, will be screening the video over the next few weeks, in support of efforts by the campaign group to raise awareness of the plans, which would see the destruction of 140 acres of prime Green Belt land, an area double the size of Sandridge.

He explained: “Save Symondshyde is a large group of concerned members of the public, who are fighting to stop the destruction of this beautiful countryside, which represents unspoilt Green Belt at its best, and provides the “green lungs” for residents in nearby cities, towns and villages. I thought that it was important for people to see, through this video, just how special this area is and how important it is to prevent urban sprawl.”

The campaign has attempted to publicise the plans ahead of a short consultation held by Welwyn Hatfield Council, which will begin on the 30th August.

Chairman of the campaign, John Gardner said: “This piece of Green Belt land is a critical natural asset, providing a valuable amenity for local people and a critical role in maintaining separation between existing towns and villages. This proposal would punch a hole of urban development into the heart of the

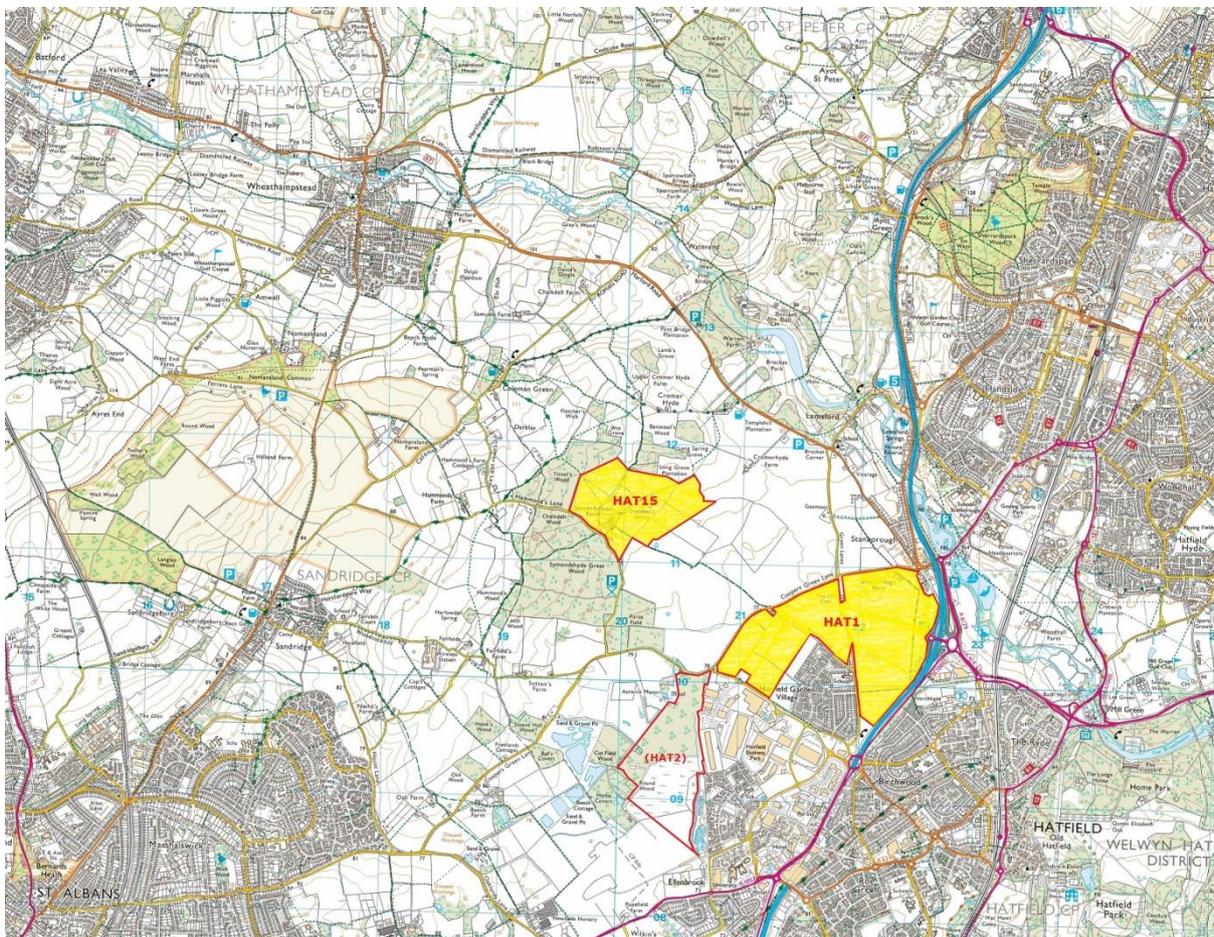
Green Belt, and is entirely at odds with core principles in the National Planning Policy Framework. The council’s approach to consultation about this proposal has been woefully inadequate, and many people in the area are completely unaware of these plans.”

The group are urging people to register on campaign group website www.save-symondshyde.co.uk to find out more about the plans and how best to object once the consultation opens at the end of the month.

- Ends -

Notes to the Editor

The area in question is “**HAT15**” coloured yellow on the plan below:



Additional Points:

- **Questionable Assumptions**
Welwyn Hatfield Council has, in the view of the campaign group, made questionable assumptions in its draft Local Plan about the numbers

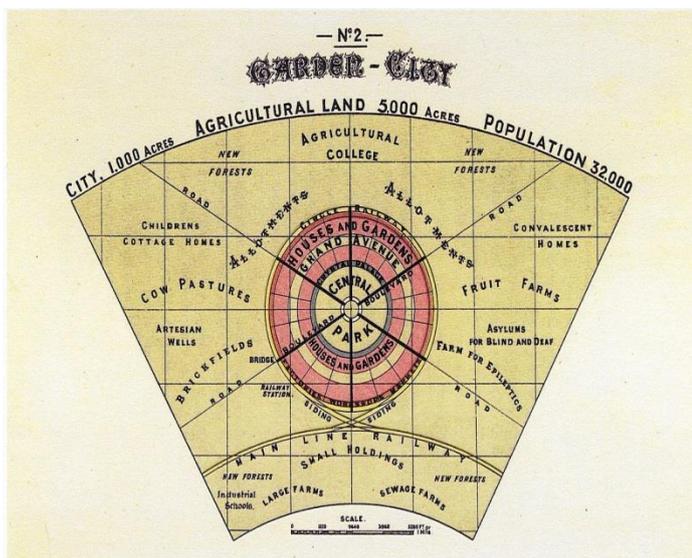
needed for new housing, and also little evidence has been shown by the Council that the loss of valuable Green Belt such as Symondshyde, could be mitigated to any meaningful extent.

- **Commercial Realities**

In reality, if such a large settlement was constructed, the majority of the dwellings would be of a type commanding a high premium, well beyond the reach of many people. So it would not even meet the alleged housing needs of the local population, even after allowing for a proportion of such dwellings being used as affordable housing. Desecrating important Green Belt, by building such a large new settlement, also casts significant doubts about the development on Symondshyde actually being sustainable within the meaning of the government's own planning guidelines.

- **Ebenezer's Legacy**

Ebenezer Howard was one of the pioneers of Garden City movement in the United Kingdom, and it was the concept of an "agricultural belt" around his vision for "Garden Cities", which formed the basis for the modern concept of the Green Belt today.



It is ironic that Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, inheriting the planning ideals Ebenezer Howard pioneered, especially in Welwyn Garden City,

should now be seeking to desecrate Green Belt land by bad and lazy planning.

Contacts

Please contact Stephen Larcombe on **01727 858807** or via his mobile on **07745 731849** if you require any further information.

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The video can be accessed via the following link:

<https://vimeo.com/178481475>