

## Save Symondshyde campaign - annual report 2017

### In Summary

Save-Symondshyde ensured the Symondshyde plans were widely publicised in the local community.

**“Thank-you”** to all the campaign’s supporters for their contributions. Your efforts, time and money supported our publicity campaign. Your contributions paid for consultant to help our objections in the recent “consultation”.

Symondshyde was one of the most commented topics in the single consultation Welwyn Hatfield held that included Symondshyde. (October 2016)

There were no major changes, only minor corrections to grammar, spelling and facts to any part of the plan.

However all our and your comments were essential. The government appointed inspector will only consider points made during the consultation.

The government has appointed an Inspector. No date has been set for the public examination. The earliest it will be is mid-September 2017.

We will explain more about the process and our plans throughout the meeting. You and your friends and neighbours are very welcome to talk to us about them after too.

It is “unfortunate” that the process becomes quite technical.

The bottom line is:

- Our best chance of stopping this proposal is at the Examination.
- The better our arguments are made, the better our chances.
- For this we will need additional funds to pay an experienced consultant to support us.

### Over the past year

The first many of us heard about the “plans” for Symondshyde was February 2016. There was a small amount of publicity from Gascoyne Cecil Estates (GCE). Most people heard by word of mouth. The council publicised and communicated nothing.

### Welwyn Hatfield “Community Involvement”

Welwyn Hatfield council claims “Community Involvement”.

Symonshyde (sic) village in Hatfield was introduced at the 24th September 2015 “Cabinet Housing and Planning Panel” (CHPP). The CHPP meets approximately monthly. The documents and minutes are lengthy. The September minutes are 137 pages long. Unfortunately the Map managed to omit pretty much all landmarks.

Welwyn Hatfield organised “drop-in” events October and November 2015. These were not consultations but for information only. There were many posters, Councilors and officials. Unfortunately no displays of Symondshyde or even “Symonshyde”. No mention of the new village when discussing Hat1 and Hat2 and the traffic around Marford Road andCoopers Green Lane.

But if you happened to pick up a large (100+ page) pack of details, hidden on page 56, in appendix B is a remarkably poor map with details of Symonshyde in Hatfield.

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### **Gascoyne Cecil Estates Charrette**

The charrette was held over the course of the week 1st - 9th February 2016.

- Whilst the quality of the presentations was good, the attendance was poor ranging from a dozen or so in some meetings to around a hundred at the summary.
- Although GCE - Lord Salisbury's company publicised the event to a few, it was very patchy and limited. None of those living nearby were informed.
- There have been a number of minor changes since, but we were given a clear explanation of what GCE proposed, and the areas they couldn't resolve such as the wider infrastructure issues.

### **Our first meetings**

Several concerned locals first met in a local pub in Coleman Green Lane on 22nd February 2016. Our thanks to the landlords for their tolerance of us.

At a public meeting 26th June 2016

- The name Save-Symondshyde was adopted,
- All those willing to join the committee were co-opted
- John Gardner was elected as the first chair .

### **Publicity and campaigning**

- Petition - over 1,200 unique signatures in 2 months (March to May 2016)
- Met with Grant Shapps the Welwyn Hatfield MP, and wrote to Peter Lilley and Anne Main (MPs for other affected residents).
- Attended many Welwyn Hatfield planning meetings (individually and as a group),
- There has been good coverage from the Welwyn Hatfield Times and Herts Advertiser.
- Articles have appeared in local parish magazines in Wheathampstead and Sandridge.
- Talked on Radio Verulam and Three Counties Radio about Symondshyde.
- Many thanks to Nick Morris for his wonderful videos
- and thanks too, to the Odyssey in St Albans for showing them and allowing us to distribute leaflets.
- Campaigning stalls and leaflet distribution at many local events. These included Coopers Green, Welwyn Garden City, Hatfield, Wheathampstead, Jersey Farm and St Albans.
- Printed and distributed over 15,000 leaflets.
- Talked to many Special interest Groups, other local campaign groups, and even got calls from several developers.

### **The "Consultation"**

We received comments and suggestions from several hundred people and groups.

Commissioned a planning consultant who has successfully challenged other proposed green belt developments previously (Richard Bate <http://greenbalance.co.uk>). Richard reviewed the site, discussed our strategy and helped with the objections.

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Submitted objections on our member's behalf regarding:

- 3 Vision and Boroughwide Objectives
- Policy SP 2 Targets for Growth
- Policy SP 3 Settlement Strategy and Green Belt boundaries
- Policy SP 24 New Village at Symondshyde - SDS6 (Hat15)

### **Now**

The Local Plan was formally submitted by Welwyn Hatfield council May 2017.

An independent Programme Officer has been appointed by Welwyn Hatfield council (Louise St John Howe)

An independent Inspector Melvyn Middleton has been appointed by the Secretary of State this month.

The programme officer will provide progress updates via <http://www.welhat.gov.uk/localplanexamination>

The latest update says...

24 June 2017

No dates have yet been fixed for the hearing sessions, but they will not be taking place before the middle of September at the earliest. As soon as the dates and programme for the hearing sessions are available, details will be posted on the examination pages of the website and will also be sent to everyone who responded to the pre-submission consultation of the Draft Local Plan.

### **Looking forwards**

The Inspector's "examination" is key.

The role of the Inspector is to consider whether the Plan is sound.

Those seeking changes have to demonstrate why the Plan is not sound.

The criteria for soundness are that the plan is:

- positively prepared,
- justified,
- effective
- and consistent with national policy

There are three possible outcomes to the examinations

- The submitted Plan is sound
- The submitted Plan is not sound, but could be made sound by changes, if necessary following additional work
- The submitted Plan is not sound and could not be made sound by changes.

At this stage there are only two means by which changes can be made to the submitted Plan:

- (1) Main modifications recommended by the Inspector
- (2) Additional modifications made by the Council on adoption.

Only those parties seeking specific changes to the Plan are entitled to participate in the hearing sessions. This is likely to extend to campaign groups such as ourselves, but not to individuals (participant numbers at the hearings will be limited).

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### **About us**

The current committee are

John Gardner Chair

Julian Turner Treasurer

Jill Coggins Secretary

Paul Barron, Anne Dehnel, Anthony Denoranha, John Hale, John Newton-Davies,  
Rick Sanderson, Judy Shardlow.

Half of us live within 1Km of Symondshyde, the rest within 3km. We are all prepared to stand again.

We would welcome more members to the committee.

Another 2-4 locals particularly with enthusiasm and fund raising, event organising, legal or planning expertise would be great!

If there are more than 4 volunteers or anyone offering to stand as chair, treasurer or secretary there will be a vote.

Stopping this awful idea is most important to us. If you have some proposals to do it better - please stand up in the AGM (or after) and say or come and speak to us.

John and the committee

Mon 26 Jun 2017