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## We Have Great News!

### Welwyn Hatfield Council removes Symondshyde from the Plan

After almost four years of campaigning and following a remarkable turn of events last week, we can announce that Welwyn Hatfield Council have agreed to remove the Symondshyde development proposals from the draft Local Plan!

We are all delighted with the news, and we know you will be too. But there are some caveats: the decision, made last Wednesday evening at the Welwyn Hatfield Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel (CPPP) was endorsed by the Cabinet on Thursday evening and the council have instructed their Head of Planning to advise the Planning Inspector of the decision.

The inspector had already scheduled a site-specific hearing to discuss all issues relating to the proposed development of Symondshyde on the 11<sup>th</sup> March. However, now that the Council has done an about-turn, we are waiting to find out whether the Inspector will agree to cancel that hearing. It may be that he will want to hold the hearing in order to give all parties, including the landowner/developer, an opportunity to present their evidence. We will keep you updated on this.



### Housing Need Assessment

At the heart of discussions about the Local Plan, is the calculation of Objectively Assessed Housing Need (OAN) – how many houses need to be built. The government requires all councils to build enough houses for local people, based on household projections. However household projections change. The 2014-based projections indicated that 16,000 new homes would be needed, but the 2016-based projections showed that this figure was falling.

Through our planning adviser, which you have historically helped to fund, we argued that housing should be calculated on the most recent information and that 1,845 less houses were needed, and consequently Symondshyde should be removed. However, despite a wellargued

case, the Inspector decided that the OAN should remain at 16,000 and at that point Welwyn Council was in agreement. Despite a further 'call for sites' in 2018, resulting in 36 new sites being added, until last week Symondshyde still remained in the plan.

However, on Thursday this all changed. We believe that there has been a growing disquiet among councillors about the continued allocation of Symondshyde, even though additional alternative sites, closer to existing settlements have become available. The clear objection by councillor Glyn Hayes that Symondshyde was the most unsustainable site in the plan provided a way forward to a compromise that was acceptable to the CPPP - an argument we have made from the very beginning. Importantly the council also revised its agreed housing target to just over 14,000 homes, arguing that a higher figure cannot be achieved without extensive harm to the Green Belt.

### **What next?**

The Local Plan process continues, although both the Inspector and the Council are keen to complete the plan process and allow the construction of homes on agreed sites to begin. We do need more housing in the district and in Hertfordshire, but we believe that Symondshyde was and remains an entirely unsustainable option, that should be permanently removed from consideration.

We are not resting on our laurels but we do need to give thanks to everyone who has fought to achieve this outcome. Local councillors committed to good decision making and democratic process have helped and supported us throughout.

Our former planning consultant Richard Bate has helped us for over three years and continues to do so. Although he retired last year, he has continued to work with us on a pro bono basis because of his strong belief that this proposal, if successful, could carve the heart out of outstanding Green Belt land. We have laughed and cried at the beautiful films produced by Nick Morris and kindly shown by The Odyssey Cinema in St Albans. We have loved the films, but we really hope that no more are needed. Local people, have supported us, liked our social media posts, joined us on fund-raising walks and barn dances and have dug deep to fund our campaign. We thank you all.

We will keep you posted as events go forward. With your support we will continue to fight to keep Symondshyde the open, beautiful, windswept and wild place that we all love, available for all local people as a place of activity and quiet relaxation.

Thanks again for your valuable support!

Best wishes,

John and the Save Symondshyde team

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