



Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan Consultation 2015

A Quickstart Guide

Please do have your say!

The single most important thing you can do is respond to this consultation. Panshanger residents put in over a thousand responses last time around (2012/13), in the end it took the council months to collate all and publish the comments. Almost every response concerning Panshanger objected to the housing plan and lack of supporting facilities and infrastructure. The council has a duty to listen to the voice of residents under the Localism Act of 2011. Here we now are in 2015 with a Local Plan proposal that for Panshanger is no different to the last one, despite the public rejection of it. Worse still, the council have now decided they need to find space for over 5,000 more homes, total 12,500, than they did in 2012/13. Even worse, the developers and those with a vested financial interest are calling for upwards of 15,000 homes in the borough. A target like that may not be such a problem if those homes were to be evenly spread across the borough, but there is no sign of that.

All of this means it's now more important than ever to have your say!

The last consultation from 2012 is still online and you should be able to search for your previous comments, many of them will probably still apply. You can follow this link and search for yourself by surname:

http://consult.welhat.gov.uk/common/search/advanced_search.jsp?initial=A&eventId=17414&page=0&sortMode=response_date&lookingFor=consultees&tab=list

You can read some of the previous comments about the sustainability of the Panshanger proposal submitted to the 2012 consultation here:

http://consult.welhat.gov.uk/portal/planning_policy/local_plan_consultation_november_2012/sa_ecs?pointId=1352283648311&do=view

Most, but not all, of the previous objections still apply; you can refresh your memory here:

http://consult.welhat.gov.uk/common/search/advanced_search.jsp?&page=1&pageSize=20&eventId=17414&searchQuery=panshanger,%20Object&sortMode=response_date&lookingFor=representations&tab=find&q:sortMode=

(Remember you can use copy and paste to retrieve your previous comments for editing)

How To...

If you are new to the 'Consultation portal' it's not as hard as it looks. Using the instructions you can be up and running very quickly. There is also an online tour here (although this is not specific to Welwyn Hatfield):

<http://consult.welhat.gov.uk/help/portal/lhs/videos/takeatour/Portal%20Help%20Files%20Template.htm>

1. Go to the following website <http://consult.welhat.gov.uk/portal/> and register by clicking the Login/Register button, top right:



Click Register on the drop down menu, then click 'Register as a Consultee'

Fill in the boxes and click ok 

2. You must enter a valid email address.
3. Once logged in you will see the following:

A screenshot of the consultation portal interface. It shows a search filter set to 'All Topics', view options for 'List View' and 'Date View', and an RSS icon. Below is a table with three rows of consultation documents, each with a plus icon, start/end dates, and a status of 'open' with a green checkmark.

Consultation	Start	End	Status
 Local Plan Consultation Document January 2015	23/01/15 09:00	19/03/15 23:59	 open
 Sustainability Appraisal of the Local Plan Consultation Document	23/01/15 09:00	19/03/15 23:59	 open
 Draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan Revised January 2015	23/01/15 09:00	19/03/15 23:59	 open

4. There are three documents that you can comment on. Please do look and comment on three.
5. Our website has suggested areas you could comment on if you are grappling for the right words.
6. As an example click on the top entry 'Local Plan Consultation Document January 2015' shown above.
7. Then you will see some text and following below:



8. Here you can:

- a) Click on the Supporting Documents, this allows you to see all the documents that are referenced in the doc you are currently in, which is Local Plan Consultation Document in this case.
- b) Clicking on All Comments allows you to read the comments from anybody else, provided the council have processed them and given them the green light.

9. Above the table you can also see the following link button. Click on it and you are ready to start reading and commenting. This the entry point for adding your comments.



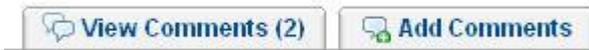
10. On the left hand side you will see a menu. You can comment on any or all of the headings listed by clicking on them.

11. For example: Click on '9 Approach to site selection' - Click here to go there:

http://consult.welhat.gov.uk/portal/planning_policy/local_plan_consultation_january_2015/local_plan_consultation_january_2015?pointId=1421325221819#section-1421325221819

12. You can now read and comment on the text in sections 9.16.

13. To add your own comments click the **Add Comments** box at the top corner as below:



Note: You might want to click on **View Comments** first to see what others have said.

14. Once in the blue coloured Add Comments section you are faced with two check boxes:

Do you support the approach taken? (please select one)

Yes, support No, object Don't know

Note: Do not leave the checkbox blank as this may invalidate your comment.

15. Most people will want to click the 'No, object' checkbox. Do not forget to do this!

16. You can then type your reason for objecting in the text window below the check box. You will then be asked: Please state your reasons for supporting or objecting:

Here is an example entry:

Quote: **"9.16** The assessment of Wildlife Sites suitable for designation through the Local Plan process is the responsibility of partnership between the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust and Herts County Council. Wildlife Sites are wildlife-rich sites selected for their local nature conservation value. They vary in shape and size and can contain important, distinctive and threatened habitats and species. Many are owned by private individuals. Wildlife Sites may change over time as new data becomes available and new sites may be identified as suitable for designation or others proposed for removal"

This document shows that 17 sites will become undesignated wildlife sites and there will only be 2 new wildlife sites designated. People commented in the last consultation and since then that the WGC4 site is a rare unimproved grassland and natural habitat containing wildlife. Why hasn't this area been promoted as a potential wildlife site by the council and why haven't they even begun to consider the sites ecological value? Particularly as the green belt line runs along the site and the area has never been farmed or developed, it is clearly a green field site. I object to the loss of this green space, the council does not seem to have carried out any due diligence in assessing this site before putting it forward for housing. The way the site is described in the council's plan documents is inaccurate, vague and hasn't been updated properly since before the last consultation. Therefore I consider that the council's site selection has been remiss. In a semi-rural area like Welwyn Hatfield the council should be looking to add wildlife sites, not lose 17 and only add 2, this is not a sustainable development proposal.

Does a change need to be made? (please select one)

Yes No Don't know

17. Most of the time you will probably want to click Yes.

18. The next text box says "If you are suggesting a change, please state what it is"

This can be a problem if you have commented on several numbered sections in the same page. If it is simple to add your suggested change do so, however as you are probably not a planning professional you may not have all the answers. The council can consider your comment and consult the appropriate professionals in order to find options and solutions that could be applied to your comment text. We residents cannot be expected to provide ALL the answers, but the council has a duty to consider our suggestions under the National Planning Policy Framework legislation.

Also, if you don't type in the box at all your comment will still register, it is not mandatory.

There is also an option to add an attachment to your comment, such a picture of a document file if you wish.

Finally, click the 'Next' button to go to the submission screen, which will ask you if you want to fill out the feedback form for consultation you have just commented on. If you click on the Yes option you can make a further comment.

If you see a problem with how the section was worded, or feel that something was omitted you can add it here under "What do you think we can do to improve our consultation?" This option appears on every comment you make but you only need to add it in once. For example you may wish to comment on why the proposals for Panshanger in this consultation are no different to the last one in 2012, when so many people objected to that one. You may ask why the council have not sent a single letter to residents informing of this consultation and why the general posters they have produced don't mention Panshanger at all. You could also ask how people not online are supposed to find out about this and then respond to it. You could ask why there have been no public involvement meetings such as town halls meetings or focus groups in the formation of this updated plan. The only meetings have been council committee meetings where the outcome appeared to be pre-agreed at best.

19. Now you have two options:

- a) Click Save as draft in the system (not on your PC) to save your comment for future editing.
- b) Click Submit to send it. Once submitted you cannot change it.



20. Once submitted you will see a thank you message and you can return to the consultation document.

Note that the system will allow you to submit a completely blank comment and will not warn you that no text has been entered, unlike most online forms elsewhere on the internet. Be alert to this.

A good precaution is to click on the PDF icon button and save a copy of your comment on your own PC the same way you would save any other PDF file. Note; to read PDF files you need free software such as Adobe Reader or Foxit Reader. Click here for a free PDF reader.

Doing this has two benefits, you can verify your comments, and you have a record that you sent them in case they never appear as comments on the consultation website.

Once you have done this your comment entry is complete!

Whenever you are logged in you will see the My Account box, clicking on it gives you the following:



Here you can see how many comments you've created and what their status is. The number in the brackets is the tally of the comments in that category. Click on any category to review them. This is also how you can come back later to look at your draft comments from earlier sessions.

Note: An Inadmissible comment is defined as

"...not appropriate or relevant for use against the relevant consultation. An e-mail will be sent to you detailing the reasons why your comment has been marked as Inadmissible. Please note that inadmissible comments will not become publicly viewable at any point.

Any inadmissible comments will also appear in the **Inadmissible** section of your personal area showing you all comments that you have submitted that have been marked as Inadmissible."

Comments go from Submitted status to be processed by council staff. If they are happy with the contents it will be marked as processed and appear on the website with the others. If they don't approve of your comment for some reason they will mark it as inadmissible and you will get an email telling you so.

Your comments may take some time to appear. If your comments are not being processed in a timely fashion you could contact the council:

Email: localplan@welhat.gov.uk

Contact Telephone: 01707 357532

Seeing other people's comments can be useful and is how the consultation software is intended to work.

Emails from the system:

You will get emails from the system every time there is a change in status of one of your comments. You can change when they are sent by clicking on the My Details text shown above. In this screen you can choose preferences for how you get email:

Contact Preferences	
Receive email notifications about new consultation events?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
Send Me Emails Using	<input type="radio"/> Plain text format <input checked="" type="radio"/> HTML format
Send Me An Email	<input type="radio"/> Daily <input type="radio"/> Weekly <input type="radio"/> When the consultation event closes <input checked="" type="radio"/> Immediately as my comments' status changes <input type="radio"/> Do not send emails regarding my comments

Immediately is a good option as if you select this option you'll get a confirmation email a few seconds or minutes after submitting your comment. Note that you can send multiple comments on any section of the document.

Remember: The more comments there are, the better it is. Other parts of Welwyn Hatfield will be very vocal in preventing development in their area; they have already had some success doing so. It is up to Panshanger residents to make sure the council also hears our voice. The independent planning inspector will also have to take into account local people's views of the council's plan. It needs to be very clear, yet again that the majority of local people do not support the proposal for Panshanger.

Remember that you should be able to add multiple comments to the same section at different times. So if you remember something that you forget to say earlier, you can go back and add it later. Up until March 19th when it closes.

IMPORTANT

Please do have your say!

Panshangerpeople.org.uk

Panshangerpeople@gmail.com

Check our website frequently for the latest news about the consultation.