

Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel
7 April 2022

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

* Reporting to Cabinet

Minutes of a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL CABINET PLANNING AND PARKING PANEL held on Thursday 7 April 2022 at 7.30 pm Via Zoom.

PRESENT: Councillors S.Kasumu (Chairman)
S.Boulton (Vice-Chairman)

G.Hayes, A.Hellyer, S.McNamara, G.Michaelides,
R.Platt, J.Quinton, D.Richardson, A Rohale, P.Shah
and C.Stanbury and T.Travell.

OFFICIALS Senior Projects Officer (Planning) (M.Pyecoft)
PRESENT: Planning & Policy Implementation Manager (S.Tiley)
Interim Governance Advisor (B.Bix)

47. SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor T.Travell substituted for Councillor S.Thusu.

48. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor S.Thusu.

49. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2022 were approved as a correct record.

50. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

Councillors S. Boulton declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 7 on the agenda by virtue of being a Member of Hertfordshire County Council.

51. ARTICLE 4 DIRECTION - OFFICE TO RESIDENTIAL CONVERSIONS

Officers explained that the Permitted Development right introduced temporarily in 2013 and made permanent in 2016, allowed offices to be converted to residential use. Extensive use was made of this by landowners across the Borough, and

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whilst it provided a significant number of new homes, it had led to a significant loss of employment space.

Recent changes to both Planning Use Classes and Permitted Development regulations meant that the Article 4 Direction which removed the right to convert offices to residential in certain areas would cease to have effect on 31 July 2022. In order to retain protection for the identified employment areas, a replacement must be put in place, and Members had agreed to do this in September 2021.

Accordingly, a replacement Article 4 Direction which would remove the permitted development right was made on 26 January 2022 with a public consultation starting on the same day. Unlike previous Directions made by the Council, this Direction had an immediate start, which meant that, if following the consultation, members wished to retain it - it would need to be confirmed within six months otherwise it would lapse. Following analysis of the results of the consultation it was proposed that the Article 4 Direction should be confirmed and made permanent.

Members' attention was drawn to the tests set out by the Government for the use of Article 4 Directions, particularly those that related to residential uses. Officers considered that the significant loss of employment floorspace in the Borough in recent years and the potential for that to continue, meant that the proposal was appropriate and evidence based, and satisfied the tests set out by the Government.

In response to questions from Members, Officers clarified that the illustrative maps provided matched the local plan boundaries; and that the Direction did not bar applications for planning permission. Members were content that once agreed, the Direction would be in place until it was revoked.

**RESOLVED
(Unanimous)**

- 1) To note the results of the public consultation which took place for six weeks from January to March 2022.
- 2) To recommend to Cabinet the confirmation of the Article 4 Direction covering the key employment sites across the Borough, for it to continue to have effect.
- 3) The Executive Member for Environment, Planning, Estates and Development exercise their delegated powers to make the decision in accordance with paragraph 18.1(b) of the Cabinet Procedure Rules.

Meeting ended at 7.44 pm
BB