

Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel
6 September 2018

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

* Reporting to Cabinet

Minutes of a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL CABINET PLANNING AND PARKING PANEL held on Thursday 6 September 2018 at 7.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

PRESENT: Councillors M.Perkins (Vice-Chairman)

J.Boulton (substituting for S. Boulton), J.Boulton,
A.Chesterman, J.Cragg, C.Gillett, S.Glick, G.Hayes,
S.Kasumu, A Rohale, P.Shah and P.Zukowskyj

ALSO Tenants' Panel Representatives

PRESENT: D.Fuller and R.Read

OFFICIALS Head of Planning (C.Haigh)

PRESENT: Planning Policy and Implementation Manager (S.Tiley)
Governance Services Officer (G.Paddan)

84. SUBSTITUTIONS

The follow substitution of Panel Member had been made in accordance with Council Procedure Rules 19-22:-

Councillor J. Boulton for Councillor S. Boulton.

85. APOLOGY

An apology for absence was received from Councillor S. Boulton.

86. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 August 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

87. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

Councillor P. Zukowskyj declared a non-pecuniary interest in items on the agenda as appropriate by virtue of being a Member of Hertfordshire County Council.

88. REVISED NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (NPPF) JULY 2018

Report of the Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) on the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which was published

Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel
6 September 2018

on 24 July 2018. It set out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

The revised NPPF can be viewed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework-2>

The report noted that the revised NPPF replaced the previous National Planning Policy Framework published in March 2012. Alongside the publication of the revised NPPF, the Government updated Planning Practice Guidance on viability, the standard methodology for calculating housing need and published a Housing Delivery Test measurement rule book.

The fundamental planning principles contained in the original NPPF are unchanged. The purpose of the planning system continued to be to contribute to sustainable development (of which there are three dimensions: economic, social and environmental). The revised NPPF retains a presumption in favour of sustainable development and reaffirms that the planning system should be planned.

The revisions to the NPPF focused more strongly on the delivery of homes to meet need and put greater responsibility and accountability on councils for the delivery of housing. It should also be noted that the revised NPPF goes much further than the previous NPPF in terms of promoting high quality design of new housing and places.

The report outlined the key revisions to the NPPF and identified any potentially significant implications for the Council as the local planning authority.

Officers advised that a report was presented to the Panel on 12 April 2018 detailing the proposed changes to the NPPF, their potential implications and setting out the Council's proposed response to the consultation. The Panel made comments on the proposed response and authorised the Head of Planning to prepare and submit a final response in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning.

The following points were made:

- Will there be any combining of local authorities to meet the housing requirement? It was difficult to provide a response at present.
- The tests of soundness relating to the examination of plans had slightly been amended due to the revised NPPF.
- The need to co-operate to a greater extent with neighbouring local authorities.
- Effective use of land – easier to build on brownfield sites than green belt.
- One of the greatest risks in respect of the revised NPPF surrounds the introduction of a Housing Delivery Test. Consideration was given to the number of homes which are built significantly below the identified number that need to be delivered (below 75%) then the Council would have failed

Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel
6 September 2018

the test and its policies would therefore be rendered as out of date. Concern was raised in respect of control being taken away from the Council when determining planning applications.

- There will be added pressure on the Planning Team due the extra work required.

RESOLVED

That the Panel notes the revised NPPF and the identified implications of the revisions for plan-making and planning decisions.

89. GREEN BELT STUDY STAGE 3 AND NEXT STEPS

Report of the Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) on the Green Belt Study stage 3 and the next steps. The Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan had been submitted and was currently undergoing public examination by an independent inspector. The inspector had indicated that the Plan was not currently 'sound' as it did not meet the objectively assessed need for housing. The submitted Plan contained sites for 12,000 homes but the housing need was acknowledged to be about 16,000 homes to 2033. The inspector had therefore asked the Council to carry out a further Green Belt Study to seek to identify additional sites for housing.

This report considered the findings of that Green Belt Study and the implications for the Local Plan. It considered the next steps and different approaches the Local Plan could take in identifying sufficient land to meet the Objectively Assessed Need for Housing.

The Green Belt Study and its accompanying appendices had been published on the examination pages of the Council's website (reference EX88) <http://www.welhat.gov.uk/article/6938/Examination-Documents>

Section 7 of this report identified a number of risks associated with different development strategies and the risk of the inspector finding the plan unsound, defaulting to the NPPF standard methodology for calculating local housing need and/or the Council having its plan-making powers removed.

Members received a presentation on the Local Plan and Green Belt Study which covered the follow:

- Local Plan - Objective need is for about 16,000 homes
- Green Belt - Main characteristics of green belts is their openness and permanence
- Green Belt Study - NPPF requires Council to consider sustainable patterns of development when deciding which green belt land to release

Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel
6 September 2018

- Washed-over Villages - Study reviews whether villages that are currently covered by green belt should remain so, and if not, could any of them be expanded to deliver new homes
- Parcel Assessment
- New Settlement
- Findings and next steps

Members gave consideration to the three approaches listed within the report and the implications to each approach. Approach three would be quicker but the harm to areas within the green belt would be high. Concern was expressed regarding high density building and harm to green belt land together with meeting housing numbers. The use of employment land was discussed and Officers advised that there would be implications for the Borough in terms of the Housing Delivery Test and the five year land supply with the longer timescale associated with Approach One. This was a difficult decision and one that had to be balanced taking into account the situation and being guided by the inspector. The implications of having planning powers removed from the Council were discussed together with the potential impact on the community.

In respect of the Green Belt Study, one member observed that it was very objective in respect of NPPF purposes and harm judgement and pointed out that residents, parish councils and community groups could have very subjective thoughts on which bits of green belt they consider to be most important and worthy of protection in their local area. Members generally accepted that a number of 'washed-over' villages would probably need to be released from the green belt and that some of these would have potential for housing development.

In respect of the two development scenarios, there were mixed views. Members observed that more working-from-home could offset the need for so much employment land, whereas other members commented that the loss of employment land would harm the desirable live/work potential that currently exists in the Borough and would force more people onto already congested roads and a struggling rail service in order to commute to job opportunities elsewhere.

In respect of Approach One (involving a new call-for-sites exercise), Members observed that this approach was the most democratic but recognised that it would have the greatest impact on the timetable and could have an impact on the Council's five year housing land supply in the meantime.

In respect of Approach Two (to allocate lower harm sites plus broad locations or areas of search), Members noted that the NPPF states that sites should be identified in Years 11-15 (where possible) and acknowledged that the new requirement to review the plan and update out-of-date policies every five years would represent the opportunity to identify specific sites within broad locations or areas of search, which would be set out in the Local Plan. This approach would

Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel
6 September 2018

therefore allow for a housing requirement to be set for the full plan period; specific sites for 10+ years (as some strategic sites will continue to deliver homes in the last 5 years) and set the strategy for where the remaining sites should be identified. Members accepted that this would be quicker than Approach One as these sites were already in the public domain and there would therefore be no need for further public consultation prior to the hearing sessions. Members also noted that this could be preferable to Approach Three as it would reduce the reliance on 'high' harm sites.

In respect of Approach Three (to allocate sites that have already been promoted), Members observed that this approach would probably result in the allocation of land that has been identified as 'high' harm in the Green Belt Study. A Member expressed concern regarding the Plan treated sites identified in the Green Belt review as moderate-high harm/higher harm which may be quite significant and could outweigh the need in which case some Members would not be able to support the Plan. This approach would have a similar timetable to that of Approach Two above, which would allow hearing sessions on the new approach to take place in late Spring 2019.

RESOLVED

1. That the Panel expressed the above comments on the conclusion of the Green Belt Study.
2. That the Panel expressed the above comments on the two development scenarios set out in Paragraph 4.28. Scenario One is the loss of some employment land and the release of some land from the Green Belt. Scenario Two is the retention of proposed employment land designations and the release of more land from the Green Belt than the option above.
3. That the Panel expressed the above comments on the merits and risks of the three approaches set out in Paragraphs 4.32-4.43 and seeks to identify a preferred approach. Approach One is to carry out a call-for-new-sites exercise and consult on new site modifications prior to the village hearing sessions. Approach Two is a development strategy based on allocated sites and sites that have already been promoted to the Council in the first ten years of the plan period and to identify 'Broad Locations' or 'Areas of Search' for the remaining five years. Approach Three is a development strategy based on allocated sites, extra capacity on some existing allocations and the selection of sites that have already been promoted to the Council and analysed by officers.
4. That the Panel agreed that the Head of Planning in consultation with the Leader of the Council could write to the Inspector setting out the Council's views as expressed above on the three approaches and implications for the examination programme.

90. FIVE YEAR LAND SUPPLY

Report of the Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance), which provided an interim update to the five year land supply (5YLS); although the Council is not required to publish an update but it supports the ongoing Local Plan examination, as well as being beneficial in assisting with planning application decisions and appeals. The five year land supply position was presented as of 31 May 2018.

The report noted that where the strategic policies in local plans are more than five years old, the assessment of local housing need should be used. This has been defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (Annex 2) as the number of homes identified as being needed through the application of the standard method set out in national planning guidance or a justified alternative approach. Given that there is the potential for imminent changes to the standard method approach, as well as the fact that the Draft Local Plan is now going through examination and gaining increasing weight, it has been concluded that using housing target identified in the Draft Local Plan was a justified alternative approach in this instance. This approach would be tested at the Entech House planning inquiry which opens later this month.

Concern was expressed regarding land owners looking at sites that become available and how small sites can contribute towards the housing target and their bearing. The Panel discussed the scenarios presented within the report which explored the Council's published method in order to assess what impact they would have on the 5YLS. It was noted that the National Planning Policy Framework requires that either a 5% or 20% buffer be added depending on whether an area had seen 'significant under delivery of housing over the previous three years'. The five year land supply has been met in all scenarios with the impact of the differing methodologies summarised below:

<u>Methodology</u>	<u>Five Year Land Supply</u>
<u>Published Method – 5% buffer</u>	<u>6.62</u>
<u>Scenario A – 5% buffer</u>	<u>6.41</u>
<u>Scenario B – 5% buffer</u>	<u>5.97</u>
<u>Published Method – 20% buffer</u>	<u>5.91</u>
<u>Scenario A – 20% buffer</u>	<u>5.71</u>
<u>Scenario B – 20% buffer</u>	<u>5.36</u>

RESOLVED

That the Panel notes the update to the five year land supply and that this will now be formally published on the Council's website.