

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
CPPP – 4 MARCH 2021

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR (PUBLIC PROTECTION, PLANNING
AND GOVERNANCE)

HOUSING DELIVERY TEST ACTION PLAN

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Government published its latest housing delivery test results on 19 January 2021. It confirmed that Welwyn Hatfield had built 1,450 homes in the period 2017/18-2019/20 against a target of 2,284. This equates to 63%. This means that the Council has to prepare an Action Plan to assess the causes of under-delivery and identify actions to increase delivery in future years.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That CPPP recommends the Housing Delivery Test Action Plan to Cabinet for publication.

3 Explanation

- 3.1 Paragraph 75 of the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) states that *“Where the housing delivery test indicates that delivery has fallen below 95% of the authority’s housing requirement over the previous three years, the authority should prepare an action plan in line with national planning guidance, to assess the causes of under-delivery and identify actions to increase delivery in future years.”*
- 3.2 The Government published its latest housing delivery test results on 19 January 2021. It confirmed that Welwyn Hatfield had built 1,450 homes in the period 2017/18-2019/20 against a target of 2,284. This equates to 63%.
- 3.3 This has three consequences:
- 3.4 Because supply has fallen below 95%, the Council needs to prepare an action plan to assess the causes of under-delivery and identify actions to increase delivery in future years.
- 3.5 Because there has been significant under-delivery of housing over the previous three years, the Council needs to add a 20% buffer to its five year housing land supply, to improve the prospect of achieving the planned supply.
- 3.6 Because supply has fallen below 75%, the Council needs to apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development when determining planning applications. The NPPF states that the presumption in favour of sustainable development means “granting planning permission unless (i) the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas of assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed or (ii) any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.” A footnote advises that the policies referred to in the Framework include

habitat sites, SSSIs, land designated as green belt, local green spaces, irreplaceable habitats, designated heritage assets and areas at risk of flooding.

- 3.7 The updated Action Plan reviews the success of actions in the previous Action Plan which was published in July 2019 and identifies new actions that can be delivered in 2021/22 to further improve housing delivery in the borough.

4 Legal Implications

- 4.1 The preparation of a Housing Delivery Test Action Plan is in accordance with national planning legislation and Paragraph 75 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 4.2 As well as helping to identify and assess the causes of under-delivery over the previous three years, the Action Plan also helps to identify actions to increase deliver in future years and may be helpful in demonstrating that the Council is attempting to do so, in respect of future planning decisions and planning appeals.

5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 The Action Plan has been prepared by officers within the Policy team. There are no direct financial implications associated with publishing the Action Plan.

6 Risk Management Implications

- 6.1 The risk management implications are that the publication of an Action Plan demonstrates that the Council is genuinely seeking to tackle under-delivery and identifying actions to increase delivery in the future, which will be helpful in respect of future planning decisions and planning appeals.

7 Security and Terrorism Implications

- 7.1 There are no security or terrorism implications associated with this report.

8 Procurement Implications

- 8.1 There are no procurement implications associated with this report.

9 Climate Change Implications

- 9.1 The Council has declared a climate change emergency and set ambitious objectives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. There are no direct climate change implications associated with this report. It will be published online and only printed where necessary for those who require a physical copy. The Submitted Local Plan contains policies to ensure that new housing is sustainable.

10 Human Resources Implications

- 10.1 There are no human resource implications associated with this report.

11 Health and Wellbeing Implications

- 11.1 There are no health or wellbeing implications associated with this report.

12 Communications and Engagement Implications

- 12.1 Planning officers are in regular dialogue with landowners and land promoters as part of the Local Plan process and in regular dialogue with applicants as part of the planning application process. This means that officers already have a good understanding of the issues that frustrate the delivery of new homes.

12.2 There are opportunities for the actions in the Action Plan to be communicated with partners, developers and landowners.

13 Link to Corporate Priorities

13.1 The subject of this report is linked to the Council's Business Plan 2018-2021 and particularly Priority 3 Our Housing to plan for current and future needs.

14 Equalities and Diversity

14.1 An EqlA was not completed because this report does not propose changes to existing service-related policies or the development of new service-related policies.

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Appendices:

Housing Delivery Test Action Plan 2021