

Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel
6 October 2022

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

* Reporting to Cabinet

Minutes of a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL CABINET PLANNING AND PARKING PANEL held on Thursday 6 October 2022 at 7.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Campus East, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

PRESENT: Councillors A. Hellyer (Chairman)

S. Bonfante, G. Michaelides, L. Musk, R. Platt,
J. Quinton, P. Shah, C. Stanbury, K. Thorpe,
F. Wachuku, G. Ganney, C. Juggins and T. Travell

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Planning & Policy Implementation Manager (M. Wilson)
Senior Planning and Monitoring Officer (L. Palmer)
Senior Planner (J. Ponsford)
Senior Democratic Services Officer (C. Francis)

21. SUBSTITUTIONS

The following substitution of Committee Members had been made in accordance with Council Procedure Rule:

Councillor Caron Juggins for Councillor Sunny Thusu.
Councillor Gail Ganney for Councillor Drew Richardson.
Councillor Teresa Travell for Councillor Stephen Boulton.

22. APOLOGIES

Apologies of absence were received from Councillors S. Thusu, D. Richardson and S. Boulton.

23. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2022 were approved as a correct record.

24. HOUSING DELIVERY TEST ACTION PLAN

Report of the Executive Director (Place) on the Housing Delivery Test Action Plan.

The Housing Delivery Test (HDT) is an annual measure of housing delivery which compares 'total net homes delivered' against the 'number of homes required'. As the Council does not have a recently adopted Local Plan, the number of homes required for Welwyn Hatfield is taken from the Government's local housing need figures, calculated using the Standard Methodology.

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The Government published the housing delivery test results on the 14 January 2022, covering the period 2018/19 – 2020/21. This confirmed that 1,486 homes had been built in Welwyn Hatfield during the three years, against a target of 2,245 homes (therefore meeting 66% of the requirement). This means that the Council is required to prepare an Action Plan in order to assess the causes of under-delivery and identify actions to increase delivery in future years. This is the third action plan the Council has produced, the last was published in March 2021.

The Action Plan also includes an update to the Council's Five-Year Housing Land Supply position. The update has been provided as of 1 April 2022 for the period 2022/23 to 2026/27 against a requirement of 888 dwellings per annum, as required by the standard methodology for 2022/23. A 20% buffer was also applied, which is required by the Housing Delivery Test when delivery falls below 85% of the requirement. The Council's updated Housing Land Supply is 2.63 years. This is marginally higher than when it was last published in the 2020/21 Annual Monitoring Report, at which point the Council had 2.46 years supply (as at 30/09/2021).

An updated Action Plan has been prepared and is included as an Appendix to this report. The Action Plan aims to highlight reasons for past under-delivery, as well as setting out ways to reduce the risk of further under-delivery in future years through setting out a number of actions. These actions have been carried forward from the previous Housing Delivery Test Action Plan, in summary, they are:

- Progress the adoption of the Local Plan;
- Continue to determine planning applications for housing schemes as fast as reasonably possible;
- Apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development when determining planning applications for housing schemes;
- Continue to consider the necessity of planning conditions for housing permissions;
- Continue to discharge planning conditions for housing schemes as fast as reasonably possible;
- Continue to prepare S106 agreements as fast as reasonably possible/Work with HCC to prepare S106 agreements involving contributions for their services as fast as reasonably possible;
- Continue to devise, submit, and determine corporate applications for new housing;
- Work with Hertfordshire Growth Board to identify funding opportunities for accelerated housing delivery sites.

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85% of the requirement. The Council's updated Housing Land Supply is 2.63 years. This is marginally higher than when it was last published in the 2020/21 Annual Monitoring Report, at which point the Council had 2.46 years supply (as at 30/09/2021).

The following points were raised and discussed:

- Officers have assessed what the housing target is by using the governments standard methodology. The council keep a record of how many homes are built in the borough and report this number to the government. The council is currently only meeting 66% of this target. There is little that can be done to increase the delivery of homes within Welwyn Hatfield until there is a new Local Plan. A lot of the actions within the report, and from previous action plans, are essentially good planning.
- Members asked if we know the number of applications we had in the year, including how many of these were refused. Officers said they tend to look at completions and commitments, so the sites they expect to come forward. Officers advised the number of sites with permission is set out in table 3 of the action plan.
- Officers said the five-year housing land supply will be updated again in the annual monitoring report. This will be published later in the year or early 2023.
- Officers advised that subsequent year figures are based on information held and their knowledge of similar sites. Some of the trajectory information is from speaking to the developers.
- Members noted that the report was written in August 2022, meaning paragraph 4.4 is now out of date, as the Inspector has now replied. Officers were asked to consider updating the report to include this. It was noted this will go on to Cabinet.
- Officers said they monitor what applications go to DMC, so there is no double counting if planning applications come back to increase numbers.
- Members said there is no reference in the report to housing needs within the borough, including social housing. Officers advised the annual monitoring report goes into a lot more detail and this will come to CPPP. The latest report is available on the council website.
- Members referred to Table 4 - five-year delivery forecast. Officers said this includes a presumption of sustainable development, and when planning applications are considered, the fact we don't have a five-year land supply is taken into account.
- Members asked how 66% compares to other boroughs in Hertfordshire. Officers did not have this information to hand.
- Officers confirmed that targets were reduced to account for delays to delivery caused by the Covid pandemic.

RESOLVED:

(13 voting FOR - UNANIMOUS)

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- (1) "That the Panel recommends the Housing Delivery Test Action Plan and Interim Five-Year Housing Land Supply update to Cabinet for publication on the Council's website."

25. WELWYN VILLAGE CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

Report of the Executive Director (Place) on the Welwyn Village Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan.

Under national planning policy and advice by Historic England, Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) are required to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. LPAs should also consult the public and take account of views expressed.

A review of the Welwyn Village Conservation Area has taken place. The review has been undertaken by the Council's heritage consultant, Essex Place Services. The appraisal identifies potential changes to remove areas where designation may no longer be justified.

The appraisal suggests several potential boundary changes to remove modern development from the existing conservation area designation. Views on these proposed changes will be posed as consultation questions. The results will be presented to Council prior to any revision being made.

The following points were raised and discussed:

- Officers said this is an early stage of conservation area appraisal and management plan. The council have a statutory duty to keep on top of this and it is important to hold up to date information. Officers are at this meeting so they can start the ball rolling on the consultation. Officers want to engage with the Parish Council.
- Officers said the potential of the boundary change will be presented as a question as they genuinely want to hear what residents think. Having an up-to-date appraisal and management plan helps with the determination of planning applications. It was confirmed that one of the key stakeholders would be the Parish Council.
- Members said conservation areas reduce the ability to have planning applications for buildings. This consultation therefore does open up the ability for development to help get us back on track for the five-year housing supply.
- Officers said we have a duty to provide homes but also a duty to protect the character and historical significance of the borough. After consultation they will come back to CPPP before any decisions are made.
- Members asked if Section 106 money will be available to provide increased amenities if there are more homes. Officers said this is not something that is captured under this specific consultation. There will be a requirement for developments to meet their infrastructure needs such as

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through section 106 monies. This consultation is mainly about the historical aspect at this stage.

- Members asked if the proposed 6 weeks consultation is long enough. Officers have a document called *The Statement of Community Involvement* which sets out how they consult in relation to planning applications and in relation to local plan and development plan aspects. Officers want to engage with the Parish Council so they can work with them on any publication they may be making. Officers will be writing to residents and businesses within the consultation areas, as well as local stakeholders.
- Members noted that all areas proposed for removal are predominantly where there have been housing developments. Bearing this in mind, does this mean the conservation area has failed to protect those areas. Officers said there would have been circumstances why these were approved and schemes are looked at on their own merits.
- Members asked about sustainable development presumption and how these would be seen if anything came to DMC in the area. Officers said a number of factors are in play when considering applications, including weight attributed to a development within a conservation area. They will have to consider that there isn't a five-year land supply. Being in a conservation area doesn't stop a development from happening but helps ensure it is in character.
- Officers advised the consultant's report was received in August. Members said it mentions the Rose and Crown Public House being in a state of deterioration, as well as the stables behind. Members advised this has now been extensively renovated, so may get some comments from residents when goes out to consultation. Officers thanked members for this information and noted there has been a long lead in time.

RESOLVED:

(13 voting FOR - UNANIMOUS)

- (1) "That the Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel (CPPP) recommend to Cabinet that the Draft Welwyn Village Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan undergo public consultation for a period of six weeks."

Meeting ended at 8.23 pm
CF