

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
CABINET – 29 MARCH 2022

Recommendation from Cabinet Parking and Planning Panel on 10 March 2022:-

46. ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2020/21

Report of the Head of Planning on the Annual Monitoring report for the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021. The report served a number of purposes including reporting the amount of development that had taken place in the borough, assessing whether the developments met targets across a number of indicators and sets out the expectation for future developments. It reports on the progress against Local Development Scheme. Officers highlighted some of the key findings from the Report.

- Retail vacancy rate had increased in both Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield, and the rate had been fluctuating in the year before.
- There were 352 new housing units (net) completed, which included 48 new affordable homes.
- The minimum annual local housing need increased slightly to 878 dwelling per annum.
- 5268 dwellings were required when using the housing delivery test for the next 5 years.
- Loss of employment floor space continued, due to office to resident conversions. Article 4 directions which were due to come into force would slow this trend.
- The rate of job seeking allowance or universal credit claimants was steadily declining.

Officers stated the full report covers further topics and provides more detail.

Members asked why there was an improvement in planning appeals. Officers stated they do not have an obvious answer and they would do further work to identify why.

Members sought clarification on how much of the borough was greenbelt, how much of it had changed and how to protect the greenbelt. Officers stated that approximately 79% of the borough was designated greenbelt land. The current boundaries were established in the 1993 Local Plan and have remained largely unaltered since they were designated.

Members were pleased to see that the Article 4's were working to protect office space.

Members stated that Hatfield Central was the most deprived ward in the borough and asked how Hatfield Central and Peartree would be "levelled up". The Executive Member stated the ongoing development work and new constructions should help level up.

Members noted that population change to the borough was by international migration. Members queried why 30% more house was needed when the population growth was 0.7% however Members were aware that the report was during a covid pandemic year.

Members asked if there were more care homes spaces proposed than needed. Officers stated the area was rapidly meeting the need and they may need to review the need for that type of accommodation in the future.

Members asked whether the warehouse built on green belt land made it into the report or would it be in the following years. Officers stated they would come back with an answer.

Members asked about the over provision for 1 and 2 bed dwellings, and whether 3 and 4 bed dwellings would be provided. Officers stated the urban higher density developments had come forward first. Lower density larger homes would be built on sites currently in the green belt on the edge of settlements to deliver a transition from town to countryside.

Members noted there was a lot of information in the report and felt the information was useful.

**RESOLVED:
(unanimous)**

- (A) That the Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel recommends to Cabinet that the AMR be approved for publication and, that the Head of Planning be given delegated authority to agree any minor alterations to finalise the AMR, following consultation with the Executive Member for Environment, Planning, Estates and Development.

The reports of the Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel meeting can be viewed in full here:

<https://democracy.welhat.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=266&MId=1348&Ver=4>