

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
SPECIAL CABINET – 25 JULY 2022

Recommendation from Cabinet Parking and Planning Panel on 21 July 2022:-

12. LOCAL PLAN - INSPECTOR'S LETTER AND PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS TO THE PLAN

Report of the Assistant Director (Planning) on Members received a presentation which set out the background to the Local Plan including the key stages and consultation; the Council's January 2022 Strategy and the Inspector's response; the housing requirement; performance of the January 2022 housing against the requirement(s); the additional sites required to meet the housing requirement; timetable and next steps; and, considerations.

The Inspector had advised that the Local Plan requirement of 15,200 was still appropriate. He had advised an approach based on identifying sites for the year period following adoption could be sound with a commitment to a review, to be undertaken in the context of housing need and national policy. The Inspector had advised that the plan can only move forward if the Council accepted the conclusions and carried out consultation on Main Modifications. He had asked for the supply of housing to meet the requirements for the ten years post adoption, including the residual amount not achieved between 2016-22.

Additional dwellings were required to be allocated from sites considered by the Inspector. The presentation set out options to meet the housing need while meeting the Inspectors tests.

Recommendation 1:

Consider the implication of different approaches to managing the shortfall over the remaining plan period set out in the report and the appendices.

Recommendation 2:

Agree to recommend to Cabinet and Council that the additional sites set out in Table 6 of the report (and the updated site capacity of the January 2022 Member agreed sites, Appendix A Table 1) and which offers the best opportunity for reaching a sound plan be submitted to the examination as modifications to the Local Plan, and;

Recommendation 3:

Recommend to Cabinet and Council that public consultation take place on Main Modifications to the Local Plan at the earliest opportunity once the Inspector has confirmed the content of the Main Modifications required to make the Plan sound.

If Members do not agree to recommendation 2 and 3 above

Recommendation 4:

Agree to recommend to Cabinet and Council that the additional sites set out in Table 4 of the report (and the updated site capacity of the January 2022 Member agreed sites, Appendix A Table 1) that responds to the relationship of the Full Objective Assessment of Housing Need to the Employment Strategy and the need for housing to be provided alongside new jobs.

Recommendation 5:

Members recommend to Cabinet and Full Council that public consultation take place on Main Modifications to the Local Plan at the earliest opportunity once the Inspector has confirmed the content of the Main Modifications required to make the Plan sound.

The following points were raised and discussed:

- At a recent planning appeal it was noted that a lack of a 5-year housing supply was not a reason to approve a development.
- Developments are built with the profits of the developers in mind, not the need of the local people.
- The sites selected in Welham Green effectively surround the existing village; phasing could be introduced to minimise disruption if all the sites were to come forward at the same time.
- Other authorities in Hertfordshire have withdrawn their Local Plans, some Members commented that our current plan protects the greenbelt whilst recognising the need to build. Continuing to defend that plan would keep developments out of high harm areas and deliver 8,517 homes in the first ten years of the plan. This would demonstrate the council is listening to residents, whilst acknowledging that we are not going to create a plan that pleases everyone.
- When questioned about the feasibility of going forward with the previously submitted proposal, officers confirmed that as the inspector had twice refused those numbers he is likely to find the plan unsound.
- It was noted that the population of the borough is unlikely to not continue to grow as there is continual migration from the capital to commutable areas and people are living longer. House prices will continue to increase if we do not have enough homes, there will continue to be a struggle for people to get on to the housing ladder.
- A Member commented that the plan has a higher proportion of development in Cuffley and Welham Green than Brookmans Park, despite the latter being a more sustainable location.
- Concern was expressed about the climate change implications arising from new development, particularly in the Green Belt.

Councillors asked for their thanks for officers to be put on record for all the work they have done over the many years of the Local Plan process.

RESOLVED:

1) (UNANIMOUS IN FAVOUR)

Panel members considered the implication of different approaches to managing the shortfall over the remaining plan period set out in the report and appendices.

- 2) (UNANIMOUS AGAINST)
Panel Members agree to recommend to Cabinet and Council that the additional sites set out in Table 6 of the report (and the updated site capacity of the January 2022 Member agreed sites, Appendix A Table 1) and which offers the best opportunity for reaching a sound plan be submitted to the examination as modifications to the Local Plan,
- 3) (NOT VOTED ON AS IT RELIED ON ACCEPTANCE OF (2) ABOVE)
Recommend to Cabinet and Council that public consultation take place on Main Modifications to the Local Plan at the earliest opportunity once the Inspector has confirmed the content of the Main Modifications required to make the Plan sound
- 4) (UNANIMOUS AGAINST)
Agree to recommend to Cabinet and Council that the additional sites set out in Table 4 of the report (and the updated site capacity of the January 2022 Member agreed sites, Appendix A Table 1) that responds to the relationship of the Full Objective Assessment of Housing Need to the Employment Strategy and the need for housing to be provided alongside new jobs
- 5) (NOT VOTED ON AS IT RELIED ON ACCEPTANCE OF (4) ABOVE)
Members recommend to Cabinet and Full Council that public consultation take place on Main Modifications to the Local Plan at the earliest opportunity once the Inspector has confirmed the content of the Main Modifications required to make the Plan sound.

It was moved by Councillor S. Thusu and seconded by Councillor C. Stanbury

- 6) (8 voting FOR, 3 voting AGAINST, 2 voting to ABSTAIN)
Agree to recommend to Cabinet and Council the proposed sites agreed and recommended by the Special Council meeting on 27 January 2022 and their updated dwelling numbers specifically as shown in table 3 of the report and Appendix A Table 1 of the report giving a total updated capacity of 12,775 with 8,517 in the first ten years.

Note: Members requested the vote for (6) above be recorded.

For: Cllrs Hellyer, Kasumu, Michaelides, Platt, Richardson, Stanbury, Thusu and Wachuku

Against: Cllrs Musk, Shah and Weston

Abstain: Cllrs Bonfante and Quinton

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

<https://democracy.welhat.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=266&MIId=1498&Ver=4>