

Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan

Updated Housing Trajectory and Housing Supply Statement

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

December 2020

Introduction

In his interim report, paragraph 135, the Inspector required a housing trajectory which illustrates the five year housing supply position and, if a stepped trajectory is required, a full justification. This would supersede the previously published trajectory to incorporate the additional sites submitted to the examination by the council.

The updated housing trajectory

Appendix 1 contains the potential delivery of new homes for the period of the local plan arising from existing commitments, forecast windfalls and specific housing sites. The trajectory is provided in two alternative tables.

Appendix 2 contains the details relating to the different strands of housing land supply arising from proposed allocations, completions and commitments. A separate statement justifying the windfall assessment has already been submitted to the examination.

Table 1 incorporates the recommended additional sites by the council within the specific housing sites, but excludes those sites which the council no longer supports for inclusion in the local plan. This delivery trajectory indicates that 4660 new dwellings can be provided during the period 2020/21 – 2024/25, at an average rate of 932 dwellings per annum.

Table 2 indicates a trajectory should the unsupported sites be retained within the local plan and indicates the potential to increase delivery to 5,000 homes in that period, at an average of 1,000 per annum.

Five Year Housing Requirement

- Table 1

The Council's site recommendations (excluding PB1) indicate a target of 668 dwellings per year. A five year supply calculation is provided below, using the "Sedgefield" method (meeting previous under delivery during the five years) and a buffer of 20% reflecting previous persistent under delivery.

A Annual housing target	668
B Five year housing target (A X 5)	3,340
C Under delivery 2016-2020	551
D 20% Buffer (B X 20%)	668
E Five Year Requirement (B+C+D)	4,559

Against this requirement the local plan delivers 5.1 years of housing supply, exceeding the requirement by 101 dwellings.

- Table 2

If the Inspector accepts the Council's recommendations for additional sites but decides to retain the sites recommended for deletion and include the potential for land at PB1, the site capacity somewhat exceeds the 800 dwellings per year target indicated previously by the

Inspector. Table 2 therefore indicates delivery against the need target of 800 per year, or 16,000 overall.

The following calculations uses the 800 dwelling per year target but retains the other assumptions.

A Annual housing target	800
B Five year housing target (A X 5)	4,000
C Underdelivery 2016-2020	1,079
D 20% Buffer (B X 20%)	800
E Five Year Requirement (B+C+D)	5,879

Against this requirement the local plan delivers 4.3 years of supply, a shortfall of 879 against the calculation. If the calculation is changed to a “Liverpool” approach, providing for the shortfall over the whole plan period, the supply is increased to 4.5 years or a 477 dwelling shortfall.

Potential to increase the five year supply

The potential to increase the dwellings provided during the five year supply period is limited by a number of factors.

- Sewerage capacity constraints apply within the plan area. While these can be overcome and therefore do not prevent development outright, the evidence from the statutory undertakers is that it can take up to three years after a planning application is permitted for the necessary improvements to be made. This severely limits the ability of housing sites within these constraint areas to fall within the five year supply. The pattern of constraints is not a simple one and can vary between adjoining sites depending on the capacity of local sewers. Delivery implications are picked up in the HELAA site assessments.
- Education provision is generally “lumpy” – a new primary school is of a minimum 2 form entry size and requires a site or groups of sites with a capacity of about 1000 dwellings to justify provision. Provision of developer funding is clearly much less effective, certain and manageable from a large number of small sites (even with the recent relaxation of “pooled” s106 contributions). Further, new schools are unacceptable development in the green belt and therefore new school sites within Welwyn Hatfield can be extremely challenging where sites are not within a local plan allocation.
- Where potential additional allocations require green belt release, this significantly increases the risk to the site promoter of expensive pre-application studies. Smaller developers may therefore wait until the local plan is adopted, and the green belt issue certain, before commencing work on planning applications. This is part of the reason that allocations, even smaller ones, are unlikely to deliver before the fourth year after adoption. It limits the likely five year supply contribution from any additional housing site to about 100 dwellings.
- This local plan is promoting a significant increase in supply compared with the previous adopted plan, and also with previous delivery. It is likely to take some time for the development industry in the area to gear up to meet this challenge, which may impact on delivery rates early in the plan period. This factor is referred to within the Planning Practice Guidance (paragraph 03-34) as one which may lead to the need for a stepped trajectory.

Conclusion

Based on the sites submitted to the Inspector, and the associated recommended site removals, the local plan provides for a five year supply of housing starting in 2020/21.

However, against a housing target of 800 dwellings per year, even continuing to incorporate the sites recommended to you for removal, there is a shortage of almost 900 dwellings against the five year supply requirement. There are significant infrastructure, economic and structural reasons to make this a difficult gap to fill. Accordingly, it is considered that under these circumstances a stepped target would be justified. Once an overall target has been confirmed by the Inspector, it will be possible to recalculate the five year supply requirement and revisit the need for a stepped target in the plan.