



**WELWYN
HATFIELD**

**Christopher Dale
Head of Planning**

Date: 15 October 2021

Melvyn Middleton
Planning Inspectorate
c/o Programme Officer
louise@poservices.co.uk

Dear Sir

Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan Examination

I am writing to update you on the programme I set out in my letter to you on 5th August 2021.

As you are aware the level of growth and the need to release a significant amount of land from the Green Belt is highly controversial in the borough and the Prime Minister's recent speech which mentioned reforms to the planning system raised the prospect that there may shortly be a change in approach. Whilst Members of the Council have received legal advice that decisions need to be based on the current planning system with no opportunity for further debate on the housing numbers they are also aware that once land is removed from the Green Belt it cannot easily be put back. Before taking such an irrevocable decision Members of Cabinet considered they should write a letter seeking clarification from the Secretary of State on two points. Firstly, to confirm whether or not there is a possibility of further discussion on the 15,200 target figure for new homes and secondly, whether the Prime Minister's comments suggest a change to planning policy in the near future which would redirect growth or prevent growth on green fields.

As a consequence the 20th October meeting of Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel has been cancelled pending a response from the Secretary of State.

The Chief Executive is seeking to minimise the delay to the programme and has sought clarification of the likely timescale for such a response from DLUHC. It is understood that the average time for receiving a response is three weeks but that there is a backlog of correspondence as a result of the recent Cabinet reshuffle. There is a possibility that the response will be received in time for the report to be considered by the next meeting of Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel on 11th November and Full Council on 17th November but if not then it will be necessary to arrange special meetings in early December so that the main modifications consultation can still commence before Christmas. The democratic calendar is currently being reviewed to this end. Officers are continuing to work on updating the Main Modifications Schedule so that consultation can commence as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Sue Tiley
Planning Policy and Implementation Manager

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts AL8 6AE
DX 30075, Welwyn Garden City 1

Tel: 01707 357000
www.welhat.gov.uk

