

Taylor
Wimpey

PLANNING STATEMENT

Chequersfield

Contents

	Page
1. Introduction	4
2. Site and Local Context	5
3. Pre-Application Submission	5
4. The Development Proposal	6
5. Relevant Planning Policies	8
___ National Planning Policy Framework	8
___ Planning Practice Guidance	11
___ Development Plan Policy - Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005	13
6. Planning Analysis	16
___ Planning Policy	16
___ Landscape and Ecology Impact	16
___ Topography	17
___ Standard of Housing and Design Mix	17
7. Conclusion	18

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared by Taylor Wimpey to support our application for the construction of 30 residential apartments on the land north of Chequersfield, the 'site'. The description of works for the application is to comprise of the following;

Full Planning Application for the erection of 30 apartments served via a new vehicular access; associated ancillary and enabling works.

- 1.2. Pre-application submission boards were submitted to Welwyn Hatfield Council dated 13th March 2017, which was followed by a meeting at their offices on the 26th April 2017. The details of the pre-application discussions are covered in Chapter 3.

- 1.3. This planning application is supported by the following supplementary documents, which have been prepared to meet a variety of technical, regulatory and planning policy requirements. These include:

- Design and Access Statement
- Ground Investigation Report
- Landscape Strategy
- Noise Assessment
- Drainage Strategy
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Transport Statement
- Energy Statement

- 1.4. This Planning Statement establishes the suitability of the application site for residential development and assesses the planning merits of the scheme against the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), together with the associated National Planning Practice Guidance, local planning policies and other material considerations.

2. Site and Local Context

- 2.1. The site is located approximately 2 miles south from Welwyn Garden City town centre and approximately 3.5 miles north of Hatfield town centre. The location holds the benefit of being located within a commutable distance of London with the benefits a Garden City holds.
- 2.2. The land in focus of this application is bordered by an existing Taylor Wimpey development, constructed approximately 9 years ago, to the south which comprises of predominantly 3 storey apartment blocks, rising to 4 storey at the corner turning element of the blocks. To the north and west it is bounded by hedgerows, behind are open fields with a local sub-station
- 2.3. The nearest local transport option is the bus stop which is within 500m of the site. The proposed development is inclusive of a footpath which connects the footpaths along Chequersfield, to improve the safety of pedestrian movement and help integrate the development to the surrounding infrastructure.

Figure 1: Site Context Plan



(Source: Google Earth)

3. Pre-Application Submission

- 3.1. The proposal is promoted by Taylor Wimpey North Thames who have an interest in the application area, which together with existing highway, comprises all the land necessary for the implementation of the scheme.
- 3.2. Pre-application submission boards were submitted to Welwyn Hatfield Council's planning department dated 13th March 2017. A meeting was held at Welwyn Hatfield Council offices on the 26th April 2017 where the officer raised some concerns over the proposed development.
- 3.3. The key point was the wish for a continuous street scene along Chequersfield and the proximity of the larger block to the frontage.
- 3.4. The landscape officer also commented that there was not enough soft landscaping to relate to the area, and the siting of block B minimized the amount of soft landscaping visible from Chequersfield.
- 3.5. There was a concern with the overdevelopment of the site and it was confirmed that a landscape design to the banked area should be submitted with the application to ease the relationship between the block frontages and their relationship with the existing topography.
- 3.6. It was noted that the height of the apartments would also be an issue as they would appear too dominant against the development opposite, largely due to the topography of the site. The appearance of the apartments would also not have a good relationship with this development as the existing area is more contemporary than the planned submission.
- 3.7. There were large areas of hard landscaping visible from Chequersfield which should be minimized due to the nature of the area. The lay-by parking along the street would also detract from the character of the area which could be used to increase the amount of soft landscaping.

4. The Development Proposal

4.1. The proposed development seeks full planning permission for the construction of 30 residential apartments in 2 blocks served via a new vehicular access.

4.2. A detailed Master Plan has been submitted which includes 30 residential apartments in 2 blocks. The blocks have been orientated to overlook the parking area to provide surveillance and the associated landscaping creates a soft development edge. The division of space is as follows;

Residential Development	26.5%
Green Infrastructure	34.1%
Road Infrastructure	39.4%

4.3. The application proposals have been informed by various discussions and consultation meetings with professionals, organizations and authorities. The proposed scheme has incorporated comments from the pre-application submissions to evolve the design to satisfy the best practice design principles.

4.4. The site is to be served by a single vehicular access from Chequersfield which runs along the southern boundary. This will act as the principle access route into the parking area. The site access shall be accessible to pedestrians through the formation of a new pavement that connects the existing footways along Chequersfield.

4.5. The proposed access point is fully compliant with the design guidance from Highways. The vehicular parking provision on site comprises of 12 visitor spaces and 30 dedicated spaces, one for each apartment. The layout predominantly presents the parking to be contained in a court yard with 5 spaces located adjacent to the street.

4.6. The scale of the development is 2.5 and 3.5 storey apartment blocks, taking influence from the existing vernacular and key focal areas of the buildings. The proposal has been designed to create a distinct development that reflects the main characteristics of Chequersfield whilst presenting its own identity.

4.7. The development comprises a range of apartment types, sizes and tenure with 33.33% affordable provision on site, which complies with Policy H7 that requires 30% affordable housing on any development over 25 units, with a 50/50 split of affordable rent/shared ownership. The affordable provision consists of 1 bedroom, 2 person apartments. As required by Policy H10, there are 12 Lifetime Homes proposed for the site. These are 2 bedroom, 3 person apartments. The accommodation schedule is detailed as under;

Ref	Description	Sqm	Sq Ft	Number	Total Sqm	Total sq ft
Private						
P501	1 Bedroom, 2 Person Apartment	46.5	501	1	46.5	501
P531	1 Bedroom, 2 Person Apartment	49.3	531	1	49.3	531

P665	2 Bedroom, 3 Person LTH Apartment	61.8	665	12	741.6	7890
P600	2 Bedroom, 3 Person Apartment	55.7	600	4	222.8	2400
P600V	2 Bedroom, 3 Person Apartment	55.7	600	2	111.4	1200
Sub Total				20	1171.6	12612
AFFORDABLE						
A490	1 Bedroom, 2 Person Apartment	45.5	490	2	91	980
A501	1 Bedroom, 2 Person Apartment	46.5	501	3	139.5	1503
A531	1 Bedroom, 2 Person Apartment	49.3	531	1	49.3	531
A546	1 Bedroom, 2 Person Apartment	50.7	546	4	202.8	2184
Sub Total				10	482.6	5198
Grand Total				30	1654.2	17810

- 4.8. The landscape proposals seek to create a high-quality setting for the proposed buildings, incorporating a mix of native and ornamental species that will provide year-round visual interest. The use of flowering species, such as Lavender, also represent biodiversity enhancements for pollinators.
- 4.9. The landscaped area to the south of Block B incorporates swathes of layered planting that will not only create a high quality, attractive setting for the building but also enhance the localised Chequersfield street scene. Multi-stem Birch trees create focal points within the planting, with the white bark providing visual interest during the winter months.
- 4.10. Elsewhere across the site, tree planting will be incorporated to soften the built elevation and create vertical scale within the public realm. The tree species will include those which blossoms in the spring and others with attractive autumn foliage to provide year-round visual interest.
- 4.11. Areas of flowering lawn are included along the southern edges of the site to provide visual and ecological interest and provide opportunities for informal round visual interest. Areas of flowering lawn are included along the southern edges of the site to provide a visual and ecological interest and provide opportunities for informal recreation. The northern boundary will be defined by a native Hornbeam hedge that can be grown and managed to create an attractive, defensible edge to the development.

5. Relevant Planning Policies

- 5.1. This section provides a summary of national and local planning policy relevant to the consideration of the proposal.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 5.2. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) outlines national policy guidance and the foreword explains that the purpose of planning is to help achieve sustainable development and that it should go ahead without delay.
- 5.3. The key principle of the NPPF as set out in paragraph 14 of the document is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and Local Planning Authorities (LPA) are directed to approve development proposals that accord with the development plan, or where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date.
- 5.4. A series of 12 ‘Core Planning Principles’ are set out at paragraph 17 which require that planning proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and local places that the country needs. The most specifically relevant Core principles to the application land are listed as under, these will be explored in the following sub-sections;
- 4 - Promoting sustainable transport
 - 6 - Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes
 - 7 - Requiring good design
 - 8 - Promoting healthy communities
 - 11 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- 4 - Promoting Sustainable Transport**
- 5.5. Sustainable transport is addressed in favour of transport modes to grant the public body a choice as to their means of travel. The Government recognises that different local policies and infrastructure networks are required in different communities to maximise sustainable transport. There is encouragement to present solutions which support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and congestion.
- 5.6. Paragraph 30 states *Encouragement should be given to solutions which support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and reduce congestion. In preparing Local Plans, local planning authorities should therefore support a pattern of development which, where reasonable to do so, facilitates the use of sustainable modes of transport.*
- 5.7. Paragraph 35 states *Plans should protect and exploit opportunities for the use of sustainable transport modes for the movement of goods or people. Therefore, developments should be located and designed where practical to;*

- *Accommodate the efficient delivery of goods and supplies*
 - *Give priority of pedestrian and cycle movements, and have access to high quality public transport facilities*
 - *Create safe and secure layouts which minimise conflicts between traffic and cyclists or pedestrians, avoiding street clutter and where appropriate establishing home zones*
 - *Incorporate facilities for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles, and*
 - *Consider the needs of people with disabilities by all modes of transport.*
- 5.8. The proposal recognises and supports the implementation of a strategy to help integrate the application land to help future residents have a choice as to their means of travel. The footpath from the A1000 along Chequersfield will be connected to the footpath by the existing development to improve the pedestrian permeability to this transport amenity and to Chequersfield.
- 5.9. The site is in a sustainable location and will provide links for pedestrians and cyclists to the local services and facilities and is within proximity of existing public transport provision, offering a greater critical mass to ensure these services continue in a sustainable way.

6 - Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes

- 5.10. Paragraph 47 states *Local Planning Authorities should use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area, as far as is consistent with the policies...identifying key sites which are critical to the delivery of the housing strategy over the plan period.* And to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing against their housing requirements.
- 5.11. Paragraph 49 details that Housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date if the Local Planning Authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites.
- 5.12. Paragraph 50 explains that *to deliver a wide choice of high quality homes, opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities, local planning authorities should;*
- Plan for a mix of housing
 - Identify size, type, tenure and range that is reflective of local demand
 - Set policies for meeting affordable housing need, on or off site or a financial contribution
- 5.13. The Full Planning Application development plan details an accommodation schedule as presented earlier in this statement, which entails a mixture of housing in terms of size, type, tenure and range that is reflective of the local demand. There will also be an affordable housing provision of 10 units on site in addition to 12 units being Lifetime Homes standard.

7 - Requiring Good Design

- 5.14. Paragraph 56 outlines the need for good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. It is indivisible from good planning and contributes to the betterment of place making for the public body. The proposed elevations for the residential dwellings show an appearance that is in keeping with the local aesthetic and vernacular of Chequersfield whilst also using high quality materials and rationalised design principles to generate quality architecture.
- 5.15. Paragraph 66 demonstrates that applicants will be expected to work closely with those directly affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. The development, layout, scale, massing, footprint, street scape and appearance have evolved based on the comments and considerations from the pre-application submitted to the Council.

8 - Promoting Healthy Communities

- 5.16. Promoting healthy communities is a prime consideration of a major development as it helps shape the existing urban / rural built environment in both the social and economic context. Paragraph 69 of the NPPF outlines that *The planning system can play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities. Local planning authorities should create a shared vision with communities of the residential environment and facilities they wish to see...should aim to achieve places which promote;*
- *Opportunities for meetings between members of the community who might not otherwise come into contact with each other, including through mixed-use developments, strong neighbourhood centres and active street frontages which bring together those who work, live and play in the vicinity*
 - *Safety and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion; and*
 - *Safe and accessible developments, containing clear and legible pedestrian routes, and high quality public space, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas.*
- 5.17. The implementation of active frontages throughout the development helps promote the engagement of neighbours through their individual activity. This also improves natural surveillance and becomes a deterrent for crime and disorder, and aids to the legibility of the street scene.

11 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

- 5.18. Paragraph 109 encourages the contribution and enhancement of the natural and local environment by;
- Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils
 - Recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services
 - Minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to half the overall decline in biodiversity,

including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures

- Preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water, or noise pollution or land instability; and
 - Remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.
- 5.19. The proposal seeks to incorporate landscaped areas throughout the development to increase the presence of green infrastructure. The hedgerows and boundary aspects will be maintained where possible and encouraged to further biodiversity and net gains in wildlife and habitat.

Planning Practice Guidance

- 5.20. The National Planning Policy Guidance, published in March 2014, and updated periodically, builds upon the policy set out in the Framework by giving clear guidance to developers on a range of individual topics, including design.
- 5.21. The Planning Practice Guidance ‘Design’ sets out the importance of good design and what can be achieved with it. This is addressed further in the accompanying Design and Access Statement.
- 5.22. The Planning Practice Guidance ‘Health and Wellbeing’ states clearly what a ‘healthy community’ is classed as and builds upon paragraphs 7, 69, 156 and 162 of the NPPF:

“A healthy community is a good place to grow up and grow old in. It is one which supports healthy behaviours and supports reductions in health inequalities. It should enhance the physical and mental health of the community and, where appropriate, encourage:

- *Active healthy lifestyles that are made easy through the pattern of development, good urban design, good access to local services and facilities; green open space and safe places for active play and food growing, and is accessible by walking and cycling and public transport.*
- *The creation of healthy living environments for people of all ages which supports social interaction. It meets the needs of children and young people to grow and develop, as well as being adaptable to the needs of an increasingly elderly population and those with dementia and other sensory or mobility impairments.”*

- 5.23. The proposed development creates a ‘healthy community’ as it is in a sustainable location which encourages sustainable modes of transport, being in proximity to pedestrian and cycle routes as well as public transport methods.
- 5.24. The development proposes 12 of the units to be constructed to Lifetime Homes standard and therefore meets the need of adaptable places to live for the increasing elderly population, whilst also being suitable for children and young people.

Development Plan Policy - Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005

- 5.25. The Welwyn Hatfield District Plan is prepared by Welwyn Hatfield Council under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compensation Act, 1991. The plan covers the period up to 2011 although there have been saved policies that are carried forward and still considered to be applicable.
- 5.26. The functions of the Plan are;
- To develop the policy and general proposals of the approved Structure Plan and to relate them to precise areas of land
 - To provide a detailed basis for development control throughout the District
 - To provide a detailed basis for co-ordinating the development and other use of land in the District; and
 - To bring local and detailed planning issues before the public.
- 5.27. The identified Saved Policies that are applicable to the development are noted as follows and will be explained to better demonstrate how the proposal meets each policy;

D1	Quality of Design
D2	Character and Context
D8	Landscaping
H2	Location of Windfall Development
H6	Densities
H7	Affordable Housing
H10	Accessible Housing
M14	Parking Standards for new Developments

D1 - Quality of Design

- 5.28. *The Council will require the standard of design in all new developments to be of a high quality.*
- 5.29. The material setting of Chequersfield is predominately brickwork as the main facing material with concrete type roof tile. The apartments opposite also have areas of render, weatherboard and Equitone cladding.
- 5.30. This would be reflected in the proposed development by utilizing buff brick as the primary material with the occasional use of render and Cedral weatherboard to add interest and link the design to the existing development opposite of site.

D2 - Character and Context

- 5.31. *The Council will require all new development to respect and relate to the character and context of the area in which it is proposed.*

- 5.32. The local area demonstrates strong frontages and clear delineations of public and private space.
- 5.33. The use of materials and the protruding areas of the blocks relates to the character of the apartments opposite of site along with the differing eave and ridge levels which combine to create a strong frontage.

D8 - Landscaping

- 5.34. *All developments should include landscaping as an integral part of the overall design. This should reflect the strong tradition of urban landscape design in the district.*
- 5.35. The positioning of the blocks has been carefully considered to allow for areas of soft landscaping in front of the apartments to separate the road from the development which will soften the appearance of the blocks and reflects the landscape design in the area.

H2 - Location of Windfall Development

- 5.36. *All applications for windfall residential development will be assessed for potential and suitability.*
- 5.37. The proposal is sited close to the East Coast Railway Line and is on the boundary with an area allocated as an employment site. Policy EMP7 'Provision for 'Dirty User' industries' considers Chequersfield is a suitable location for bad neighbor/dirty industries which allows the development of the land.

H6 - Densities

- 5.38. *The Council will require all residential developments of 5 or more dwellings to be built at 30 to 50 dwellings per hectare provided that the development will not have an adverse impact on the character of the surrounding area.*
- 5.39. The site is comprised of approximately 0.28 hectares with the proposed development of 30 units and this density is in keeping with the surrounding areas.

H7 - Affordable Housing

- 5.40. *The Council will seek through negotiation a proportion of affordable housing, which as a minimum should comprise 30% subsidized housing.*
- 5.41. The development proposes 10 affordable units on site, which results 33.33% of affordable units on site. The tenure split proposed is 50% being social rent, 50% being shared-ownership.

H10 - Affordable Housing

- 5.42. *In all residential developments involving 5 or more dwellings the Council will seek to secure a proportion of dwellings to be built to Lifetime Homes standard.*

- 5.43. 12 units are proposed to be built to Lifetime Homes standard.

M14 - Parking Standards for new Development

- 5.44. The Council will require parking provision for new development to be made in accordance with the standards set out in the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance on Parking.
- 5.45. The Council's supplementary planning guidance on parking recommends 1.25 spaces per unit for 1-bedroom apartments and 1.5 spaces per unit for 2-bedroom apartments.
- 5.46. This requirement has been achieved with 42 parking spaces being provided. 30 spaces will be dedicated spaces, 1 per unit, with the remaining 12 spaces being allocated as visitor spaces.

Development Plan - Welwyn & Hatfield Draft Local Plan 2031

- 5.47. The Draft Welwyn & Hatfield Local Plan 2031 is the new Local Plan for the Welwyn & Hatfield Borough. The Plan has not yet been adopted and is at the EiP stage.

6. Planning Analysis

- 6.1. This section of the report sets out an assessment of the proposed development against the relevant planning policies.
- 6.2. The key issues for consideration for this application are listed as under;
- (i) Planning Policy
 - (ii) Landscape and Ecology Impact
 - (iii) Topography of the Site
 - (iv) Standard of Design and Housing Mix

Planning Policy

- 6.3. Section 6 of the NPPF ‘delivering a wide choice of high quality homes’ requires local planning authorities to significantly boost the supply of housing by identifying key sites for allocation within the local plan to meet the delivery of housing within the plan period and to be updated annually.
- 6.4. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) forms part of the evidence base commissioned by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (‘the Council’) to inform its emerging Local plan, providing an objective assessment of the need (OAN) for housing in Welwyn Hatfield which complies with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and published Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).
- 6.5. The 2014 based DCLG household projection model for Welwyn Hatfield, underpinned by the 2014 based SNPP, estimates that the number of households will increase by 15, 817 over the 2014-2039 projection period, equivalent to an additional 633 households per year.
- 6.6. The 2015 SHMA partial update calculated the annual need for affordable housing in Welwyn Hatfield, taking account of current and future need relative to available stock and future supply, concluded that 755 affordable homes were needed annually over 5 years before falling to 539 affordable homes annually once the backlog is cleared.

Landscape and Ecology Impact

- 6.7. The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal carried out by ACD Environmental confirms that the site is of negligible ecological value with no evidence of protected species and that the proposed development would not cause any significant impacts to such sites. The report puts forward some recommendations;

- (i) The intact hedge on the northern boundary is of local value, and we would advocate retention of this feature where possible.
- (ii) We advocate that hedge buffer planting is incorporated into the landscape design, which could comprise a wildflower border, a shrub border dogwood, or a low beech hedge.
- (iii) Wildlife-friendly lighting scheme to reduce light spill on the northern boundary would be recommended.
- (iv) Nesting and roosting boxes to be built as part of the fabric of the building should be designed for building reliant birds and bats and birds associated with urban areas.
- (v) Badgers are not currently present on site, but are likely to be present in the surrounding habitats. Their potential presence should be acknowledged when carrying out construction activities.

Topography

- 6.8. Due to the banking along the southern area of the site the topography of the site is a clear consideration. The banking will remain, to an extent, due to the High Voltage Electricity Cable Easement. Therefore, the siting of the block and well thought out landscaping can create an attractive scheme.

Standard of Design and Housing Mix

- 6.9. The housing mix meets the requirements of Policies H7 and H10, with 12 of the units being constructed to Lifetime homes standard being 2-bedroom, 3-person apartments and 10 of the units (33.33%) being affordable units. The tenure mix of the affordable units proposed is 50% affordable rent and 50% shared-ownership. All affordable units are 1 bedroom, 2-person apartments which meets the need stated in paragraph 3.9 of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council Planning Obligations, Supplementary Planning Document, February 2012.
- 6.10. The design of the scheme has been carefully considered and has a strong relationship with the existing development located to the south of the site. The elevations have been designed to form a gateway into Chequersfield, which will have the effect of finishing the development in the area by creating a visible boundary and improving the landscape along the street.
- 6.11. The design of the proposed development has been strongly influenced by the existing development, by utilizing the material palette present in the local area it will form a coherent development whilst still obtaining its own identity.
- 6.12. The proposed development would also provide much needed housing in support of the emerging draft Local Plan, where housing targets and numbers are marginal.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. The proposed development at Land North of Chequersfield, is the result of pre-application submissions. The scheme has evolved since the initial pre-application and has benefited from the inputs from all of those involved. The scheme put forward for full planning permission, reflects these points and is a development that carefully respects the local character, landscape, ecology and transport infrastructure.
- 7.2. The development provides for a sustainable development which has a positive social-economic benefit to the local area. The layout provides much needed housing for local people, affordable and private. Furthermore, the development does not present a harmful impact upon the local ecology and actively enhances the natural landscape. And lastly, does not have a harmful impact on existing highways and drainage.
- 7.3. The site is a windfall site, which is currently of poor and unkempt appearance, and the delivery of 30 much needed, well designed new homes in a sympathetic architectural style will hugely improve its appearance and ensure it blends into the locale, whilst making best use of the site in a residential area.
- 7.4. In summation, this application for full planning approval for the Land North of Chequersfield accords with the Government's strategic priorities of delivering much needed housing / residential development within a sustainable development framework. The approval of this scheme will demonstrate that the local Council is meeting its aim - to deliver on the needed housing requirement as well as supply social, environmental and economic benefits to the local community.