

Welwyn Garden City Estate Management Scheme (EMS) FAQs

What is happening?

A report is being considered by the council's [Cabinet](#) recommending we retain the existing EMS and create a dedicated team within the council's planning department to oversee its management and enforcement.

It follows an extensive public consultation in October 2016 on the future of the scheme, and we will be asking residents what they think in the new year before any final decisions are made.

Why is this option being put forward?

The results of our consultation last year showed that 81% of people living within the EMS area believed that additional controls and rules, beyond the planning system, were needed to protect WGC's unique heritage and character, and the majority (38%) were in favour of maintaining the existing scheme.

We believe the most effective way of managing the scheme moving forwards will be to create a dedicated team, allowing us to address the current administration issues and improve how the EMS is processed and enforced.

What other options were considered?

We consulted on a number of different options, including replacing the EMS with an Article 4 Direction, finding another body to administer the scheme, and terminating the scheme without alternative controls.

The advantages and disadvantages of each option were explained in the consultation materials.

Residents both within and outside the area were given the opportunity to express their preference, and 38% of EMS residents, and 33% of non-EMS residents, opted to retain the existing scheme.

Why has the council decided not to proceed with an Article 4 Direction?

Although an Article 4 Direction would have combined the EMS aims with the main planning system, not all EMS restrictions would have been covered, including trees and hedges, which was an area of concern for residents. Only 16% of EMS residents would have been in favour of this option, which is why we are now proposing an alternative way forward.

Why might an application fee be introduced?

The EMS is currently funded by council tax and planning fees. As with planning applications, an EMS fee would be used to fund a dedicated, professional team to determine applications and investigate breaches.

We think this would provide a better service to those who need it, help us continue to protect what makes WGC unique, and make the process fairer for all borough taxpayers.

It's important we hear what residents think about our proposals and we will be sending letters in the new year to collect views before any decisions are made.

Have the fees been decided?

No, we will be asking for resident's views on the fee level. [The Cabinet report](#) outlines a table of indicative fees, based on similar schemes created to preserve the historical character of an area, including Hampstead Garden Suburb and Dulwich Estate.

The proposed charges also reflect the impact different applications would have on property values, such as extensions, and include flexibility to respond to very minor projects without deterring people from applying and increasing the need for enforcement.

Will I have to pay for planning permission still?

Yes. EMS consent is needed in addition to planning permission or building control services, which may also be required before you begin work, and would be charged separately.

The consultation demonstrated how strongly residents feel about keeping additional controls in place to preserve WGC's unique values and appearance, and these proposals will ensure we can more effectively manage and enforce a scheme moving forwards.

Will the EMS rules stay the same?

Yes, all aspects of the existing scheme will be retained and we are proposing to introduce a Design Guide to help everyone better understand how the EMS restrictions apply to their homes.

Will this mean my application will be processed quicker?

We believe creating a dedicated EMS team will enable us to improve turnaround times and bolster enforcement activity.

When will I get a letter?

We hope to send letters to residents seeking their views in early 2018.

Who can I speak to about the proposals?

We hope the above answers any questions you may have, but if you do have any further queries, please email ems@welhat.gov.uk or call **01707 357000**.