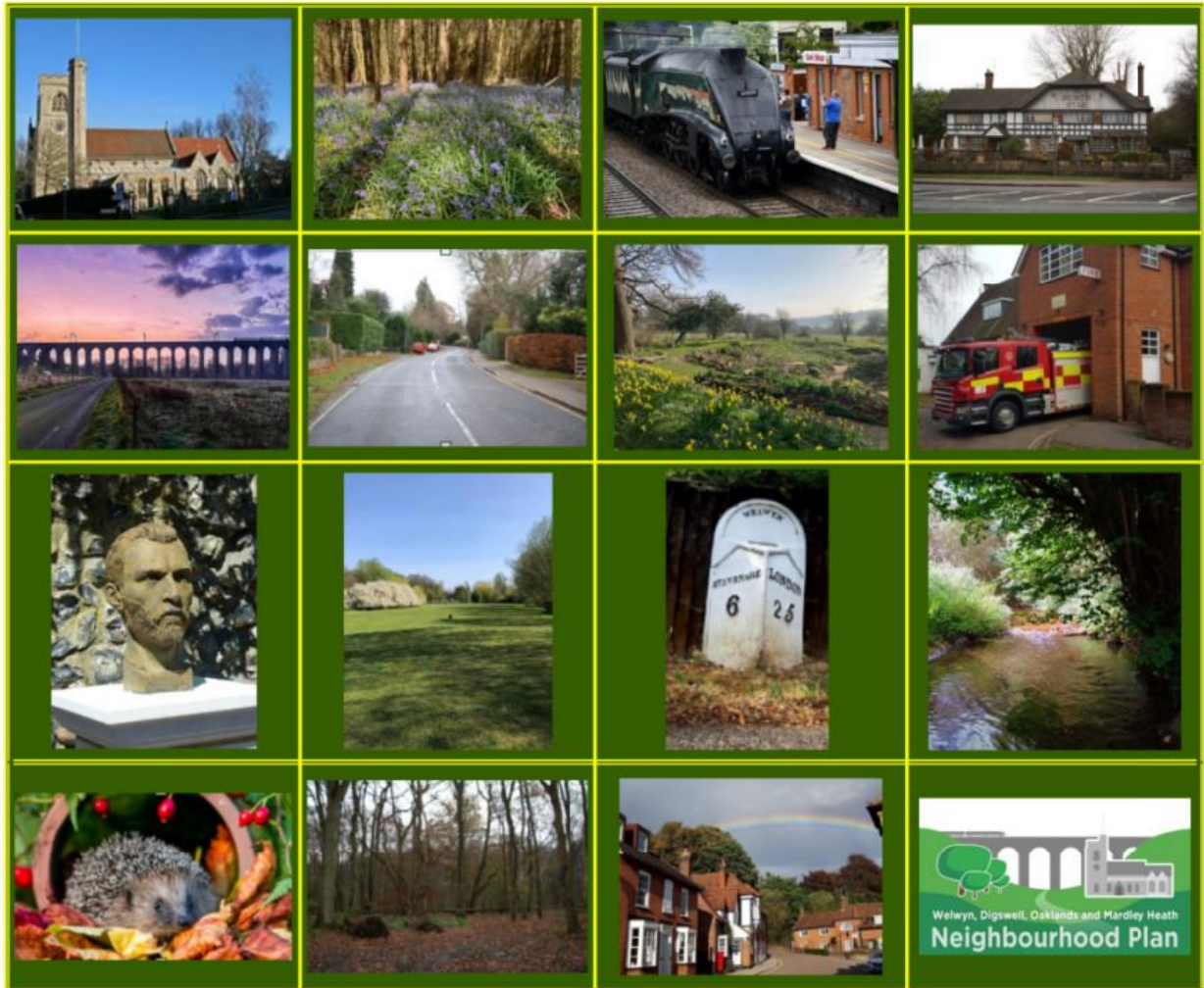


Welwyn Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan 2025-2036

DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND GUIDANCE



for
Welwyn, Digswell, Oaklands and Mardley Heath



Welwyn Parish Council



Front Cover:

Photographic collage (*left-to-right, top-to-bottom*):

1. St Mary's Church, *Welwyn*
2. Harmer Green Woods in Spring, *Oaklands*
3. A4 Pacific locomotive "Union of South Africa" at *Welwyn North Station, Digswell*
4. The North Star pub restaurant, Great North Road (B197), *Oaklands*
5. Digswell Viaduct early morning, *Digswell*
6. New Road, *Digswell*
7. Danesbury Park Fernery, view showing grotto, bridge and planting by volunteers, *Welwyn*
8. Welwyn Fire Station, Hertford Road, *Welwyn*
9. Vincent van Gogh bust by Anthony Padgett, alongside Bridge Cottage Surgery, *Welwyn*
10. Singlers Marsh *Welwyn*
11. Milestone on Church Street, *Welwyn*
12. River Mimram, at Fulling Mill Lane, *Welwyn* (*with acknowledgement to Flickr*)
13. A local resident *at home*
14. Mardley Heath
15. Church Street, towards Wendover Lodge, from Mill Lane, *Welwyn*,
16. The Welwyn Parish Neighbourhood Plan logo (*designed by Councillor Mark Castle, WPC*)

With thanks to all the talented local photographers who have contributed their works on various occasions including to Welwyn Village News and Welwyn and Oaklands Chat Facebook pages

DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND GUIDANCE

Status and Purpose of this Appendix

This appendix sets out design principles and guidance to support the implementation of the Welwyn Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan. The Design Principles contained in this appendix:

- do not constitute land-use planning policies;
- do not form part of the statutory development plan; and
- may be treated as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications, where relevant.

The Design Principles are intended to provide locally informed guidance on matters of design, layout, sustainability and character, and to complement national planning policy and the policies of the Welwyn Hatfield Borough Local Plan.

They should be applied proportionately, having regard to the nature, scale and context of development, and are not intended to introduce additional development management requirements beyond those set out in statutory policy.

Relationship to the Neighbourhood Plan Policies

Development proposals should be determined in accordance with the policies of this Neighbourhood Plan, the Welwyn Hatfield Borough Local Plan and national planning policy. Where relevant, decision-makers may have regard to the Design Principles in this appendix as supporting guidance to help inform considerations of design quality and local distinctiveness.

Use of this Appendix

Not all Design Principles will be relevant to every development proposal. The extent to which they apply will depend on:

- the type of development proposed;
- its scale and location; and
- the characteristics of the surrounding area.

Updating this Appendix

This appendix may be updated or refined from time to time to reflect changes in guidance, best practice or local circumstances, without triggering a formal review of the Neighbourhood Plan, provided it remains guidance rather than policy.

Design Principles

Design Principle A: Site Layout for New Developments

1. Development on larger sites (10 or more dwellings) should seek to:
 - make reasonable provision for green streets and local habitats, including through the incorporation of grass areas, hedgerows, trees and front gardens; and
 - retain and, where appropriate, enhance existing pedestrian, cycle and bridleway routes that connect the Parish with the surrounding countryside.
2. Development should be designed to avoid undue harm to the amenity of neighbouring sites, including through loss of privacy or visual intrusion.

Justification

Consultation responses indicate that residents place a high value on preserving the Parish's environment, protecting local wildlife, safeguarding Green Belt land, woodland, parkland, nature reserves and green spaces, and promoting pedestrian, cycle and bridleway routes.

Design Principle B: Parking Provision Standards

1. For residential development, proposals should demonstrate how the site seeks to be self-sufficient in vehicle parking provision, with reference to the Local Housing Needs Assessment, and should also address cycle storage and refuse and recycling bin storage.
2. Parking provision should take account of the needs of people with mobility impairments and the provision of electric vehicle charging points (EVCPs), where appropriate.
3. For Class C3 residential development, parking provision should have regard to the following locally informed standards, where relevant to the nature and scale of development:
 - approximately 1.25 spaces per one-bedroom dwelling, of which one space would typically be on-plot;
 - approximately 2.2 spaces per two-bedroom dwelling and 2.75 spaces per three-bedroom dwelling, of which two spaces would typically be on-plot; and
 - three spaces for dwellings with four or more bedrooms, of which at least two would typically be on-plot.
4. Where garages are intended to contribute to parking provision, they should be of sufficient internal dimensions and height to accommodate modern vehicles and associated storage, in line with best practice guidance.
5. Where planning permission is required for garage conversions or alterations, development should seek to avoid the loss of on-plot parking provision unless appropriate alternative parking is provided within the curtilage of the dwelling.
6. Where residential layouts make on-street visitor parking impracticable, the inclusion of lay-bys within the site may be an appropriate solution, having regard to the scale and layout of the development.
7. Where it is not practicable to meet parking provision fully on-plot (for example in the case of terraced housing), alternative solutions such as shared parking bays or service roads may be appropriate, where well designed and safely integrated.
8. For new shops or business premises within Welwyn High Street, Church Street and Codicote Road, development proposals should consider how parking for staff and customers can be accommodated, having regard to local circumstances and existing provision.

Justification

National planning policy recognises that parking provision for residential and non-residential development should take account of accessibility, the type and mix of development, public transport availability, local car ownership levels and the provision of charging infrastructure for low-emission vehicles.

The Local Housing Needs Assessment identifies particular parking pressures within the Parish and provides evidence that, in some locations, off-street parking provision may need to exceed generic standards in order to function effectively. It also highlights that reliance on unrestricted on-street parking is not always appropriate.

Consultation responses indicate strong local support for improved access to village centres and the continued vitality of local shops and services. Adequate parking provision, both on-site and nearby, is therefore an important consideration in supporting sustainable development and local businesses.

Design Principle C: Drainage on New Developments

1. Development proposals within areas at risk of flooding should be designed to avoid increasing flood risk, having regard to national policy and the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.
2. The flood risk management function of existing overland flow routes, watercourses and floodplain or storage areas should be protected and, where appropriate, enhanced, to ensure there is no net loss of flood storage capacity, flows are not impeded and opportunities are taken to make space for water.
3. Surface water management should incorporate sustainable drainage (SuDS) techniques, appropriate to the nature and scale of development, such as balancing ponds, swales, permeable paving and rainwater harvesting, in order to:
 - avoid pollution or adverse ecological impacts on groundwater and watercourses, including the sensitive chalk stream ecology of the River Mimram;
 - minimise the culverting of open watercourses and, where feasible, open up existing culverted sections; and
 - ensure that balancing ponds are designed as positive landscape or amenity features where appropriate.
4. For development proposals on larger sites (10 or more dwellings), surface water runoff should be managed within the site boundary so as not to increase flood risk on-site or elsewhere. Engagement with relevant catchment partnerships and drainage bodies may be appropriate, and any recommendations should be taken into account as part of the overall design approach.
5. Where feasible, foul water drainage should connect to the public sewer, and development should be designed to avoid overloading existing infrastructure. Site layouts should allow for future access to sewers and drains for maintenance, renewal and upgrade where practicable.

Justification

Local Plan policies provide guidance on water management and flood risk. Rainwater run-off and groundwater movements associated with development in and around Welwyn village have the potential to affect the sensitive environment of the River Mimram. Surface water flooding is particularly evident in parts of Oaklands, where run-off from adjacent fields and hard surfaces can place pressure on existing sewer capacity.

Given the high water table and the extent of groundwater protection zones within the Parish, opportunities for non-mains foul drainage are limited. Careful consideration of drainage solutions is therefore important in supporting sustainable development and protecting water environments.



P3: Surface flooding – B197 at Oaklands



P4: Surface flooding – Robbery Bottom Lane

Design Principle D: Provision of Utility Services (see also Appendix 5)

For development proposals other than single property modifications or extensions:

1. Development should seek to make provision for:
 - the installation of full-fibre broadband, where available;
 - adequate, secure and unobtrusive on-plot storage for waste and recycling bins; and
 - on-plot electric vehicle charging facilities, where appropriate.
2. Development proposals should have regard to the capacity of existing infrastructure networks, including water, sewerage, electricity, gas and other services, and should seek to ensure that new development can be adequately supported in a timely manner.
3. Where new or upgraded infrastructure is required, developers and infrastructure providers should seek to coordinate works in order to minimise disruption to residents and the local road network.

Justification

Good design practice and the promotion of sustainable technologies can help reduce the environmental impacts of development. Consultation responses indicate that high-quality broadband connectivity is particularly important to residents, including to support home working.

Welwyn Hatfield Borough is relatively well provided with on- and off-street electric vehicle charging facilities. The inclusion of private off-street charging at new developments or refurbishments can complement Hertfordshire County Council and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council strategies for publicly available charging infrastructure.

Consultation responses also highlight concerns regarding the cumulative impacts of repeated roadworks, noise and disruption. Coordinated delivery of utility infrastructure can help reduce these impacts on local communities.

Design Principle E: Best Practice for Sustainable Building Design

1. For larger residential developments (10 or more dwellings) and for industrial or commercial development exceeding 100 m² of floorspace, proposals should consider the inclusion of a Sustainable Design Statement, informed by the principles of Hertfordshire's *Building Futures Sustainable Design Toolkit*, where relevant to the nature and scale of development.
2. Development should seek to incorporate appropriate renewable and low-carbon energy solutions, such as solar thermal, photovoltaic panels or heat pumps, where feasible. Site layouts should have regard to opportunities for passive solar gain and measures to reduce the risk of summer overheating.
3. Development should meet relevant Building Regulations requirements, including Parts F and L (as amended), and where feasible should seek to exceed minimum standards to improve energy efficiency and environmental performance. Designs may aspire to higher standards, such as Passivhaus, where appropriate and viable.
4. The location and design of new homes should have regard to access to public transport, services and amenities, where this can reasonably be achieved.
5. Proposals for renewable energy schemes, within or outside the Parish, may be supported where they demonstrably benefit local communities and are appropriately located and designed.
6. Sustainable development that contributes to meeting local housing needs (such as affordable or downsizing accommodation) and incorporates high-quality green and visual enhancement features may be encouraged where appropriate.

Justification

National policy promotes sustainable development and the transition to a low-carbon future. Building Regulations, British Standards and technical guidance continue to evolve to reflect improvements in technology and understanding, and development that goes beyond minimum standards can help improve long-term environmental performance.

Updates to Building Regulations Parts F and L, aligned with the Future Homes Standard, introduce higher standards for ventilation and energy efficiency. Applying these requirements, and where feasible exceeding them, can support the delivery of more sustainable and resilient development.

Design Principle F: Character and Heritage

Development should seek to:

1. Achieve high-quality design that responds positively to the scale and character of the local area, having regard to existing building lines, rooflines, gardens and boundary treatments.
2. Be proportionate, sympathetic and complementary to surrounding properties and the wider landscape, with materials and design that reflect the character of the location and area, where appropriate.
3. Respect the character and heritage of the Parish, including the setting of designated and non-designated heritage assets, the significance of local archaeology, and the guidance set out in relevant local documents such as the Parish Portrait, Digswell Character Appraisal and the Welwyn Village Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP).

Justification

Consultation responses strongly support the need for development, including extensions, to be sympathetic to the character and scale of surrounding buildings and the open space character of the Parish. The Parish Portrait and the Digswell Character Appraisal describe key characteristics and settings, while the Welwyn Village CAAMP provides guidance on conservation area character and management.

These documents are not intended to be prescriptive, and an overly rigid approach could limit opportunities to incorporate new technologies or contemporary design solutions. The Design Principles therefore provide general guidance to help applicants explain and justify their design approach on a site-by-site basis.

Design Principle G: Facilities for Home-Working

Where appropriate to the size and type of development, new dwellings may be designed to incorporate facilities that support home-working, in order to encourage flexible working practices and small-scale start-up activity.

In considering the inclusion of home-working facilities, development should have regard to:

- the provision of sufficient internal space suitable for office-type use, with good levels of natural light; and
- the need for adequate electrical power outlets, modern IT infrastructure and telecommunications connectivity, including full-fibre broadband where available.

Justification

Changes in working practices during the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in a significant increase in home-working, and consultation responses indicate that a substantial proportion of residents continue to work from home. The ability to work from home can also support start-up enterprises by reducing the need for dedicated office accommodation.

Where developments seek to include home-working facilities as a design feature, the quality and functionality of the internal layout and supporting infrastructure are important considerations in ensuring these spaces are practical and effective.

Design Principle H: Energy

Development proposals, including new buildings and substantial refurbishments where appropriate, should seek to reduce energy consumption and support the transition to low-carbon energy, having regard to local amenity and heritage considerations. In particular, development should seek to:

- maximise the proportion of renewable or low-carbon energy generated on-site, where feasible and compatible with local character, including within Conservation Areas;
- facilitate the use of renewable energy from off-site sources, for example through the provision of space for battery storage or related infrastructure, where appropriate
- take reasonable steps to minimise energy demand and maximise energy efficiency through building fabric, layout and technology; and
- ensure that energy systems are designed to operate efficiently, for example through the use of low-temperature heating systems where suitable.

Justification

Technologies such as solar panels, heat pumps, rainwater harvesting and enhanced insulation can significantly reduce energy consumption, operating costs and environmental impacts. Consultation responses and wider evidence indicate that such measures are not yet consistently implemented across new development.

Encouraging energy-efficient design and the integration of renewable and low-carbon technologies, where appropriate, can help improve the long-term sustainability and resilience of buildings while supporting national and local objectives for reducing carbon emissions.