Welwyn Garden City
Estate Management Scheme
Welwyn Garden City is one of only two Garden Cities in the UK. The town was the vision of Ebenezer Howard, who was the founder of the Garden City movement. The town is doubly unique in also having been designated as a New Town, shortly after the end of World War II and by the fact that its original designer, Louis de Soissons, was in charge of its development from its inception until his death in 1962 and his firm’s influence continued through to 1978.

The ideas for the Garden City grew during the late 19th Century and were based around the idea that densely built-up towns and the countryside both had advantages and disadvantages. Howard’s idea was to combine the advantages of both in a pleasant, co-operative egalitarian environment. This was encapsulated in his book of 1898 “To-morrow – A Peaceful Path to Real Reform”.

One of the key themes of the Garden City ideal was self-containment; providing jobs, services, leisure facilities and housing all within one town of a high quality, green and open setting. This has some parallels with modern ideas about sustainable development in the sense that providing a mixture of land uses in close proximity reduces the need to travel.

The town’s historic significance in the field of town and social planning is global. It attracts regular study and visits from tourists and representatives of civic organisations from abroad. Its success led directly to the creation, in the UK and abroad, of other new towns such as Harlow, Stevenage and Radburn. It is often held up as the best example of civilised, sustainable new settlement a model for others to follow.

Architecturally, although much of Welwyn Garden City is neo-Georgian, it is a very simple neo-Georgian, it is pared down, free of too many features and therefore was eminently suitable for the 20th Century. Although neo-Georgian revival architecture was not uncommon elsewhere during the 1920s and 30s, the planned, singularly controlled concentration here is unique. On the whole, individual buildings of all styles, public and private, form a collection that is of the highest significance, defines the character of the Garden City and is vital to its integrity.
In recognition of the importance of the Welwyn Garden City environment and in order to protect the amenities and values of the area and residents, in 1973 the High Court imposed a scheme of management under the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 covering areas of the town. The scheme is:

‘to be administered for the purpose of maintaining and enhancing amenities and values in Welwyn Garden City with due regard to the convenience and welfare of persons residing, working and carrying on business there’.

It has the effect of applying similar controls to freehold properties that exist under the terms of the leases. The scheme contains 11 conditions that are binding upon each subsequent owner of the building, including the need for prior consent for alterations to the appearance of buildings.

Essentially, the purpose of the Management Scheme and its importance to homeowners is to ensure that homes and street scenes are kept in harmony with the original design and concept of the town.

What is the Estate Management Scheme?

This leaflet outlines the background to the Estate Management Scheme and the policies that the council will use to determine requests for changes to residential properties, either freehold or leasehold, within the scheme area.
Why is Welwyn Garden City Important?

- Welwyn Garden City (WGC) is one of only two Garden Cities in the country
- The main aims of the Garden City movement were to provide balanced, sustainable communities with provision for housing, employment and recreational space within a high quality garden environment
- Conceived by Ebenezer Howard, WGC’s importance in town and social planning is recognised globally
- The master plan for WGC was designed and subsequently implemented by Louis de Soissons
- WGC has grown alongside these concepts and now includes many examples of developments also carried out by the New Town Development Corporation, the Commission for the New Towns and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

WGC’s special character and quality is made up of many aspects that include:

1. Carefully designed layouts with formal and symmetrical patterns
2. Design and detailing of architecture in groups and individual buildings
3. The buildings set within an ‘Arcadian’ landscape context with accessible open space and large mature trees, hedgerows and planting
4. The human scale and accessibility of the commercial, residential, leisure and employment area

WGC combines some of the UK’s best domestic architecture of the last century, in a designed urban and landscaped setting. The town is unique because both its design and its development during the early years were in the hands of a single person: Louis de Soissons. It is doubly unique for also being designated as a New Town.

The town was originally designed and built at a time when city living was very unhealthy and increasingly difficult. The Garden City was seen as a combination of living in the country yet at the same time having industry close by. This was a new concept in the early 20th century and explains why the town is now recognised as a model of urban planning worldwide.
Property valuations are often determined by the settings in which properties are located. Quite simply, inappropriate developments, poor quality alterations to buildings and the erosion of the special character of the environment lead to the lowering of values both in visual and economic terms.

The challenge with Garden City settlements is how to manage change whilst at the same time ensuring that the fundamental aesthetics, amenities and values of the Garden City remain intact. This is important, not just in visual terms, but also because Garden City settlements provide evidence for the ongoing debate about housing provision in the UK and the creation of sustainable communities. As a society, we have much to learn from what was essentially an ‘experiment’, but only if we succeed in understanding and protecting the special qualities of such settlements.

**Why is the Management System Important today?**

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**Is this communication important?**

Yes: residents are strongly advised to keep this communication safe as it sets out the main aspects of the Management Scheme.
Where do I find more information?

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council –
Development Control Team
The Campus
Welwyn Garden City
Hertfordshire
AL8 6AE

Email: planning@welhat.gov.uk
Telephone: 01707 357000

A map showing the areas of Welwyn Garden City covered by the Estate Management Scheme can be found on the Council’s website – www.welhat.gov.uk.

The council approved this document and inserts on 7 Oct 2008.

Further Sources of Information

Your solicitor will be able to provide you details of your lease and/or advice on legal aspects relating to your home

Town and Country Planning Association – website: www.tcpa.org.uk

Twentieth Century Society – website: www.c20society.org.uk

Welwyn Garden City Heritage Trust – website: www.welwyngarden-heritage.org

Welwyn Garden City Society – website: www.wgcsoc.org.uk
e-mail: info@wgcsoc.org.uk

Publications:
‘Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform’
Ebenezer Howard, 2003, Routledge

‘The History of Welwyn Garden City’ Roger Filler, 1986, Phillimore & Co Ltd

‘Welwyn Garden City: A Town for Healthy Living’
Maurice de Soissons, 1988, Cambridge University Press