

Welborne Plan Examination

Fareham Borough Council Opening Statement

Thank you on behalf of the Council for the opportunity to make this statement at the start of the Welborne Plan Examination.

Many parties here will recognise the proposals for Welborne as the product of a process which commenced with the *South Hampshire Strategy*. This strategy for development in the south Hampshire sub-region was published by the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire group of local authorities in 2005 to inform the South East Plan. The planning system has changed since then, but in any event the development of Welborne was never seen as something that is being imposed on Fareham from above, but as an opportunity to positively engage with the issues of the needs for housing and employment development, securing appropriate infrastructure, protecting green space around the Borough, and sustainability.

The broad location and development principles for a Strategic Development Area to the north of Fareham adjoining the M27 were tested through the Fareham Core Strategy examination in 2011 and found sound. Since then, the Council has continued work on both the Welborne Plan, and the Development Sites and Policies Plan. Together, these documents complete the planning framework set out in the Core Strategy.

The broad objectives for the development of Welborne were established in the Fareham Core Strategy, but the detail of how the development would come forward and the type of place Welborne would become have been developed through the Welborne Plan, which is the subject of this examination. Early on in the process of preparing the Welborne Plan, the aspiration emerged that it would be a new Garden Community, based on a 21st-century interpretation of the long-established Garden City principles, which have been redefined in a contemporary way to respond to the unique characteristics of the locality. The vision for Welborne is for 'a distinct new community set apart but connected to Fareham, whose spirit, character, and form are inspired by its landscape setting'.

Like many other areas in the UK, Fareham faces growing pressures from an increasing and ageing population, with growing disparities of household income. Planning to meet their diverse housing needs is extremely challenging. The Borough Council takes inspiration from the Garden City movement, which sought to redress imbalances in the housing market by ensuring that the whole of society had access to high-quality housing. A fundamental objective of Welborne is to provide a range of house types and tenures to meet housing needs across the wider community.

The aim of the Plan is to deliver approximately 6,000 new homes. Importantly, there is a strong expectation that there will be a wide range of house types and tenures, from larger low-density executive housing to smaller-scale affordable housing. The expectation is that the range of different house types will meet the needs of the local housing market, which will be tested at each phase of the development. The new housing will be integrated, and not separated by tenure, with the affordable housing interspersed with the market housing. In this way Welborne will create a balanced community which reflects the social and economic diversity found in the existing population within the rest of the borough.

It is understood that Welborne, with a community of around 15,000 people, will never be completely self-sufficient and will continue to use the established town centre in Fareham for its high order goods and services. But the new community is currently being planned to ensure that it can meet most of the day-to-day needs of its residents. This includes primary health care and pre-school facilities and primary and secondary schools, and a new district centre. Given the current uncertainties in the employment sector, the Welborne Plan provides a high degree of flexibility on the types of employment uses it will bring forward over the next 20 years; but overall it is expected that at least 3,300 jobs will be created in the more traditional types of office, warehouse and light industrial floorspace, with a further 2,400 jobs in retail, services and other employment.

In planning to meet the needs of the new community Fareham Borough Council has been keen to ensure that the community facilities, including the sports fields, parks and open spaces, are made accessible to the wider community. A network of green corridors is planned to link Welborne with Fareham town centre, the adjoining residential areas and the wider countryside.

A Standing Conference has been established to help facilitate the preparation of the Welborne Plan. Independently chaired, it includes representatives from local community groups, local businesses, adjoining local authorities, and key service providers. The body has been instrumental in helping to establish the type of place that Welborne aspires to be, and in providing a forum for issues to be heard.

Delivering a long-term project such as Welborne has its own challenges. The infrastructure costs are high, such as the need to upgrade junction 10 of the M27 motorway by making it an 'all-moves' junction. So creating a viable and deliverable scheme is essential, but Fareham Borough Council is working closely with the site promoters and with funding agencies such as the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership and the Homes and Communities Agency to secure the necessary infrastructure. Delivery of such infrastructure as and when it is needed is seen as essential to the success of Welborne.

The Welborne Plan has been written as a strategic framework for the delivery of the project, flexible enough to deal with different circumstances and eventualities, yet providing sufficient certainty to enable all parties to continue to invest in the project. The level of evidence produced in support of the Plan is proportionate to its status as part of the Borough's development plan. The joint promoters have indicated that they are likely to proceed with an outline planning application shortly. The job of the Welborne Plan is to provide an appropriate framework to enable that and subsequent planning applications to be judged.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the parties taking part in this Examination, including those participating and attending the hearings sessions, for their engagement and the time they have taken in considering the important planning issues facing this Borough.