

# Welwyn Garden City

Herfordshire

'Mark One' New Town – Designated 20 May 1948

Welwyn Garden City has a unique story. Having started life in 1919 as England's second Garden City, built and developed by a private company working for the community, its designation as a New Town took it from private to public (state) delivery. Following a twin designation with Hatfield (developed by separate Development Corporations run by the same personnel, with Green Belt between the settlements), Welwyn Garden City became the largest settlement in the Borough of Welwyn Hatfield, providing homes for 44% of the Borough's population in 2001. The town's Garden City Heritage is recognised as being of international significance.



Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

## Key facts:

- **Location:** 32 kilometres north of London, on both the A1(M) and the East Coast Main Line.
- **2011 Census population:** 46,619, in 19,549 households.<sup>1</sup>
- **Local authority:** Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.
- **Local Plan status:** Welwyn Hatfield Emerging Core Strategy 2012, with saved policies from the Welwyn Hatfield District Local Plan (adopted 2005).

## New Town designation:

- **Designated:** 20 May 1948.
- **Designated area:** 1,747 hectares.
- **Intended population:** 50,000 (population of Welwyn Garden City at designation: 18,500).
- **Development Corporation:** Designated to assist in the decentralisation of the population of Greater London. The original Garden City masterplan drawn up by Louis de Soissons followed Garden City design principles, with tree-lined boulevards. Its town centre was of neo-Georgian design. Garden City design principles were sometimes compromised in Development Corporation development. The Development Corporation undertook significant housing development in the 1950s, mainly east of the railway line. Development Corporation wound up 31 March 1966.

## Housing, deprivation and health:

- 33.5% of housing in the town is socially rented. Owner-occupation is lower than the UK New Towns and UK averages, and the number of privately rented households is 3-5% lower than the UK New Towns and UK averages.
- Welwyn Garden City has lower levels of deprivation than the English New Towns and England averages (2-3% lower, depending on the category).
- The 2011 Census reported that the 'general health' of Welwyn Garden City residents is above the UK New Towns and UK average levels. 49.8% declared themselves to be in 'very good' health – 3.0% and 2.2% above the UK New

Towns and UK averages, respectively. 3.4% declared themselves to be in 'bad' health – 0.9% lower than the UK New Towns and UK averages. 0.9% declared 'very bad' health – less than 1% below the UK New Towns and UK averages.

## Employment/economic profile:

- Welwyn Garden City is the main focus for employment, retail and community facilities in Welwyn Hatfield Borough.
- Welwyn Garden City has significant areas designated for office, industrial and warehouse uses and currently accommodates a number of major employers, such as Xerox, Tesco and Roche. Tesco is the biggest employer in the town today.
- Within Hertfordshire LEP.

## Development Corporation legacy:

- The structural integrity of the masterplan influences planning and development in the town today.
- When the Development Corporation was wound up there was no plan made for securing long-term management to carry through the ideology and visual and environmental ethos of the Garden City. As with other New Towns, this affects the way the town is planned and managed today.

## Key issues for the future:

- Accommodating housing and employment growth while maintaining the quality of place and respecting the unique heritage and design of the town.
- Cumulative alterations to neighbourhoods.
- Providing affordable housing.
- Parking is an issue, particularly in pre-1970 housing areas.

<sup>1</sup> Totals for the following wards: Sherrands, Haldens, Panshanger, Howlands, Peartree, Handside, Hollybus

## Did you know?

The first public building to open in Welwyn Garden City was a theatre, reflecting the emphasis that the Garden City movement put on arts and culture as part of the community.