

# Chapter 5

## Options Refinement

## Chapter 5 Options Refinement

### 5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1** This chapter presents further layers of refinement and deepens assessment of the main issues as they are likely to impact on development options in different locations.
  - 5.1.2** Chapter 3 used defined assessment criteria to generate red/amber/green ratings. These ratings were then used as a framework for comparative assessment of 69 defined 'areas of search'. In Chapter 4 the relative weight assigned to each topic was evaluated in relation to each specific area of search to assign one of four ratings to each area: Pass, Marginal Pass, Marginal Fail, and Fail. The same rating system was applied to the area of search in relation to the wider area, to enable consideration of strategic and cross-boundary issues. Only those areas assigned a 'Fail' rating were dropped from the strategy selection process. This process of dropping options was described as a 'sieve approach'.
  - 5.1.3** In this chapter the approach combines the focus on specific issues which formed the basis for Chapter 2 with the comparative approach to specific areas of search contained in Chapters 3 and 4. This enables more in-depth assessment of key issues in relation to specific areas of search. It also means that decisions are taken only when sufficient evidence is accumulated to be able to do so with confidence.
  - 5.1.4** Because the focus in this chapter is on more complex issues, it is not appropriate to apply a 'tight' assessment framework of the type used in the early stages of strategy selection when relatively simple and clear-cut criteria were employed. Instead, a 'looser' assessment framework is set out, under which the same issues are applied to each broad area, and to specific areas of search where possible.
  - 5.1.5** No ratings have been applied to the separate assessment in this chapter because many of the issues are nuanced and therefore do not readily lend themselves to such assessment. Instead, the conclusion to this chapter will draw together the headline findings to evaluate the main significant differences between the areas of search.
  - 5.1.6** A number of topics have been selected as critical areas for further assessment because a) there are identified gaps in the evidence base relating to NPPF requirements b) further information proportionate to the requirements of strategic plan-making is available or can be readily obtained c) the information can be meaningfully applied to the task of differentiation between options.
  - 5.1.7** In accordance with these principles, the topics addressed in this chapter are as follows :
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- **Economic development:** independent expert view of realistic economic development options, taking account of viability, future market trends, and economic geographies beyond the individual area or settlement;
- **Urban form:** high-level assessment of landscape and setting, structure and connectivity, function and capacity, and open space and green infrastructure, based on site visits, map-based observation, and relevant documents;
- **Schools:** realistic options to accommodate additional pupils generated by new residential development;
- **Highways:** transport modelling to assess the likely impacts of development and the feasibility of policy interventions to provide new infrastructure or sustainable transport measures;
- **Habitats Regulations Assessment:** legal requirement in relation to designated sites in the Lea Valley, Broxbourne Woods, and Epping Forest;
- **Green Belt Review:** comparative assessment of areas of East Herts Green Belt, including strategic assessment in relation to the five purposes defined in national policy, and detailed assessment in relation to the options for possible new Green Belt boundaries;
- **Delivery:** checking whether land is available for development and what the main land use requirements could be (e.g. residential, commercial, leisure, education, other)

**5.1.8** Each of these assessments refine the existing assessments provided in the previous chapters. Whilst each section in this chapter has been written as a stand-alone assessment, each relates to the broad reviews of the key issues undertaken in Chapter 2 as shown in Table 5.1 below:

**Table 5.1 Refining the issues and the options**

This Chapter	Previous sections
Economic Development	Economy (2.3); Employment Potential (3.3)
Urban Form	Natural and Historic Environment (2.8); Landscape Character (3.14)
Schools	Education (2.4); Primary Schools (3.4); Secondary Schools (3.5)
Highways	Transport (2.5); Highways Infrastructure (3.6)
Habitats Regulations Assessment	Natural and Historic Environment (2.8); Designated Wildlife Sites (3.12)
Green Belt Review	Green Belt (2.9); Boundary Limits (3.16); Strategic Gaps (3.17)

This Chapter	Previous sections
Delivery	Delivery (1.10); Infrastructure Planning (1.11)

**5.1.9** There are also a number of other critical issues addressed previously, for example in relation to water supply and the impact on the environment, which will be addressed further in the remaining chapters of this document.

## 5.2 Economic Development

**5.2.1** Economic development encompasses a wide range of activities in a range of different types of premises, in a variety of different locations from town centres to out-of-town centres and at home. A realistic strategy for the District Plan will need to take account not just of local settlements but of future trends and economic geographies crossing district boundaries. National policy sets out the main requirements in terms of the high-level requirements for plan preparation as follows:

### National Planning Policy Framework

**Paragraph 160:** Local planning authorities should have a clear understanding of business needs within the economic markets operating in and across their area. To achieve this, they should:

- work together with county and neighbouring authorities and with Local Enterprise Partnerships to prepare and maintain a robust evidence base to understand both existing business needs and likely changes in the market; and
- work closely with the business community to understand their changing needs and identify and address barriers to investment, including a lack of housing, infrastructure or viability.

**5.2.2** In order to further the Council's understanding of businesses and markets for the plan period, to provide a basis for future engagement with the business community and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), and to facilitate a robust development strategy to underpin the District Plan, East Herts Council commissioned economic advice from consultants DTZ.<sup>(1)</sup> The consultants' report identifies a number of future economic trends, including the focus on towns and cities, clustering, the changing face of retailing and distribution, and self employment and homeworking. Taking account of NPPF requirements and the strategic advice contained within the DTZ report, four key assessment perspectives have been identified for the purposes of development strategy formulation:

<sup>1</sup> East Hertfordshire Employment Forecasts and Strategic Economic Development Advice (October 2012). Available on the Council's website at [www.eastherts.gov.uk/technicalstudies](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/technicalstudies).

- **Opportunities for jobs growth in the locality:** planning should actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or could be made sustainable, and maintaining the vitality of urban areas (NPPF Paragraph 17). This assessment therefore looks at the feasibility of new jobs at each of the remaining areas of search, whether in a new employment allocation, in another non-allocated location such as a neighbourhood centre, or other local services. Some areas of search are better placed than others to attract businesses, and this partly reflects ease of access to the motorway network, and space to provide modern facilities. <sup>(2)</sup>
- **Opportunities for jobs growth in the wider travel to work area:** the NPPF requires that in planning strategically across local authority boundaries account should be taken of wider travel-to-work areas (NPPF paragraph 180). The DTZ report examines the 'sub-regional distribution of employment growth' in and beyond East Herts. <sup>(3)</sup> There are a number of major employment centres such as Hatfield Business Park, Gunnels Wood, Stevenage, Knebworth Innovation Park, Stevenage, Stansted Airport, Harlow Enterprise Zone, and Park Plaza, Waltham Cross, which are likely to see significant growth. In addition, the City of London, outer London, and a number of other areas beyond the district boundaries are likely to continue to provide significant employment for current and future residents of the settlements of East Herts. The realities of these wider economic geographies in relation to the specialised, flexible, and mobile modern labour and housing markets means that it is often unrealistic to expect people to live and work within the same settlement.
- **Investment barriers:** the NPPF states that local planning authorities should recognise and seek to address potential barriers to investment, such as poor environment or lack of infrastructure, services or housing (NPPF Paragraph 21). The assessment here seeks to identify any such barriers in the locality and the wider area, and suggest whether and how such barriers might be overcome.
- **Prospects for additional employment provision:** the NPPF requires that planning policies should avoid the long term protection of sites allocated for employment use where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for that purpose (NPPF paragraph 22). Whether or not there are reasonable prospects of take-up of particular employment sites by employers is essentially a matter of market

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2 This has already been addressed briefly in the Employment Potential Topic Assessment (see Chapter 3). In practise, where businesses choose to locate will depend on the availability of facilities which match their own particular needs. The needs of Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) differ from the needs of large businesses, and the needs of different sectors also vary. Given such variety, the main concern here is to avoid a prescriptive and inflexible approach by using broad criteria.

3 See Chapter 4 of the DTZ study.

demand, and equally applies to new employment allocations as to existing allocations. DTZ's report has been used as a high-level guide to consider the market attractiveness of particular areas of search for different employment uses. In addition, consideration is given to the prospects for employment growth at non-allocated locations. The viability implications of planning policy costs is a separate matter to be addressed in the next chapter.

- 5.2.3** Taking these criteria together, it is clear that formulation of a credible and deliverable employment strategy involves working with, rather than against, the grain of the overall patterns of economic development and future trends. Therefore aspirations for local job creation have to be located within a wider understanding of the realistic prospects for sustainable economic development, given the constraints arising from competitive economic geographies, financial viability, and barriers to investment. In other words, plans must be aspirational but realistic (NPPF paragraph 154).
- 5.2.4** For economic development to be sustainable in the long-term, it must also be seen within the context of an overall understanding of successful place-making. To take one example, a positive link between residential development and the vitality of existing town centres has been identified in the strategic advice prepared by the consultants. In terms of economic well-being, this consideration must be balanced against maintaining quality of life to attract skilled residents, and also about ensuring that traffic congestion does not unduly reduce the attractiveness of the district as a place to live and to do business. This latter point will be addressed in the section on highways later in this chapter.
- 5.2.5** Finally, the report prepared by DTZ shows that in assessing the competitive impacts of new employment options on existing employment, it is first necessary to understand the nature of economic geographies, industrial sectors and what is being proposed. Adverse impacts tend to occur when there is direct competition with different locations in close proximity fulfilling the same functions. However, where new proposals are different they may complement and reinforce the economic vitality of an area by adding to the overall economic activity. The economy of East Herts is dominated by Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and development of premises for larger businesses outside the district would not tend to compete directly with the district's existing economic base.

## **Bishop's Stortford**

- 5.2.6** The town is well related to Stansted Airport and transport links, with a thriving town centre including substantial comparison goods offer. There are opportunities for development at the Goods Yard and the Causeway, and possibly also the Mill Site in the longer term. There are a number of well regarded employment areas within the town.

**5.2.7** The recently prepared Jobs Forecasting and Strategic Economic Development Advice from DTZ consultants concludes that the location with the strongest prospects for employment growth in the District is Bishop's Stortford, because of its location on the M11; its proximity to Stansted Airport which is expected to generate additional jobs in future years; and the character of the town. To realise this potential for growth, DTZ anticipates the need for allocation of new employment land particularly for B1 uses, at a location on the A120 on the northern or western side of the town, ideally as close as practicable to Junction 8 on the M11. There is also scope for employment growth in the town centre. It would be consistent with planning policy to plan for significant residential growth to accompany employment growth. In terms of future economic development, the following observations may be made:

### **Area of Search 1: Bishop's Stortford Built-up Area - 1,233 dwellings:**

**5.2.8 Local-area opportunities:** Depending upon where development occurs within the existing built-up area, there may be local opportunities to create small-scale economic/employment developments. Existing employment locations, although well-occupied, are not considered flexible and suffer from constraints such as a lack of parking and relatively poor access to main transport networks. The Goods Yard Development Brief (2011) includes aspirations for a mix of uses including office and retail, and possibly a hotel. Proposals to create a town centre boundary linking the station with the existing town centre could provide a significant opportunity. The town centre development scheme at Old River Lane, (approved subject to the completion of a Section 106 Agreement) is possibly the biggest opportunity for new jobs in the retail and service sectors.

**5.2.9 Wider-area opportunities:** In terms of the town as a whole, this level of development may assist in maintaining the viability of the town centre, and existing employment sites and businesses. The potential advantages gained from new employment development would depend on the type of new business created. Some businesses may prefer a town centre location with good access to shops, services and rail connections, whereas a light industrial or warehouse based business would prefer to be located close to main access routes, and may therefore have little connection with existing town centres or employment land. A business park on the edge of the built-up area would meet the needs of businesses and would be preferred compared to a town centre location because of the time penalty involved in travelling into the centre of Bishop's Stortford and the cost of parking.

**5.2.10** Bishop's Stortford gains considerably from its proximity to Stansted Airport and benefits from its own junction on the M11. Functionally, Bishop's Stortford operates within a travel to work area that spans the M11 corridor and includes not only the airport but also Harlow, Sawbridgeworth and the nearest Uttlesford towns. Out-commuting is a dominant aspect of residents in the town and there are a high number of Bishop's Stortford residents

that have airport-related jobs (25% of airport employees reside in Bishop's Stortford). Much of the recent growth of the town has been as a result of airport expansion. Proposals for the release of a 18 hectare employment site at Stansted Airport for non airport-related employment uses is a key opportunity for businesses who would benefit from being close to the airport, the M11 and to Bishop's Stortford services and the town's potential labour supply, but are not constrained by a need to be located close to the M25. Indications suggest that this opportunity would complement the existing employment land within Bishop's Stortford. Conversely, Bishop's Stortford could benefit from office based users who want proximity to the airport, but do not want to be at the airport itself.

**5.2.11 Investment barriers:** Existing employment sites would need considerable investment to ensure they are fit for purpose for modern and changing business needs. Given that many of the issues faced by existing employment sites relate to a lack of access and being physically constrained, it is unlikely that these issues could be overcome even with new hard infrastructure. Investment would need to be focused on improving the existing buildings to ensure they are flexible and are suitable for modern technological requirements. New employment sites located close to major road networks would need to be allocated along with the necessary infrastructure.

**5.2.12 Prospects for employment:** New employment development located within the existing built-up area is likely to be viable in financial terms if they consist of the redevelopment of existing employment areas. However, if the choice was available, investors may prefer to invest in a new less constrained location rather than redevelop existing constrained sites. There may be prospects for limited small-scale office development at the Goods Yard, although the overall attractiveness of this location is limited compared with a new employment area on the edge of town, which could provide better access and parking.

## Area of Search 2: Bishop's Stortford North - Sub Area A: 700 dwellings

**5.2.13 Local-area opportunities:** The Strategic Economic Development Advice suggests that part of this area could be suitable for an employment allocation, given its good access to the A120 and M11. The developer consortium has suggested on its website that it is considering the provision of a Business Incubator Centre, possibly run by the Chamber of Commerce, although it is unclear whether this might be in sub-areas A or B at this stage. It may be that a Business Incubation Centre could form part of an employment allocation.

**5.2.14 Wider-area opportunities:** indications are that Bishop's Stortford is the best location in the District for a new employment allocation. Given constraints at other sites on the A120 nearer the M11, Sub-Area A is likely to provide the best opportunity in the town for a relatively small but modern



employment area. This would complement existing employment areas in the town and take advantage of the proximity to the M11 and Stansted Airport.

**5.2.15 Investment barriers:** Further assessment of the capacity of the A120 to handle the increased traffic arising from development to the north of the town will be needed.

**5.2.16 Prospects for employment:** the developer consortium has not proposed to proceed with the concept of an employment location, although the delivery of an employment allocation as part of the wider development of Sub-Areas A and B is likely to mean that any financial risks can be offset by the delivery of housing development.

## Area of Search 2: Bishop's Stortford North - Sub Area B: 1,400 dwellings

**5.2.17 Local-area opportunities:** the Roger Evans Masterplanning Study (2005) suggested that employment allocations would be best suited to sub-areas A or C, (at the eastern and/or western ends of Area 2) for access and visibility reasons and also to enable a coherent residential neighbourhood structure to be delivered in Sub-Area B. Therefore it is not considered that Sub-Area B in the middle of Area 2 is suitable for an employment allocation or for larger-scale retail. However, it is likely that this sub-area would contain a neighbourhood centre with local shops and other local services and facilities and would therefore be likely to generate some local service employment.

**5.2.18 Wider-area opportunities:** Sub-Area A to the west presents a more suitable location for an employment allocation given the proximity to the A120/Hadham Road roundabout and better visibility.

**5.2.19 Investment barriers:** the main barrier to investment in this area is lack of direct access to the A120. Without direct access this area would be unattractive to prospective employers. However, the A120 is a primary route and therefore an exception would have to be made to the standard policy discouraging direct access on the basis of transport modelling evidence.

**5.2.20 Prospects for employment:** It is likely that one or more neighbourhood centres would be required including local shops and other services and facilities, and such a centre could form part of this. Therefore the prospects for this kind of scheme are considered good.

## Area of Search 2: Bishop's Stortford North - Sub Area C: 400 dwellings

- 5.2.21 Local-area opportunities:** this area is well located in relation to access to the motorway, and the Strategic Economic Development Advice suggested that this area would rank highly in terms of access to the motorway network. The Employment Potential topic assessment (Chapter 3) suggested that the area scores well for visibility and access.
- 5.2.22 Wider-area opportunities:** the developer has promoted options for an employment allocation across the road at the Stansted Road roundabout within the A120. This area has the advantage of being located in close proximity to the motorway and with good access to the A120. However, the site lies within Uttlesford District, and Uttlesford Council has publicly stated its intention not to permit development in this area, and this is reflected in its Draft Local Plan (2012).
- 5.2.23 Investment barriers:** there is no direct access to the A120. Access would need to be via Michael's Road to the Stansted Road roundabout.
- 5.2.24 Prospects for employment:** given that the land is not part of the consortium for Bishop's Stortford North, the financial risks of an employment allocation cannot be easily offset with residential provision. Perhaps because of this, the landowner/developers have publicly stated that they are proposing a residential scheme. Given these factors, there do not appear to be reasonable prospects for significant employment provision in this location.

### Area of Search 3: Bishop's Stortford East - Sub-Area A: employment land only

- 5.2.25** This area of search failed the previous sieving process for residential purposes as the site is more suited for employment uses. It is therefore deemed appropriate to re-address this area of search in this Sieve for employment uses only.
- 5.2.26 Local-area opportunities:** This area of search is well suited for employment land being adjacent to Junction 8 of the M11. The Strategic Economic Development Advice provided indicates this location as a preferential location in terms of market perspective and would attract the most occupier demand for B1 uses. The site is adjacent to Woodside Industrial Estate and Birchanger Services and is reasonably close to existing employment land within the town at Raynham Road and Dunmow Road.
- 5.2.27 Wider-area opportunities:** Given its proximity to the M11 and Stansted Airport, this site is ideally located to serve businesses who want to be close to the airport but want an off-airport site closer to potential labour sources and other businesses. There are potential opportunities that may arise from the sale of Stansted Airport as a new owner may have new ambitious plans for the airport which may increase business and residential needs in Bishop's Stortford. Uttlesford District Council are proposing the release

of an 18 hectare employment site located on the airport for non-airport related uses. In terms of the potential impact this would have on new employment land in Bishop's Stortford and this area of search in particular, it is considered that the Uttlesford site would be more likely to appeal to warehouse operators and B1c Light Industrial occupiers than B1a Office occupiers or B1b R&D occupiers. It is not considered that there would be any conflict with employment opportunities in Harlow given the relative distance from the M25.

- 5.2.28 Investment barriers:** The greatest implications in terms of infrastructure constraints revolve around the need to relocate the current occupier of the land - Bishop's Stortford Football Club. It is known that the club wish to expand and their member numbers are so great that they place considerable demand on all the available football pitches in and around the town. Whilst they might be willing to relocate, any new ground would need to be somewhat larger than their current site, providing second and training pitches along with mini and junior pitches. There are no sites available of this size within the town and the number of landowners, issues of land assembly and the many funding uncertainties involved may make this employment land option undeliverable until the latter stages of the plan period.
- 5.2.29 Prospects for employment:** As noted above, the location in general would be very attractive to business occupiers but the need to facilitate the relocation of Bishop's Stortford Football Club may make this option financially unviable.

### Area of Search 3: Bishop's Stortford East - Sub-Area B only: 150 dwellings

- 5.2.30 Local-area opportunities:** This area of search is well suited for employment land being adjacent to Junction 8 of the M11. The Strategic Economic Development Advice provided indicates this location as a preferential location in terms of market perspective and would attract the most occupier demand for B1 uses. The site is opposite Woodside Industrial Estate and is adjacent to Birchanger Services and is reasonably close to existing employment land within the town at Raynham Road and Dunmow Road. However, the land in question is currently occupied by Bishop's Stortford Golf club who have no desire to relocate nor close and as such, only a small part of the area of search is available for development and this land does not have direct access to Dunmow Road.
- 5.2.31** In terms of residential development, this area of search would yield approximately 150 dwellings. However, it is considered unlikely that this level of development would create any new employment enterprises on its own in the local area; although the increase in population could help support the town's existing economic base.

- 5.2.32 Wider-area opportunities:** Given its proximity to the M11 and Stansted Airport, this site is ideally located to serve businesses which want to be close to the airport but want an off-airport site closer to potential labour sources and other businesses. There are potential opportunities that may arise from the sale of Stansted Airport as a new owner may have new ambitious plans for the airport which may increase business and residential needs in Bishop's Stortford. Uttlesford District Council are proposing the release of an 18 hectare employment site located on the airport for non-airport related uses. In terms of the potential impact this would have on new employment land in Bishop's Stortford and this area of search in particular, it is considered that the Uttlesford site would be more likely to appeal to warehouse operators and B1c Light Industrial occupiers than B1a Office occupiers or B1b R&D occupiers. It is not considered that there would be any conflict with employment opportunities in Harlow given the relative distance from the M25.
- 5.2.33 Investment barriers:** At this point in time there is no indication of a desire to relocate or close Bishop's Stortford Golf Club, and the information received from the Golf Club suggests a preference for residential development only. If the submitted land was considered further, agreement to release land sufficient for an access road from Dunmow Road and to consider the alternative use of land for employment purposes would be required to make the land suitable for employment uses.
- 5.2.34 Prospects for employment:** As noted above, the location in general would be very attractive to business occupiers but the need to negotiate the release of the required land from Bishop's Stortford Golf Club may affect the viability of the option.

#### **Area of Search 4: Bishop's Stortford South - Sub-Area A: 800 dwellings**

- 5.2.35 Local-area opportunities:** This is a large site to the south of the town with good access to the A1184 towards Sawbridgeworth and Harlow, and to the south-western distributor road (St. James' Way). However, the area is less well-located in terms of the town centre of Bishop's Stortford and in terms of quick and easy access to the M11. Despite this, given its size and location the site would still have reasonable prospects for employment uses.
- 5.2.36** The Area of Search was subject to a planning application for education facilities which was refused among other reasons for being within the Green Belt. At this stage it is necessary to still consider the option of using this land for a secondary school. If the land was developed only for residential uses there would be a need for a local shopping parade and the provision of additional education facilities elsewhere in the town, which may provide some employment opportunities. 800 dwellings would create a need for

employment opportunities of a demand that the town cannot currently provide. Therefore, it would be necessary to provide for additional employment land within or in proximity to Bishop's Stortford.

- 5.2.37 Wider-area opportunities:** Given it's relatively poorer access compared to areas in the north and north-east of the town, businesses locating here are more likely to be of a smaller scale, have local connections and not be dependant upon access to the M11 and Stansted Airport. The Strategic Economic Development Advice provided suggests that "this location would not attract significant employers looking for space in the sub-region, simply because of the time and distance needing to be travelled to access the M11 either through the town centre or via the ring-road. This is therefore not a strategic location and the decision whether to bring forward land at this location can be taken on the basis of assessed local requirements, since the site would only cater for local businesses".
- 5.2.38 Investment barriers:** There would be no significant infrastructure barriers to locating employment land in this area of search. Access would be best located near the A1184/St James' Way junction and would in theory be possible to achieve. There are a number of bus routes in the area which could link the area of search with the town centre and the rail station. Development would need to be located and designed in a manner that avoids any physical impact on the Hertfordshire Way in the northern part of the area of search.
- 5.2.39 Prospects for employment:** Given that this area of search is unlikely to be attractive to large or significant employers it may be that without intervention, smaller businesses would not be viable in this location. Employment development would therefore need to be provided as part of a mixed-use scheme.

### Key Points: Economic Development Opportunities in Bishop's Stortford

- 5.2.40** Bishop's Stortford has the greatest potential of any of the settlements in East Herts District for economic development, given its proximity to the M11 and Stansted Airport in particular.
- 5.2.41** There is likely to be demand for a new employment allocation on a greenfield site to the edge of the town, particularly on the A120 between the Hadham Road roundabout and Junction 8 of the M11. The prospects for delivery of such an allocation are best at the A120/Hadham Road roundabout, because of various constraints at other possible sites nearer the M11. Such an allocation would be likely to complement existing employment allocations in the town because it would provide a different and new offer.

- 5.2.42** The Goods Yard site may be capable of a small amount of office development, although it may not be financially viable for a significant amount of office development to come forward in this location.

## Buntingford

- 5.2.43** Buntingford is a small market town in the north of the District on the A10. It is some distance from major employment centres, with Bishop's Stortford some 12 miles to the east, Baldock and Letchworth 12 miles to the north west, Royston 6 miles to the north, Stevenage 6 miles to the west and Ware 10 miles to the south. Buntingford does not have a rail service and therefore residents are likely to drive to one of the neighbouring towns to access the railway service. The town has a comparatively older population than the other main towns in the District. While this may reduce the proportion of adults of working age, the unemployment rate for those of working age is relatively low. It may be due to the inaccessibility of the town that it is populated by those who do not have to travel to work, or by those who can afford to travel by car some distance for employment. It is also possible that a relatively large proportion of those in work do so from home, since this is an increasingly common characteristic for those living in rural areas provided there is access to good standard broadband services. In terms of future economic development, the following observations may be made:

### Area of Search 5: Buntingford Built-up Area: 67 dwellings

- 5.2.44** **Local-area opportunities:** Buntingford itself is not well located for the majority of business types that rely on access to major transport networks such as motorways or rail connections. However, for businesses that serve, or are linked to a small centre, the town's high quality environment is an attraction. The recent interest in the former Sainsbury's distribution depot in the south of the town has rejuvenated employment interest in the town, with a possible redeveloped distribution centre, which could create 600 new jobs. However, given the relatively older population of the town and its low level of unemployment, it is unknown at this stage whether these jobs would actually serve the town, or would draw labour from nearby towns such as Stevenage.
- 5.2.45** There are several small employment sites around and near to the town from which new employment opportunities could be built. However, these existing sites may not be suitable for modern or changing business needs.
- 5.2.46** **Wider-area opportunities:** The main advantage Buntingford has in terms of its location is that it serves a relatively large rural hinterland. As such, a new employment location such as a redeveloped distribution depot would not only serve this hinterland, but could also draw its employees from the same wide geographic area. As previously discussed however, the town is not well located for businesses that rely on motorway or rail connections.

Buntingford is not a strategic employment location and will not attract large scale employers, since they would not be able to easily recruit locally. But it could attract smaller, essentially local employers either with strong local connections or those who regard it as a good central location to service customers in the ring of towns all located within 10 to 15 miles around Buntingford. Business rates and rents are comparatively cheaper than neighbouring major employment centres which could be another attraction for businesses.

**5.2.47 Investment barriers:** The greatest barrier preventing large scale employment development is the lack of access to motorway and rail services. Even with the remote possibility of a new railway line beyond the current planning period, the distance from other major employment centres is the biggest disadvantage facing the town. Small-scale employment development would be able to fit into the existing infrastructure available in the town without the need to invest in new infrastructure.

**5.2.48 Prospects for employment:** Large-scale employers would not be attracted to the town, not only due to its distance from other major centres and major road networks, but also due to the lack of local labour. Small-scale employers with local links would be more likely to locate in the town as it is a good location to serve the hinterland around the town. However, small-scale employers are not likely to be able to afford the costs associated with developing an industrial estate or business park so financial intervention would be needed to provide a range of small, flexible units on an attractive site, probably as part of a wider mixed-use scheme.

#### **Area of Search 6: Buntingford South and West - Sub-Area A: – employment land only**

**5.2.49** This area of search failed the previous sieving process for residential purposes as the site is more suited for employment uses. It is therefore deemed appropriate to re-address this area of search in this Sieve for employment uses only.

**5.2.50 Local-area opportunities:** The existing Buntingford Business Park is a well-located employment site with relatively modern premises and a site that is suitable for expansion. Located on the junction of the A507 and the A10 bypass, the site is better located in terms of access to major road networks compared to the other areas of search and employment sites in and around the town. In terms of impact, the existing business park is well screened from the road by bunds and vegetation and any expansion could occur to the north of the existing buildings if necessary. There are also several small employment sites around and near to the town from which new employment opportunities could be built. However, these existing sites may not be suitable for modern or changing business needs.

- 5.2.51 Wider-area opportunities:** A disadvantage of this site is that it is not as well-connected to the town centre (15-20 minute walk), lacks regular bus services past the area and the crossing point across the A10 would need safety improvements. These issues may however be overcome with investment. In terms of connections with existing employment areas in the town, this area of search is almost centrally located on the A10 bypass between the former Sainsbury's Distribution Depot in the south of the town and Park Farm Industrial Estate in the north of the town. In terms of serving the wider hinterland around Buntingford, being located on the A507 immediately adjacent to the A10 bypass means the site has good accessibility to the major road network around the town.
- 5.2.52 Investment barriers:** The existing employment land at Buntingford Business Park already has adequate infrastructure that could be expanded comparatively easily. One matter that may need further consideration depending upon the location of any new units on the site is that of ensuring continued access to the covered reservoir that lies to the west of the business park. New bus connections and road crossings would also help ensure that the site could be accessed by sustainable transport means.
- 5.2.53 Prospects for employment:** To extend Buntingford Business Park would be more cost-effective than creating a new site on another location as there are already utilities on site and a suitable access to the A507. It is one of the best located employment sites in Buntingford and would therefore be attractive to local businesses. In terms of considering the risk of speculative development, to expand an existing business park would be considered less of a risk than creating a new site in an untested location.

## Area of Search 6: Buntingford South and West - Sub-Area B: 500 dwellings

- 5.2.54 Local-area opportunities:** Even though the proposed redevelopment of the former Sainsbury's Distribution Depot would, if approved, provide for some of the employment need associated with potential residential development in the town, one could not assume that all new residents would wish to work at the depot. This area of search, although adjacent to the A10 bypass would need to secure access from Baldock Road in order to make it suitable for employment uses. As the northern part of this area of search is in close proximity to an existing employment area at Buntingford Business Park there would be little to justify the creation of new employment land alongside residential properties when it would be more suitable, easier to achieve and more cost-effective to expand the Business Park.
- 5.2.55** Whilst there is an existing employment site at Watermill Industrial Estate in the southern part of this area of search, along with the unneighbourly use of land as a sewage plant which makes this area of search more suitable for employment uses than residential, the location and poor access makes it a less attractive site for business occupiers. Access is currently



gained via Aspenden Road, a narrow lane past residential properties accessed of London Road/Station Road rather than via a direct link from a main road. The site is less-well laid out with generally small, poor quality units and as such, the site scores poorly in terms of marketability. Refurbishment of the existing site may increase employment potential, but the site is constrained preventing expansion and as the site is within Flood Zone 2, there may be implications in terms of flood risk and suitable uses. There are also several existing employment sites around and near to the town from which new employment opportunities could be built, most of which are more suitable for modern or changing business needs.

- 5.2.56 Wider-area opportunities:** The southern part of this area of search is not very well connected to the town centre or to other employment sites around the town. There is no alternative means of transport though there may be opportunities to improve this situation if any employment land was considered alongside a wider residential-led development. In terms of serving the wider hinterland around Buntingford, the southern part of this area of search has better access to villages to the south of the town than to the wider hinterland.
- 5.2.57 Investment barriers:** If employment land was sought in the northern part of the area of search new access roads and junctions would be required to make the area more accessible to the A10/A507 junction. If employment land was sought in the southern part of the area of search in connection with the existing Watermill Industrial Estate, considerable investment would be needed to make the area more suitable for employment uses. Aspenden Road is relatively narrow and unsuitable for large articulated vehicles and there is no bus route serving this area. There may also be a need to install flood mitigation measures.
- 5.2.58 Prospects for employment:** Given the poor access and other physical constraints, this location would not prove attractive to occupiers as even with significant investment the area of search would not be considered a favourable location given the alternative opportunities around the town. It is unlikely that a new junction would be acceptable from the A10. Even if this was acceptable the cost associated with such development may make the entire area of search unviable even with a mixed use, residential-led scheme. Instead, negotiations would be necessary between a number of landowners and the highway authority to gain access from Baldock Road, which would be a more cost-effective alternative.

#### **Area of Search 6: Buntingford South and West - Sub-Area C within the bypass: 120 dwellings**

- 5.2.59 Local-area opportunities:** This area of search is effectively divided into two separate areas: land of Aspenden Road, west of the abandoned railway line; and land off London Road, east of the railway line which currently contains a football pitch used by Buntingford Cougars Youth Football Club,

associated with Buntingford Football Club located on the east of the A10. Given the lack of access already cited from Aspenden Road, the western half of this area of search would be unsuitable for employment land (see Area of Search 6: Sub-Area B above). If access could be gained from London Road, the eastern half of the area of search would be well located for employment land, being located opposite to the former Buntingford Distribution Depot which is subject to a redevelopment proposal as a distribution centre. Being located at the junction of London Road with the A10, this eastern part of the area of search would be well located in terms of access to the major road network around Buntingford. There are also several existing employment sites around and near to the town from which new employment opportunities could be built.

- 5.2.60 Wider-area opportunities:** In terms of connections with existing employment areas in the town this area of search is best located to take advantage of its proximity to the potential redevelopment of the distribution depot. The area is also well located in terms of access to the A10 provided development gained access from London Road. As has already been discussed, it is unlikely that large employers would locate in Buntingford given its distance from motorway and rail connections. However, there is potential to provide local employment opportunities from businesses seeking to serve Buntingford's wide rural hinterland.
- 5.2.61 Investment barriers:** If access could be gained from London Road there would be few infrastructure issues provided development occurs in the eastern half of the area of search. The western part of the area is within Flood Zone 2 and therefore may require flood mitigation measures which may make a scheme nonviable. There is also the matter of needing to relocate Buntingford Cougars Football Club to an alternative site. It might be possible to relocate the football pitch to the western half of the site to assist in forming a green wedge in the area of flood risk less suitable for built development, provided a suitable pitch surface could be achieved. This would need negotiations with the football club as it would move the youth ground further away from the Buntingford Football Club with which they are associated.
- 5.2.62 Prospects for employment:** Depending upon where development occurred within this area of search there would be different financial implications to consider including new access points, the possible relocation of the football club and possible flood mitigation measures. Given the existing employment opportunities around the town that could be more easily expanded it may be that employment land in this area of search would not be as attractive as other alternative locations and this therefore may affect viability.

## Area of Search 7: Buntingford North - Sub-Area A: 500 dwellings

- 5.2.63 Local-area opportunities:** The existing employment site at Park Farm Industrial Estate located within this sub-area is ideally suitable for expansion/redevelopment to create new local employment opportunities. As the town grows over the plan period there is likely to be increased demand for new employment and/or commercial premises to serve existing and future residents. In many ways the Park Farm Industrial Estate would represent an ideal location for retail premises to support and compliment the existing high street retail offer and to assist in retaining local expenditure as there are less physical constraints to the north of the town than to the south. Whilst employment uses are usually better located at major road junctions, the Park Farm Industrial Estate is instead well located for smaller scale businesses that serve the locality rather than those reliant on quick and direct access to the main road network. Reconfiguration of the employment premises could be sought in order to provide flexibility for the neighbouring Freman College, whilst maintaining a frontage to the employment site along Ermine Street may improve visibility of the site. Another option would be the relocation of the employment land to the north of this Area of Search closer to the junction with the A10, releasing the land at the Park Farm Industrial Estate for residential properties and again providing flexibility for Freman College to expand.
- 5.2.64 Wider-area opportunities:** This Area of Search is better located in terms of access to the high street and to towns and villages north of Buntingford. Employment development within this northern Area of Search would compliment the town's existing employment opportunities. Whilst being better located to the high street, it is not in a location that provides quick and easy access to major road networks and other employment sites around the town such as at Buntingford Business Park and the former Sainsbury's Distribution Depot and is therefore more suited to employers seeking to serve the local area rather than the wider area.
- 5.2.65 Investment barriers:** The greatest barrier preventing large scale employment development is the lack of access to motorway and rail services. Even with the remote possibility of a new railway line beyond the current planning period, the distance from other major employment centres is the biggest disadvantage facing the town. An access point directly off the A10 bypass would make employment land in this sub-area more attractive.
- 5.2.66 Prospects for employment:** If Park Farm Industrial Estate was relocated further north rather than being redeveloped this may have implications on viability in terms of having to provide an alternative employment location as part of any development. The existing Park Farm Industrial Estate is well occupied and as such is an indication of continuing demand for local employment opportunities.

### Area of Search 8: Buntingford North-East - Sub-Area B: 300 dwellings

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- 5.2.67 Local-area opportunities:** This location would be comparatively unsuitable for employment land development given it's lack of access to major road connections. Whilst businesses here would be well-located in terms of access to the town centre, it is not well-located in terms of access to existing employment areas around the town.
- 5.2.68** There are several small employment sites around and near to the town from which new employment opportunities could be built. However, the existing sites may not be suitable for modern or changing business needs.
- 5.2.69 Wider-area opportunities:** Whilst being better located to the high street, it is not in a location that provides quick and easy access to major road networks and other employment sites around the town such as at Buntingford Business Park and the former Sainsbury's Distribution Depot.
- 5.2.70 Investment barriers:**The greatest barrier preventing large scale employment development in this area of search is the lack of access to motorway and rail services. Even with the remote possibility of a new railway line beyond the current planning period, the distance from other major employment centres is the biggest disadvantage facing the town.
- 5.2.71 Prospects for employment:** This area of search does not have enough attractions for businesses or large employers given its relative lack of access, that investors are unlikely to justify the expense of creating new employment land in this location compared to investing in other existing employment sites around the town.

## Area of Search 9: Buntingford East: 500 dwellings

- 5.2.72 Local-area opportunities:** This location is very well located in terms of access to the A10 and other employment opportunities at the former Sainsbury's Distribution Depot in the south of the town, if employment land was located south of Owles Lane. However, this location would be further away from the town centre.
- 5.2.73** There are several small employment sites around and near to the town from which new employment opportunities could build. However, the existing sites may not be suitable for modern or changing businesses.
- 5.2.74 Wider-area opportunities:** This area of search is well suited in terms of potential access to the A10 heading south of the town and also to the proposed distribution centre at the Former Sainsbury's Distribution Depot site. If access could be achieved either through or around the depot site, this would be a significant advantage for this area of search. As has already been discussed, the town's distance from major employment centres is a disadvantage for some businesses. However, there are advantages for locally linked businesses who are not reliant on access to major road or rail networks and who do not require a large labour pool.

**5.2.75 Investment barriers:** As has already been noted, the greatest infrastructure barrier to preventing large scale employment development in this area of search is the lack of access to motorway and rail services. At a more area-specific level, improved access to the A10 would make employment land more attractive. This is likely to entail a new link road either from or around the proposed distribution centre. Whether this is possible or not has not been determined and would require further evidence prior to making a decision.

**5.2.76 Prospects for employment:** The potential need for a new access to the A10 may affect the viability of employment land in this area of search. If access could be achieved through the distribution centre, this would be more cost-effective than providing a new link road around this existing site. Without this access, employment land is less attractive and may affect the suitability of the site for employment land purposes.

## Key Points: Economic Development Opportunities in Buntingford

**5.2.77** Whatever scale of residential development is proposed for Buntingford, there will be an increased need for additional retail and education provision within the town, including within pre-school, primary, middle and upper education tiers, which would in themselves create employment opportunities in these industries. The Strategic Economic Development Advice suggests that should the town grow with new residential development which consists of affordable housing, it will be necessary to ensure the provision of local employment opportunities.

**5.2.78** Buntingford businesses are unique in the District in that they thrive despite their distance from motorway and rail connections and proximity to major employment centres that most businesses rely on. Businesses within and around Buntingford instead appear to have local links serving the local area and the rural hinterland around the town.

**5.2.79** It would be most cost-effective and appropriate to seek to expand existing sites, particularly those performing well with the potential for improvement such as Buntingford Business Park and the Park Farm Industrial Estate. To create new employment land in the town is considered to be unachievable if it is solely for employment uses. Mixed use residential-led schemes may prove viable in the longer term, but should be planned to provide small to medium sized units for local small or expanding businesses.

## Hertford

**5.2.80** Hertford and Ware are considered together within the DTZ independent consultant's report, for while their separate identities and town centres are recognised, they are likely to be regarded as a single location in terms of the industrial and commercial property market. Due to their proximity to

Hatfield Business Park and other prospective prestige developments in neighbouring authority areas, it is considered that it would be difficult for the towns to attract investment for a similar development.

- 5.2.81** There is a strong presence of public sector employment in the two towns, notably Hertford, and an expected decline in this sector in future years could particularly affect them.
- 5.2.82** There are considered to be excellent rail and road links from both Hertford and Ware to London and intermediate settlements, and to towns in surrounding districts, where DTZ expect it to be easier to grow employment bases than the two towns.
- 5.2.83** However, it is thought that the benefit of considering significant residential development in and around both towns would be the reinforcement of the town centres by growing the catchment population, and potentially attracting small scale office occupiers to locate there. Nonetheless, the impact of road based out commuting on existing road networks would need to be weighed against this.
- 5.2.84** The report further identifies the need to rejuvenate existing employment areas to accommodate the shift to business service employment and includes Mead Lane and the Foxholes/Caxton Hill areas in this category. Furthermore, consideration should also be given to identifying a small number of modest sites for B1 employment; preferably where there is reasonably good access to the trunk road system and in a visible location. These may be delivered in conjunction with new residential development.
- 5.2.85** Given the foregoing context, the four remaining areas of search for Hertford have been considered against the potential implications for employment and economic development, based upon their potential scale of development and their relationship to the local and wider area. In terms of future economic development, the following observations may be made:

### **Area of Search 10: Hertford Built-Up Area: 875 dwellings**

- 5.2.86** **Local-area opportunities:** This is the highest level of growth scenario being considered for the town; although it should be borne in mind that, of the 875 dwellings proposed, 385 already have the benefit of planning permission, leaving around 490 dwellings to be delivered in the urban context. Of these, it is anticipated that 300 would be located in the Mead Lane area on vacant brownfield sites. The Council is in the process of developing an Urban Design Framework for the area, which has already been the subject of public consultation. This draft document envisages that the delivery of around 300 dwellings in the area would also serve as a catalyst for the provision of around 3,000 sqm of B1 employment development within the boundaries of the existing designated employment area.

- 5.2.87** The remaining potential opportunities for development within the urban context are likely to be delivered on a range of small sites. It is therefore considered that there would be only very limited opportunities to create additional employment from this level of development. However, some of these new occupants may potentially benefit from any new employment development provided in the Mead Lane area.
- 5.2.88** **Wider-area opportunities:** In terms of the town as a whole, this level of development may assist in maintaining the viability of the town centre as well as boosting the existing Mead Lane designated Employment Area, and possibly other existing employment sites and businesses. The close proximity of Hertford East Station to the Mead Lane area would mean that any new development in this location that led to out commuting by rail from this station would not be likely to involve additional car borne journeys. However, those journeys made by private motorised transport would add to existing congestion issues in the town centre.
- 5.2.89** While development in other parts of the urban area may not lead to creation of jobs in those locations, there is the potential that a small proportion of new occupiers would be employers of small businesses.
- 5.2.90** The town's good access to London via its choice of two rail links and by other transport modes to higher order towns in the locality enables high numbers of residents to easily out commute. The availability of bus transport to a wide variety of destinations, from both the central core and other locations throughout the town, supplements this sustainable transport offer; however, car borne journeys are likely to continue to feature highly in the modal split, exacerbating Hertford's existing congestion problems.
- 5.2.91** The town's retail offer is unlikely to be greatly affected by this level of development beyond helping to maintain the viability of the existing offer and potentially providing employment for some new residents.
- 5.2.92** Hertford benefits from its relationship to the A414 and A10 and the proximity to the M11, M25 and A1(M) beyond the district for both outward travel and for businesses wishing to locate in the town. The potential advantages gained from new employment development would depend on the type of new business created. While some enterprises may prefer a town centre location with good access to shops, services and rail connections, light industrial or warehouse based businesses tend to naturally locate close to main access routes where possible, and may therefore have little connection with the town itself or its existing, more centrally located, employment sites. These could result in less sustainable travel patterns than for more central locations.
- 5.2.93** **Investment barriers:** In the context of development in the Mead Lane area, the draft Mead Lane Urban Design Framework lists various interventions that will be required to facilitate development. These include

a number of key infrastructure features including, but not limited to, a new link road and passenger transport interchange north of Hertford East station; secondary point of access for sole emergency vehicle use; pedestrian and cycle improvements; bridge link; improved vehicle circulation; and improved bus penetration within the larger Mead Lane employment area.

- 5.2.94** For the wider urban context, specific measures have been identified within the Hertford and Ware Urban Transport Plan for which contributions towards could be required as appropriate, depending on the level of development proposed. In respect of specific employment area schemes, the removal of an obstruction between the Foxholes and Caxton Hill estates has been identified to facilitate improved vehicular access to the main road network from the Caxton Hill area and aid the reduction of congestion in the town centre.
- 5.2.95** Some of the older existing employment sites in Hertford may need considerable investment to ensure they are fit for purpose for modern and changing businesses. However, given that many of the issues faced by existing employment sites relate to being physically constrained, it is unlikely that these issues could be overcome with new hard infrastructure.
- 5.2.96** Should additional employment sites be identified, these should ideally be located close to major road networks and would need to make provision for necessary infrastructure, as commensurate.
- 5.2.97** **Prospects for employment:** In respect of the Mead Lane area, there should be significant opportunities for mixed use development to enable regeneration of the area. However, due to the need to form a buffer between new residential elements and the more general existing employment activities, some involving non-neighbourly uses, any new employment provision should be limited to B1 uses. While it is anticipated that new infrastructure requirements would be funded by development, issues relating to multiple land ownership, remediation, and co-ordination of delivery, could mean that this area may not be developed during the earliest phases of the plan period.
- 5.2.98** The remaining minor residential development locations would be far less likely to offer direct employment opportunities beyond home working or very small scale enterprises at most.

## Area of Search 11: Hertford West: 600 dwellings

- 5.2.99** **Local-area opportunities:** In terms of locally arising opportunities to access existing employment, while there is little direct provision beyond schools and the parade of shops at Fleming Crescent, this Area of Search is well located in terms of access to bus services to the town centre and some other locations in the town.



- 5.2.100** Given the proximity to Fleming Crescent and the level of residential development proposed, there would not likely be the need for further local retail services in the area. In terms of more general employment provision of a B1 use class nature within the area itself, there is good access to the nearby A414 and this could be viewed as attractive to investors due to its likely visibility. However, any employment provision would be at the expense of the area's ability to maximise its potential for residential provision. Therefore, a choice would need to be made in this respect.
- 5.2.101** **Wider-area opportunities:** The area is very well positioned for pedestrian access to Hertford North station and its connections to London, Stevenage and wider destinations. Bus services, either adjacent to the Area of Search or in close proximity in the Sele Farm area, provide sustainable access opportunities to a wide range of locations. However, for car borne commuters there would be good access to the wider road network, which if travelling in a westerly direction would have less impact on the town's congestion problems than development in some other locations.
- 5.2.102** **Investment barriers:** There would be no significant infrastructure barriers to locating employment land in this area of search, beyond the need to protect existing natural heritage and wildlife assets, and it is unlikely that further major infrastructure would be required in this respect as the use of existing infrastructure would probably be sufficient. However, any significant employment provision at this location would be at the expense of residential delivery.
- 5.2.103** **Prospects for employment:** While this Area of Search could deliver an element of employment provision, it is more likely that its attractiveness for future development potential would lie for predominantly residential use. A series of past leisure schemes that were granted permission over a number of years, which would have resulted in job creation on around half of the developable area, remain unimplemented. Furthermore, given its proximity to rail, bus and road access to locally arising and wider employment opportunities, it is considered unlikely that significant additional employment opportunities would be created in this location.

### Area of Search 12: Hertford North - Sub-Area C: 100 dwellings

- 5.2.104** **Local-area opportunities:** In terms of locally arising opportunities to access existing employment, while there is little direct provision in the immediate area beyond Bengoe Primary school, the few shops in Bengoe Street and the small parade of shops in The Avenue, this Area of Search would be well located in terms of access to a bus route which serves the town centre and its many employment opportunities. Depending on location of development, the town centre could also be accessed on foot.

- 5.2.105** It is considered unlikely that this level of development would create any new employment enterprises on its own in the local area; although the increase in population could help support the town's existing economic base.
- 5.2.106** In terms of considering the establishment of employment opportunities on its own terms, the area would have the potential to access the A602 and A10 via B158, although these are some distance away from the area. The A414 could be accessed via the town centre, but there are recognised congestion problems in the locality and this may be seen as an impediment by potential employers. The effects of the additional traffic generated by the development would also need to be considered further in this context.
- 5.2.107** **Wider-area opportunities:** With high levels of out commuting in the town, access to the town centre by bus would enable wider connections, both via this mode of transport and to rail travel via a walk to Hertford East station. Hertford North station is slightly further away, with no current direct bus connection and 'rat-running' issues through lower Bengoe are well documented, with potential measures to restrict access detailed in the Hertford and Ware Urban Transport Plan.
- 5.2.108** As stated above, the area would have the ability to connect to 'A' roads in the vicinity to enable access to wider employment bases, but this would only be likely to satisfy car-borne journeys.
- 5.2.109** **Investment barriers:** There would be no significant infrastructure barriers to locating employment land in this area of search, beyond addressing potential waste water issues and the assessment of impact in relation to trip generation. It is likely that the use of existing road infrastructure could be possible; however, any new employment allocations in this area should ensure that any new infrastructure requirements subsequently identified are self funded.
- 5.2.110** **Prospects for employment:** Given the lack of visibility of this area in relation to the primary route network and the existing congestion restraints in the locality, it is considered unlikely that significant employment development would be appropriate, especially for the level of residential development proposed.
- 5.2.111** It is therefore considered more likely direct employment opportunities would be limited to home working or very small scale enterprises.

## Area of Search 13: Hertford South - Sub-Area C: 100 dwellings

- 5.2.112** **Local-area opportunities:** While this area is somewhat remote from designated employment sites other than Foxholes, job opportunities may be available at the public sector District and County Council office bases; Post Office sorting office; and various schools in the locality which could

all be reasonably accessed by most people on foot. The town centre is located further away and, with no regular bus service beyond a school service, either a more lengthy walk or car borne journeys would be required.

- 5.2.113** For this level of growth and with the area currently under consideration being constrained by existing development and natural features it is not anticipated that any new employment opportunities would present themselves beyond home working.
- 5.2.114** **Wider-area opportunities:** While Hertford East and Hertford North stations enable good access to London and wider destinations, these would be some distance from the area. Therefore, these may imply additional car borne journeys; although the C3 bus service serves a stop in nearby London Road towards the town centre which may facilitate access to Hertford East.
- 5.2.115** As no other bus routes serve the locality, it is likely that other outward bound travel to wider employment bases would generally be made by car. With the A414 and A10 in close proximity, this may prove an attractive option for future residents.
- 5.2.116** **Investment barriers:** While there would be no significant infrastructure barriers to locating employment land in this area of search, and the use of existing infrastructure would be applicable for this level of development, the narrowness of Mangrove Road would limit the size of vehicle that would be appropriate for regular access to any enterprise established.
- 5.2.117** **Prospects for employment:** Although the area is located in close proximity to the A414 and to the A10 beyond, the part of the Area of Search under consideration is constrained by residential development on two sides and by the nature of Mangrove Road. It is therefore considered more likely that a residential development would be preferred in this location and that direct employment opportunities would be limited to home working or very small scale enterprises.
- 5.2.118** Should further employment allocations be made beyond those existing, they should ensure that new infrastructure requirements are self funded.

### Key Points: Economic Development Opportunities in Hertford

- 5.2.119** Whilst Hertford currently has a large public sector base, and every opportunity should be taken to retain this, recent shrinkage in this area is predicted to continue, at least in the short term, and therefore any expansion of this element of the employment market is not considered likely.

- 5.2.120** Proposals for growth in the Mead Lane area offer the best potential for large scale employment expansion for the town (approximately 3,000 sqm) via mixed use proposals for the area; albeit that this would be subject to the delivery of various elements of infrastructure to support such development.
- 5.2.121** For other existing employment areas, and given that the repositioning of older industrial estates would prove problematic, consideration should be given towards investment to ensure competitiveness with more modern and, in some cases, more easily accessible, ventures.
- 5.2.122** The levels of growth proposed for Hertford as a whole would in themselves create a need for employment opportunities and, with the exception of the Mead Lane area, it is not considered likely that significant scale employment areas would be facilitated by the levels of development proposed. It is therefore considered likely that, as these would not be of a sufficient scale to contain the increased work-age population, there would be an increase in out commuting to neighbouring higher order centres or further beyond, e.g. London. In this respect, given the distances from some of these areas to the railway stations, likely bus availability, and close proximity of the major route network, it would be anticipated that many of these out commuting journeys would be made by private motorised transport.
- 5.2.123** Population increase of the levels suggested in Hertford could have some detrimental effect on the existing businesses in the town, due to additional car journeys generated and resultant increased congestion where there are already known issues (most notably the A414 and the Bengoe/Old Cross areas), especially at peak times. Conversely, the increased population could help support the existing retail and service enterprises in the town centre, including the burgeoning evening economy.
- 5.2.124** Taking all of the above into account, and based solely on the evaluation of economic matters, it is considered that on balance it would be appropriate to support the levels of development proposed for Hertford.

## Sawbridgeworth

- 5.2.125** Sawbridgeworth is a small market town located approximately midway between Bishop's Stortford and Harlow on the A1184. The town benefits from a rail service to London, Stansted Airport and Cambridge. However, because of this, Sawbridgeworth suffers from a high proportion of out-commuting to the neighbouring larger towns and by rail. Traditional businesses located along the River Stort at The Maltings, just outside the district boundary have now given way to antique trading and repairs and the town centre is contained by its historic environment. In terms of future economic development, the following observations may be made:

### Area of Search 14: Sawbridgeworth Existing Built-Up Area: 119 dwellings

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- 5.2.126 Local-area opportunities:** The existing built-up area is physically constrained and as such is unlikely to yield sites suitable for employment uses. One large site that could be considered large enough for employment development is the Sawbridgeworth Football Club ground at Crofters to the northwest of the existing built-up area. However, access would not be achievable from the A1184 and as such would only be suitable for small local employers.
- 5.2.127 Wider-area opportunities:** In terms of the town as a whole, new residential development may assist in maintaining the viability of the town centre, but is unlikely to create new employment opportunities, apart from the possibility that a small proportion of new occupiers would be employers of small businesses. The town's relatively good access to neighbouring higher order towns with their substantial employment opportunities, and even London and Stansted Airport, enable high numbers of residents to commute out of the town with relative ease. This proximity to other major employment centres means that business occupiers are more likely to favour these locationally preferential sites than any in Sawbridgeworth.
- 5.2.128 Investment barriers:** Because it is not expected that this level of development would create additional employment opportunities, no additional infrastructure would be needed.
- 5.2.129 Prospects for employment:** There are currently unknowns over the viability of development at the Crofters football ground. This development opportunity hinges on whether the football club would be prepared to move ground and sell their current site. This in itself depends upon whether another landowner is prepared to sacrifice land for a new football ground. There are potentially three landowners involved and until this matter is resolved there are questions over the potential viability of development at the football ground. Compared to other locations available within the travel to work area within which Sawbridgeworth is centrally located, employers are unlikely to prefer Sawbridgeworth.

**Area of Search 16: Sawbridgeworth West - Sub-Area A and B - North and South of West Road: 200 dwellings**

- 5.2.130 Local-area opportunities:** Employment development in these locations would not be well located in terms of access to major roads. The location is within reasonable distance from the town centre but is located some distance from Sawbridgeworth Station with no realistic possibility of improving bus services to create alternative means of travel. The existing Maltings employment land specialises in antique trading and repairs and as such it would be difficult for new businesses to create effective links with the existing businesses. Employment land to the north of West Road would be either adjacent to or close to Mandeville Primary School and

such proximity would be unsafe and inappropriate. Employment land to the south of West Road would be more suitable than north but neither would be an attractive location for new businesses.

**5.2.131 Wider-area opportunities:** In terms of the town as a whole, this level of development may assist in maintaining the viability of the town centre, but again would not result in the creation of new employment, apart from the possibility that a small proportion of new occupiers would be employers of small businesses. The town's relatively good access to neighbouring higher order towns and even London and Stansted Airport, enable high numbers of residents to commute out of the town with relative ease.

**5.2.132 Investment barriers:** Land to the south of West Road was previously listed as being within a Flood Zone. Landowner discussions with the Environment Agency have resulted in the EA amending their flood zones to discount much of the area of search from being at risk of flooding. Regardless of this, it may be necessary for development to include some flood attenuation measures. This quantum of development may increase the need for local employment opportunities within the area but would not necessarily be able to facilitate the infrastructure gains necessary to serve new employment land or residential development such as a new bus route. Transport links east to west across the town are limited and would not be suitable to serve a new employment area.

**5.2.133 Prospects for employment:** Flood attenuation measures required for land to the south of West Road may impact on viability depending upon the location and layout of development in this area. Development to the north of West Road would need to donate or sell land to the County council for the expansion of the Mandeville Primary School to enable the expansion of facilities at the school to accommodate the additional pupils 200 dwellings would generate.

**5.2.134** Employment land located in this area of search would not function well alongside existing employment areas within Sawbridgeworth. The Maltings employment area located adjacent to the River Stort benefits from its close proximity to Sawbridgeworth Rail Station. The Maltings focuses mostly in antique restoration and trading. Being a niche market, it is unlikely that new employment to the west of the town would be able to feed off the existing employment area.

## **Area of Search 16: Sawbridgeworth West - Sub-Area A and B and Area of Search 17: Sawbridgeworth North - Sub-Area A: 2,800 dwellings with a bypass to the west of the town**

**5.2.135 Local-area opportunities:** A development of this scale would result in the need for additional retail and employment opportunities within the development. Much of the land would be beyond comfortable walking distance to the existing retail areas within Sawbridgeworth and would

ideally contain at least one new neighbourhood centre or local shopping parade. It would also generate the need for expanded schools to serve the development.

- 5.2.136 Wider-area opportunities:** Although this quantum of development would ideally contain employment areas, in this location new employment land would not be attractive to employers. Given the location of the area of search and Sawbridgeworth as a whole lying between the higher order centres of Bishop's Stortford and Harlow, new employment land here would not be able to compete against existing employment areas with relatively good access to major roads and supporting businesses. Small sites may however still be appropriate.
- 5.2.137 Investment barriers:** New development of this quantum would generate a need for a new bypass to the west of the town surrounding the new development. The construction of this new road and the new development itself would provide some short term employment opportunities during the construction phase. The greatest infrastructure constraint to new employment land here is that even with a bypass, other locations have a greater number of supporting services and businesses and are in better locations for access to major roads. New bus routes would be needed from the development to the rail station in the north-east of the town and to Bishop's Stortford and Harlow, in order to provide alternative means of transport.
- 5.2.138 Prospects for employment:** The constraints discussed would prohibit the viability of employment development in this location. Not only would new employment land compete against established centres and the new Enterprise Zone in Harlow, but would also need to contribute towards the funding of a new bypass to facilitate development in this area.

### Key Points: Economic Development Opportunities in Sawbridgeworth

- 5.2.139** If any options were to be discontinued further on the basis of the above considerations on economic matters alone, then development to the west of the town of circa 2,800 dwellings within a new bypass would not continue. Employment land would not be suitable within this development for the reasons already stated, yet this quantum of development would create a need for employment opportunities. These opportunities would only be provided outside the town in neighbouring higher order centres, or beyond in London, Stansted Airport or Cambridge. Out commuting and leakage of expenditure is already a significant issue for Sawbridgeworth. This option would exacerbate an existing problem, offering no benefit apart from a new bypass which may ease the journey of those commuting out of and past the town.

- 5.2.140** Ware is considered together with Hertford in the DTZ independent consultant's report, for while their separate identities and town centres are recognised, they are likely to be regarded as a single location in terms of the industrial and commercial property market. Due to their proximity to Hatfield Business Park and other prospective prestige developments in neighbouring authority areas, it is considered that it would be difficult for the towns to attract investment for a similar development.
- 5.2.141** An anticipated decline in the strong presence of public sector employment in the two towns in future years could particularly affect them; however, Ware is not expected to be as badly effected as Hertford in this respect.
- 5.2.142** Located in Ware, GSK is the largest private sector employer in the district and retention of this facility is an important objective; coupled with the potential for the company to grow its presence.
- 5.2.143** There are considered to be excellent rail and road links from both Ware and Hertford to London and intermediate settlements, and to towns in surrounding districts, where DTZ expect that it will be easier to grow employment bases than in these two towns.
- 5.2.144** However, although not likely to be significant attractors, it is thought that the benefit of considering significant residential development in and around both towns would be the reinforcement of the town centres by growing the catchment population, and potentially attracting small scale office occupiers to locate there. Nonetheless, the impact of road based out commuting on existing road networks would need to be weighed against this.
- 5.2.145** The report further identifies the need to rejuvenate existing employment areas to accommodate the shift to business service employment. Moreover, consideration should also be given to identifying a small number of modest sites for B1 employment; preferably where there is reasonably good access to the trunk road system and in a visible location. These may be delivered in conjunction with new residential development.
- 5.2.146** Given the preceding context, the three remaining areas of search for Ware have been considered against the potential implications for employment and economic development, based upon their potential scale of development and their relationship to the local and wider area. In terms of future economic development, the following observations may be made:

## **Area of Search 18: Ware Existing Built-Up Area: 147 dwellings**

- 5.2.147 Local-area opportunities:** This is the lowest amount level of growth scenario being considered for the town; although it should be borne in mind that 113 of these dwellings already have the benefit of planning permission and therefore only around 34 dwellings would remain to be



delivered on a range of small sites in the urban context. It is therefore considered that there would be only very limited opportunities to create additional employment from this level of development.

- 5.2.148 Wider-area opportunities:** For consideration of the town as a whole, this level of development may assist in maintaining the viability of the town centre, but again would not be likely to result in the creation of new employment, apart from the potential that a small proportion of new occupiers would be employers of small businesses. The town's relatively good access to London via its rail link and by other transport modes to higher order towns in the locality enables high numbers of residents to easily out commute.
- 5.2.149 Investment barriers:** Some of the older existing employment sites in Ware may need considerable investment to ensure they are fit for purpose for modern and changing businesses. However, given that many of the issues faced by existing employment sites relate to being physically constrained, it is unlikely that these issues could be overcome with new hard infrastructure.
- 5.2.150** For development in the wider urban context, specific measures have been identified within the Hertford and Ware Urban Transport Plan for which contributions towards schemes could be required, as appropriate, depending on the level of development proposed. Apart from any measures arising from this document, the small levels of residential development proposed would be likely to be accommodated within existing infrastructure. As this level of residential development would be unlikely to create significant additional employment opportunities, no further major infrastructure would be required in this respect.
- 5.2.151** Should additional employment sites be identified, these should ideally be located close to major road networks and would need to make provision for necessary infrastructure, as commensurate.
- 5.2.152 Prospects for employment:** As the level of residential development envisaged for the existing built up area of Ware is minimal, and the urban area is generally constrained, it is considered that, beyond any revitalisation of existing employment areas, the potential for further significant job creation would be minimal.
- 5.2.153** Therefore, the remaining minor residential development locations would be most unlikely to offer direct employment opportunities beyond home working or very small scale enterprises at the most.

**Area of Search 19: Ware North: 200 dwellings or 1,700 dwellings**

- 5.2.154 Local-area opportunities:** The two scenarios for the numbers of dwellings under consideration for this area would have completely different effects in terms of economic potential.
- 5.2.155** For a 200 dwelling development the effects would be minimal beyond the need for additional education provision at pre-school, primary and secondary level, which may create a small number of employment opportunities in the service (education) sector. One or more of the existing schools in the area may have the potential to be expanded to accommodate the additional need, subject to further investigation.
- 5.2.156** However, it is considered unlikely that this level of development would create any new employment enterprises on its own in the local area; although the increase in population could help support the town's existing economic base.
- 5.2.157** For a development level up to 1,700 dwellings, the effects of development at this scale would result in the need for additional retail and employment opportunities within the development. In terms of retail, as a large part of area would be beyond comfortable walking distance to the existing town centre retail area (although parts maybe within a comfortable distance of the Kingshill local shopping parade), the new development should therefore ideally contain at least one new neighbourhood centre or local shopping parade. A need for new or expanded schools to serve the development would also be generated. These facilities could provide further employment opportunities in the local area.
- 5.2.158** In terms of more general employment potential, the area would be well placed via its connections to the A10 via the A1170 to provide good access to the wider primary route network. Depending on siting in terms of proximity to the A10, there could be opportunities for enabling good visibility which may make the area an appealing location for potential employers. The Ermine Point/Gentleman's Field existing employment site, which was developed in the 1980's, is also located nearby and it too is well positioned for access to the A10 and visible in this respect.
- 5.2.159 Wider-area opportunities:** In considering the wider-area opportunities for the lower level of development, this would not be likely to result in the creation of new employment, apart from the potential that a small proportion of new occupiers could be employers with small businesses in the town. On the other hand, it may assist in maintaining the viability of the town centre. Although it should be noted that the area is some distance from the railway station, the town's relatively good access to London via its rail link, and by other transport modes to higher order towns in the locality enables high numbers of residents to easily out commute. However, depending on location, the additional motorised traffic utilising the town

centre to access the wider road network and resultant additional congestion could have a negative impact on the town's attractiveness for employers choosing to locate in the area.

- 5.2.160** For the higher level of development, this level of development would be out of scale with retail and employment provision and other facilities of the town. While this quantum of development should ideally contain employment uses to at least help address the scale of employment issue, there is a concern that the provision of a new employment area of significant size in this location could have a detrimental effect on some of Ware's existing designated employment sites. In particular, those older employment areas in less accessible locations to the south and east of the town centre could be more vulnerable, especially if businesses should choose to relocate.
- 5.2.161** It is anticipated that this level of development would generate a high level of out commuting, which, given the distance from the railway station and likelihood that frequency of bus provision would not necessarily be enough to engender modal shift, could lead to significant motorised journeys being made.
- 5.2.162** For retail provision it is noted that an ASDA superstore has the benefit of planning permission in Watton Road; however, this is some distance from the Area of Search and would be likely to generate additional motorised trips to that part of town. There is little scope for further retail expansion within the central core of the town as it is constrained by the existing historic built form.
- 5.2.163** Existing businesses in the town could also be more detrimentally affected by higher levels of traffic and inter-related town centre congestion generated by the larger scale of development than by a lower case scenario.
- 5.2.164** **Investment barriers:** While there would be no significant infrastructure barriers to the small level of development proposed in the High Oak Road area under the lower dwelling number scenario, as this would be likely to be mostly accommodated within existing infrastructure, the attractiveness of the area for investment in employment provision would be open to question. Firstly, the topography of the area could make employment provision challenging. Secondly, the area would be in a non-visible location, remote from the primary route network; and, importantly, the local road network would not be conducive to high levels of trip generation that could be occasioned by a thriving enterprise. The level of development proposed in this particular location would be insufficient to help mitigate any of these issues.
- 5.2.165** For the higher level of dwellings, this quantum would generate a need for a new road to both serve the development and to link the A1170 to the west to the High Oak Road area to the south east of the Area of Search.

The construction of this new road and the new development would themselves provide some short term employment opportunities during the construction phase. With regard to longer-term employment needs, potential infrastructure barriers (in addition to new highway infrastructure listed), would include the expansion of the town's existing bus services, ensuring that opportunities for sustainable travel to both the railway station and wider destinations be made available; new educational provision beyond the expansion of existing facilities; and the need for significant sewerage infrastructure. However, given the level of growth proposed, it is likely that all these infrastructure requirements would be supported by the development.

**5.2.166 Prospects for employment:** For 200 dwellings in the High Oak Road area, in terms of employment provision, while this quantum of development may increase the need for local employment opportunities within the town, the non-visible location away from the primary route network, constrained local road network, and the area's general topography, would probably mean that this location would be unlikely facilitate the provision of new employment land itself.

**5.2.167** For around 1,700 dwellings, it would be expected that development of this scale should be able to support the provision of all necessary infrastructure to enable both residential and employment provision in the area. The general location may prove attractive to inward investment for employment provision, especially on the western side, due to close proximity to the primary route network. Also, the level of development suggested would probably be such as to support some local retail and employment provision. However, the distance from the railway station to serve the development from wider locations by sustainable transport modes, and, importantly, the potential effects on the town's existing employment areas, would lead the suitability of the area for any larger scale facilities to be questioned.

## Area of Search 20: Ware East (Sub-Area A only) – 1,300 dwellings

**5.2.168 Local-area opportunities:** The effects of development at this scale would result in the need for additional retail and employment opportunities within the development. In terms of retail, the majority of the area would be beyond comfortable walking distance to the existing town centre retail area and the new development should therefore ideally contain at least one new neighbourhood centre or local shopping parade. A need for new or expanded schools to serve the development would also be generated. These facilities could provide further employment opportunities in the local area. The southern part of the area would be located in fairly close proximity to the existing Star Street/Widbury Hill designated Employment Area, which could provide job opportunities for some residents; however, the extent of this employment location has reduced in the recent past with a mixed use development covering a large part of the Widbury Hill area.

- 5.2.169** In terms of more general employment potential, the area would currently be somewhat isolated with a lack of visibility and poor road communications. These factors could deter potential investors from choosing this location to establish their businesses. However, should the area be developed in conjunction with land to the north of Ware (Area of Search 19), the construction of a new link road from the Widbury Hill area to the A1170 to the north of the town to enable connections to the A10 could improve the attractiveness of the location to a degree.
- 5.2.170** **Wider-area opportunities:** This level of development would be out of scale with retail and employment provision and other facilities of the town. While this amount of development would ideally contain employment uses to at least help address the scale of employment issue, there is a concern that the provision of a new employment area of significant size in this location may have a detrimental effect on some of Ware's existing designated employment sites. In particular, those older employment areas in less accessible locations to the south and east of the town centre could be more vulnerable, especially if businesses should choose to relocate.
- 5.2.171** It is anticipated that this level of development would generate a high level of out commuting, which, given the distance from the railway station and likelihood that frequency of bus provision would not necessarily be enough to engender modal shift, could lead to significant motorised journeys being made.
- 5.2.172** For retail provision it is noted that an ASDA superstore has the benefit of planning permission in Watton Road; however, this is a considerable distance from the Area of Search and would be likely to generate additional motorised trips to that part of town, which would be likely to cause further congestion, mainly in the High Street, but would also be likely to affect other roads in its vicinity. There is little scope for further retail expansion within the central core of the town as it is constrained by the existing historic built form.
- 5.2.173** Existing businesses in the town could also be detrimentally affected by higher levels of traffic and inter-related town centre congestion generated by the large scale of development.
- 5.2.174** **Investment barriers:** New development at this level would generate a need for a new link road from the Widbury Hill area to enable connections to the A10 via the A1170 to the north of the town. The construction of this new road and the new development would themselves provide some short term employment opportunities during the construction phase. With regard to longer-term employment needs, potential infrastructure barriers (in addition to new highway infrastructure listed), would include the expansion of the town's existing bus services, ensuring that opportunities for sustainable travel to both the railway station and wider destinations be

made available; new educational provision beyond the expansion of existing facilities. However, given the level of growth proposed, it is likely that all these infrastructure requirements would be supported by the development.

**5.2.175** A greater barrier to potential employment investment may be the location of the development, given that it would be some distance away from the primary route network and, even with the provision of a new link road, would not be in a clearly visible location.

**5.2.176** **Prospects for employment:** For around 1,300 dwellings, it would be expected that development of this scale should be able to support the provision of all necessary infrastructure as detailed above; however, its location may preclude inward investment beyond the support of some local retail and employment provision. Distance from the railway station to serve the development from wider locations by sustainable transport modes, coupled with the effects on the local road network would also be a concern. Importantly, the potential effects on the town's existing employment areas, would lead the suitability of the area for any larger scale facilities to be called into question.

### **Key Points: Economic Development Opportunities in Ware**

**5.2.177** Whilst Ware is home to the district's largest private sector employer, GSK, and every opportunity should be taken to retain this base, the potential for other large-scale enterprises to locate to the town is considered remote.

**5.2.178** For the larger dwelling number options under consideration, the provision of a significant amount of employment land within these locations, would need to be balanced against the factors already stated, yet these levels of residential development would themselves create a need for employment opportunities. While the larger levels of development suggested for the areas to the north and east of the town could enable the provision of some smaller employment facilities, it is likely that these would not be of a sufficient scale or nature to contain the large increase in the work-age population and stem a significant growth in out commuting from the town. Opportunities for employment would be most likely to be provided outside the town in neighbouring higher order centres or further beyond, e.g. London. In this respect, given the distances from these areas to the railway station and the anticipated limited bus provision levels to be associated with these amounts of development taken in the wider network context, it would be anticipated that many of these out commuting journeys would be made by private motorised transport.

**5.2.179** Furthermore, the increased population could have a detrimental effect on the existing businesses in the town due to the likely levels of additional car journeys generated and resultant increased congestion in an area already experiencing known issues (most notably the High Street), especially at peak times. These effects on the continued viability of existing

employment areas could also become an issue and investment in these is likely to be required to maximise their potential to compete against alternative, more recently constructed facilities elsewhere.

- 5.2.180** The dichotomy could be that, while new employment development provided in conjunction with residential growth may be attractive in some locations to prospective employers and employees, notably to the north of Ware, employment provision beyond the small scale in these areas may exacerbate viability issues for the town's existing employment areas and other town centre businesses, as previously outlined.
- 5.2.181** Therefore, if based solely on the consideration of economic matters, due to the issues raised above, it would not be appropriate to support the higher level ranges of development, especially if provided in combination.

### Villages

- 5.2.182** Given that the potential scale of any development in villages across the District is not likely to be of a strategic scale it is therefore likely that any employment opportunities created by new development would also be of a small-scale for local employers. Residents living in villages have often made that decision with the full acknowledgement that they would be required to travel significant distances often by private car to access employment. This is one reason for the comparatively older age of residents in villages and rural locations, with high proportions of retired people, higher-skilled occupations, home workers or those families who can afford and do not mind travelling to work.
- 5.2.183** A higher proportion of the population working from home is partly associated with the greater preponderance of self-employment or owners of small businesses among older skilled workers. This opportunity however, would be dependant upon whether the village has good broadband access.
- 5.2.184** The provision of residential development in villages will not fundamentally alter these demographic, lifestyle and working patterns. Appropriate small scale provision of employment space in larger villages that already have a greater number of local services will help to sustain a local employment base, though in practice, the great majority of those working in rural premises are likely to be drawn from quite a wide area. A way to assist those who currently work from home or run small rural-based businesses would be to encourage the provision of rural office hubs - a general office facility that can be used by a number of users as and when they need such facilities. Another important measure would be to seek to limit the need for increased car based journeys as a result of village growth by ensuring all villages are able to access high quality broadband internet services.

### Area of Search 61: East of Welwyn Garden City - 2,000 dwellings

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- 5.2.185** If it were to come forward as part of the District Plan, this area of search would form an urban extension to the eastern boundary of Welwyn Garden City into land in East Herts. One of Ebenezer Howard's original New Towns, the town was planned to provide sufficient employment opportunities for its residents to be self-sustaining in employment terms. However, modern lifestyles and changing economic activities over the last century since the town was designed have diminished this self-sufficiency. Travel to Work areas are growing as people are willing and able to travel greater distances to seek employment, particularly in specialist industries. As such, the original employment areas within Welwyn Garden City are gradually being superseded by more modern employment areas located along the A1(M).
- 5.2.186** **Local area opportunities:** Development of this scale would result in a need for employment opportunities, education facilities at all tiers and all the necessary community facilities a new neighbourhood would require. A new neighbourhood retail centre is likely given the distance any new development would be from the town centre and edge of centre retail areas. These community needs are likely to generate employment opportunities for new residents.
- 5.2.187** Welwyn Garden City has extensive areas of employment land in the north west of the town, which have become surrounded by residential estates over time. These older employment estates have been somewhat undermined by more modern business parks and employment areas located on the edges of Welwyn Garden City and neighbouring Hatfield and Stevenage. This area of search is well placed to gain access to both the A414 and the City Park and Mundells employment areas in reasonably close proximity along the B195 and A1000 (Bessemer Road). If employment land was located at the junction of the B195 and the A414, it would be a highly visible development but would be located at some distance from the existing residential areas. However, if employment land was to come forward as part of a wider mixed-use development scheme there would be opportunities to make sufficient public transport links to the area.
- 5.2.188** **Wider area opportunities:** Welwyn Garden City lies within the Stevenage Travel to Work Area, sometimes known as the A1(M) corridor. This TTWA extends from Hatfield in the south to Biggleswade in the north. However, the location of Welwyn Garden City being adjacent to the A414 in close proximity to Hertford, this area of search could also function as part of a more locally significant A414 corridor.
- 5.2.189** Being close to the A1(M), there are potential advantages to this location in terms of being within reasonable travel time of major employment centres along the A1(M) such as Hatfield Business Park, Knebworth Innovation Park and the Gunnells Wood Employment Area. However, given that these major employment centres are much larger, already established and have a prestige and better access to the A1(M), this area of search is unlikely to attract major employers. As such, it is more likely that employment



opportunities would be centred around providing an alternative employment offer, possibly enabling the redevelopment/reallocation of less attractive employment areas within Welwyn Garden City.

**5.2.190** The Strategic Economic Development Advice received suggests that “if development of this scale were to be taken forward, consideration could be given for a modest employment land allocation as part of any residential-led scheme, which would in some way compensate for the difficulties in identifying a site for modern B1 development in a high visibility, high accessibility location in Hertford and Ware.”

**5.2.191** **Investment barriers:** Employment development here would only be able to come forward as part of a wider mixed-use development scheme as there is no current infrastructure apart from the A414 and the B195.

**5.2.192** **Prospects for employment:** Given these constraints it is unlikely that employment land development would be financially viable unless part of a mixed-use development. Given that there would be little interest in employment land in this location from major employers, it would be more risky in terms of securing the viability of a speculative development of smaller employment uses.

#### Key Points: East of Welwyn Garden City

**5.2.193** Given the wide range of employment opportunities in Welwyn Garden City and neighbouring Hatfield and Stevenage, and more generally in the A1(M) corridor, new residents would have access to jobs, but would probably be very reliant on car transport to access these jobs, other than those in town centre locations, even if new employment land was allocated in this area of search. As such, additional traffic would probably be created on the A414 heading towards the A1(M) in the morning peak.

#### Harlow

**5.2.194** Harlow is located close to the M11 and M25 and has two mainline rail stations. It has suffered decline in recent years and Harlow Council's Regeneration Strategy (2005) promotes large-scale growth to the north in order to attract private sector investment and skilled workers to the town. As explained in Chapter 4, a motorway was originally planned to the north and west of Harlow, providing easy access to the Pinnacles and Temple Fields Employment areas. However, the M11 was eventually routed to the east, resulting in relative isolation of these locations.

**5.2.195** The South East Local Enterprise Partnership, working with Essex County Council and Harlow Council were successful in 2011 in securing designation of two sites totalling 51 ha (126 acres) as an Enterprise Zone. The successful designation of these two sites as an Enterprise Zone imply that

the development of these two sites are a priority for the Government and for Harlow Council. Essex County Council is investing in improving investment from the Growing Places Fund.

- 5.2.196** Harlow Council is seeking to establish the Enterprise Zone as a centre of excellence for healthcare and life sciences, capitalising on the cluster of major healthcare companies and organisations in west Essex, Hertfordshire and Cambridge. There are proposals for Anglia Ruskin University to establish a medical technology centre on the enterprise Zone. The focus on healthcare seeks to capitalise on the presence of GSK and BUPA Home Healthcare in the town.
- 5.2.197** The Enterprise Zone will clearly be the main focus of public sector intervention and support in bringing forward new land for development (the Nortel Campus) and regeneration of an existing industrial area (North East Templefields). It therefore seems probable that these areas will be the focus for private sector investment, notwithstanding the fact that there are other industrial areas in Harlow that require rejuvenation. Given the capacity of the existing EZ sites it is probable that Harlow will not be promoting other sites that will compete with the EZ.

## Area of Search 62: North of Harlow - 10,000 dwellings

- 5.2.198 Local-area opportunities:** The main road access to the site is via the A414 west to the A10, and this limits the attractiveness of the location for strategic employment compared with other better-placed locations including Bishop's Stortford and Harlow. However, the scale of proposed residential development would be likely to create a substantial number of jobs in the local service sector.
- 5.2.199 Wider-area opportunities:** within Harlow, the new Enterprise Zone in Harlow is projected to result in a significant number of additional jobs, and these two sites (north-east Templefields North East and also at London Road - former Nortel Site - further south) would be likely to become a major focus. Pinnacles and Temple Fields are major employment areas. Further away, development north of Harlow would fall within the travel-to-work catchment of a number of employment opportunities by road (Hoddesdon and Cheshunt, North London, Hertford, Ware, and Welwyn Hatfield) and by railway (London, Cambridge, Stansted).
- 5.2.200 Investment barriers:** transport infrastructure is a major barrier to strategic employment north of Harlow. A northern link road connecting to a new junction on the M11 was discussed in the Harlow Infrastructure Study (2010), which suggested costs of £150 million for the road and £50 million for the junction. If such a road were provided, it may be that it could also provide access to the M11 from the Harlow Enterprise Zone at Templefields North-East. One or more additional road bridges across the River Stort could be needed in order to integrate development to the north with Harlow

and provide access for business needs north of the river. However, all these highways infrastructure projects will require transport modelling and consideration of feasibility and funding sources.

- 5.2.201** The Harlow Regeneration Strategy (2005) states that *"A persistent message throughout the analysis is the very poor image of the town and negative perceptions of Harlow as a location for business and living, particularly to outsiders. Although Harlow has been successful in attracting a share of inward investment in the East of England, the negative perceptions of the town as an investment location are related to the inadequacy of the road network and transport infrastructure set against modern requirements, congestion, outworn industrial estates, poor quality housing, relatively high levels of welfare dependency and the town's outdated design."* (page 13-14).
- 5.2.202** The Regeneration Strategy proposes 'transformational growth' to encourage investment not only in employment areas but also in terms of transport infrastructure and housing stock. According to the Regeneration Strategy, new 'aspirational' housing north of the Stort, as well as within the town, is crucial to making Harlow into an attractive place for people to live, work, and invest. It appears from the comments made by DTZ that there is some basis for this strategy in the long term, as residents of an urban extension becoming tired of commuting to the City and seek work more locally. However, the strategy may be complicated by the likelihood of development north of Harlow being seen and possibly promoted as part of East Herts rather than as Harlow.
- 5.2.203** It is also clear that the remoteness of the Pinnacles employment area from the M11 means that even large-scale transport investment such as a new Stort bridge west of the existing Eastwick Lodge/Burntmill bridge, coupled with an M11 northern link road, would unlikely to make it a more attractive location for investment.
- 5.2.204** **Prospects for employment:** As elsewhere, the general principle is that the prospects for employment areas are governed by proximity to the motorway network. The most viable location in Harlow would be to the east, possibly near a new junction on the M11. A business park at Area 62 would be unlikely to be financially viable even with the provision of a new northern link road to the M11, because there are other competing business parks which are more attractive due to closer proximity to the motorway network, including the Harlow Enterprise Zone and others further afield. However, service-based businesses associated with housing would be likely to be viable in this location.

#### Area of Search 69: Hunsdon Area - 5,000 dwellings

**5.2.205** DTZ consultants suggested that a more 'freestanding' detached new settlement further north near Hunsdon would in be very similar to an urban extension to Harlow in terms of where residents would choose to work. In DTZs view significant numbers of new residents of a freestanding settlement would in practise travel into London from Harlow Town station, or commute to other parts of the sub-region from further afield, taking advantage of the A414 and A10. But this option would have rather less potential to contribute to the the regeneration of Harlow, compared to an urban extension located on the north side of the Stort Valley. The urban extension option would also on balance be better in terms of the objective to encourage the use of means of travel other than the car.

### Key Points - Harlow

**5.2.206** DTZ consultants have advised East Herts Council that most of the jobs growth and economic development opportunities to 2031 are likely to occur at the towns outside the district, which have a better access to the motorway network and a larger existing employment base, and are the main feature of travel to work patterns. Harlow falls into this category, and the Enterprise Zone may well provide work for some East Herts residents in future. At the same time, the creation of the Enterprise Zone within Harlow and the difficult access to the M11 mean that the area north of Harlow is unlikely to be attractive as a strategic employment location.

**5.2.207** Development north of Harlow would therefore be largely residential in character, and attract new residents because of its location within East Herts rather than Harlow, especially given its good access to the City of London from Harlow Town station. This suggests that development to the north would present a very different image to that of Harlow now, and would be likely to have a different name. It may be that such changes could help to improve the image of Harlow, although as the Harlow Regeneration Strategy states, this would be 'necessary, but not sufficient' to ensure regeneration, and would need to form part of a wider package of measures to try to capture some of the benefits for growth for Harlow.

**5.2.208** Given the general comments in the DTZ report about economic geographies, it seems unlikely that development north of Harlow would have a significant adverse impact on the economic vitality and well-being of either Harlow or the towns and villages of East Herts. As DTZ's report suggests, in economic terms housing growth is likely to have benefits for existing shops and businesses in both districts in terms of delivering more customers.

**5.2.209** Finally, there appears to be little merit to a separate 'freestanding' new settlement north of Harlow from an economic development point of view, mainly because such a location would be remote from Harlow and associated transport links.

## 5.3 Urban Form

- 5.3.1** 'Urban form' refers to the structure and pattern of development. Urban form encompasses design considerations for strategic plan-making, as set out in national policy:

### National Planning Policy Framework

**Paragraph 56:** The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people.

**Paragraph 61:** Although visual appearance and the architecture of individual buildings are very important factors, securing high quality and inclusive design goes beyond aesthetic considerations. Therefore, planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment.

- 5.3.2** Coherent urban form is one of a number of contributory factors making up 'sense of place', and will therefore be an important consideration of area-specific visions in the next chapter. Urban form should also play an important role in promoting healthy communities with access to strong neighbourhood centres (NPPF Paragraphs 69-70). Whilst more detailed urban design considerations will be undertaken later in the District Plan process, including in Part 2: Allocations and Policies, it is appropriate to consider urban form in Chapter 5 in order to understand the broad design implications of development from a settlement-wide perspective. <sup>(4)</sup>

- 5.3.3** In terms of being able to assess urban form in a meaningful way through the District Plan strategy selection process, it is necessary to select key criteria which a) address the main strategic-level concerns of urban form; b) are established in national policy; and c) provide a framework for comparative assessment. Four areas have been identified which meet all three requirements and have been delivered as the basis for assessment of urban form as follows:

- **Landscape and Setting:** at the strategic level, the setting of a town or village, both in terms of its landscape context and its relationship to neighbouring settlements is crucial. It sets the context for the character of the built environment itself (see NPPF paragraphs 17 and 58)

4 Further guidance in respect of urban form is provided in two Government-backed design documents: Manual for Streets and Building for Life 12.

- **Structure and Connectivity:** integrating new development into the existing built form is crucial to achieving good design. New development should be a coherent and integral part of the settlement and make a positive contribution to its character (see NPPF paragraph 58).
- **Function and Capacity:** Urban form is also about the relationship of new development with the existing settlement in terms of the ability or capacity of the existing town or village centre to accommodate additional growth as well as opportunities for new development to complement existing local or neighbourhood centres, or provide new centres within the development (see NPPF paragraphs 38 and 70).
- **Open Space and Green Infrastructure (GI)** - in terms of urban form, GI can help to integrate development into neighbourhoods and provide clear limits to growth. Open spaces will often have a multi-functional role including formal and informal leisure, sport and recreation, provide habitat for wildlife as well as opportunities for horticulture. Provision of new open space can also help link-up with existing open spaces to create a network of green infrastructure which further strengthens urban form (see NPPF paragraphs 73 and 11).

**5.3.4** Preliminary assessment of the function and capacity of development options has already been undertaken in Sieve 1 and Sieve 2. The Community Facilities topic assessment in Sieve 1 assessed against whether a) facilities were provided within the village or Built-Up Area of the town, b) there is potential for the area of search to provide some or all of the listed community facilities as part of the development. For consistency, a defined list of facilities was provided. In Sieve 2, consideration of town and neighbourhood centres as a potential 'anchor' for future growth was discussed. The assessment below combines the findings of both these assessments and places them in the context of urban form.

**5.3.5** This section provides a high-level assessment of urban form. For the District Plan, further assessment of urban form is likely to underpin Part 2: Allocations and Policies. Detailed consideration of urban form such as provided in relation to planning applications (typically in Design and Access statements) is not necessary or proportionate to the requirements of strategic plan-making and requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

## Bishop's Stortford

- 5.3.6** Historically, Bishop's Stortford was formed by the river valley landscape. During the twentieth century, the town broke out of the river valley onto the surrounding plateaux. The urban form of the town has been shaped in recent years by the A1184/A120, and development in Thorley and St. Michael's Mead abuts the bypass. Bishop's Stortford is proposed for designation as a Principal Town Centre, and functions as a sub-regional centre, providing shopping, some employment, and leisure opportunities for villages and towns in Hertfordshire and in Essex.
- 5.3.7** The town is characterised by a number of attractive Green Wedges, along the Stort river corridor but also others including recreational space such as the Thorley Green Wedge, Hoggate's Wood/Ash Grove, and the playing fields associated with the schools to the west. The Roger Evans Masterplanning Study (2005) draws attention to the grid street pattern of the Victorian New Town and highlights the advantages of this urban form in terms of connectivity and legibility to the looping patterns of some newer parts of the town.

### Area of Search 1: Built-Up Area - up to 1,233 dwellings

- 5.3.8** The initial scale assumption of 1,233 dwellings included 775 dwellings at the schools sites (London Road, Warwick Road, Beldams Lane, and Hadham Road). However, the secondary school capacity issue in Bishop's Stortford remains to be resolved and it may be that all these sites will need to be retained for educational purposes. This will require further investigation and any comments relating to the schools site below should be understood in this context.
- 5.3.9** **Landscape and Setting:** The Goods Yard presents a significant opportunity to enhance the riverfront whilst preserving the attractive area of woodland to the south of the site. The schools sites are situated within the urban fabric of the town and if developed, would appear to be capable of successful integration into the existing urban context with a good layout and design.
- 5.3.10** **Structure and Connectivity:** the Goods Yard presents a significant opportunity to enhance connectivity between the railway station and the town centre. In particular, the proposals to designate the town centre boundary to cover the northern half of the site provide an opportunity to significantly increase the vitality of the station area. The bridge at Station Road would need to be widened to provide safer and more attractive connection between the station and the town centre. Given careful attention to design and layout the schools sites could be well connected into the existing urban fabric.

- 5.3.11 Function and capacity:** The Goods Yard has significant potential to enhance the capacity of the town centre, providing a link between the station and the existing town centre, and also by enhancing the vitality and viability of the station area through an appropriate mixed-use scheme, probably involving retail and some small-scale office accommodation. The other sites within the Built-Up Area are probably too small and disconnected from other non-residential uses to significantly enhance the capacity of the town, although further work is needed to assess whether or what sort of role the Hadham Road site will play in terms of future educational provision.
- 5.3.12 Open Space and Green Infrastructure:** The Goods Yard links well with the Stort Valley corridor. The schools sites currently provide open space in the form of playing fields which would be lost if these areas were developed. The Hadham Road site provides informal rugby pitches and these would probably be lost with development of the site, either for an education facility or for residential development. The area of mature woodland to the south of the Hadham Road site appears to provide open access and should be preserved.

### Area of Search 2: Bishop's Stortford North - up to 2,500 dwellings:

- 5.3.13 Landscape and Setting:** this large area falls into a number of distinct landscape areas. The areas are addressed here from west to east. There are views of the churches of All Saints (Hockerill) and St. Michael's from higher parts of the area, including from Dane O' Coys Road, which would need to be protected if the area were to be developed. The area to the west of Hoggate's Wood, part of the 'Hadham Plateau', is defined by large, relatively flat geometric fields. The Green Wedge containing Ash Grove and Hoggate's Wood is of high landscape character, containing mature mixed woodland and a distinctive valley landscape south of Dane O' Coys Road. Although the rural character of Dane O' Coys' Road could be preserved to a degree with sensitive layout and design, development would entail inevitable loss of the sense of remoteness. East of Hoggate's Wood is the valley landscape of the Bourne Brook tributary, which the Landscape Character Assessment states has 'urban fringe characteristics', and is 'cut off from stronger landscape features to the north' by the A120. Beyond the marked dip of Bourne Brook itself lies a relatively high area of plateau as far as Hazelend Road. The Stort Green Wedge lies immediately adjacent across Hazelend Road.
- 5.3.14 Structure and Connectivity:** the area is structured by a number of natural features, including the Bourne Brook and its tributary, the Green Wedge including Hoggate's Wood and Ash Grove, and a number of tree belts and hedgerows. It is also structured by a number of man-made features including Dane O' Coy's Road, the A120 to the north, and a number of north-south footpaths connecting with the town. Dane O'Coys Road itself would be likely to play an important role in the internal structure and



connectivity of any future development, although the narrow character of the road suggests that it would not be appropriate for private vehicular traffic. If development in this area were to go ahead, then the minor roads and tracks, especially Foxdells Lane, Whitehall Road, Whitehall Lane and Barrell's Down Road, would form important access routes for pedestrian and cycle connections, but could probably not cope with a substantial increase in vehicular traffic.

- 5.3.15 Function and Capacity:** development could be of sufficient scale to provide one or possibly two centres each hosting a range of local community facilities. Section 5.2 above suggests that it may be viable to include an employment allocation somewhere in this area. A large supermarket in this area is not considered appropriate because it would serve a much wider area than Bishop's Stortford and, although undoubtedly attractive to developers from a market perspective, would be likely to displace any meaningful new local community facilities and attract large amounts of additional traffic.
- 5.3.16 Open Space and Green Infrastructure:** Hoggate's Wood and the green wedge south of Dane O'Coys Road has good potential as strategic GI, supported at a smaller scale by the opportunities presented by the existing tree belts/hedgerows and Bourne Brook and its tributary. These latter features could also have an important sustainable drainage function.

### Area of Search 3: Bishop's Stortford East - Sub-Area B: 150 dwellings:

- 5.3.17 Landscape and Setting:** the landscape is relatively flat between the town and the M11 in a location largely occupied by the Golf Course. The area short-listed for further assessment after Sieve 2 lies between the edge of the Golf Course and the existing urban area, and is characterised by an area of low-density shrubland of a type used by dog walkers.
- 5.3.18 Structure and Connectivity:** Dunmow Road provides the main access to the town, and was identified by the Roger Evans study as having potential for upgrading with better pedestrian and cycleways. Given that development of around 150 dwellings has been proposed following Sieve 2, relatively small scale, development in this location is likely to be of a similar nature to that at Manor Links adjacent, which may also provide secondary pedestrian and cycle access. The Golf Course could provide a clear boundary to the east.
- 5.3.19 Function and Capacity:** development would be unlikely to be of sufficient scale to support additional centres, and the nearest facilities would be in the town centre approximately 1km away along Dunmow Road.

**5.3.20 Open Space and Green Infrastructure:** open space is likely to be limited to possibly a play area as part of a possible new residential development, if this area is considered appropriate for future development. There is little other open space nearby, and the Golf Course is private and therefore not considered as open space or Green Infrastructure for this assessment.

#### **Area of Search 4: Bishop's Stortford South - Sub-Area A: up to 800 dwellings:**

**5.3.21** The initial scale assumption of 800 dwellings allowed 15 hectares for provision of a new secondary school site to the north-east corner. However, the secondary school capacity issue in Bishop's Stortford remains to be resolved and it may be that solutions at other locations can be found. This will require further investigation and any comments relating to the schools site below should be understood in this context.

**5.3.22 Landscape and Setting:** the site slopes gently from north to south, and is characterised by open fields with a small area of woodland to the northern edge and St. James' Way (southern bypass) to the south and west. The site lies to the north-eastern part of the Thorley Uplands Landscape Character Area. There are views of Thorley Parish Church from the area. The Planning Inspector's Report in respect of the proposal for a Secondary School site to the north-east of the area makes a number of relevant comments in relation to landscape and setting.<sup>(5)</sup>

- Whilst the presence of the bypass does have some visual impact, much of the bypass cannot clearly be seen from within the appeal site itself, as it is lost within the wider landscape views (Paragraph 565)
- The schools proposal would result in a prominent and somewhat discordant feature in the surrounding landscape, characterised by a prevailing open, rural topography (Paragraph 574)
- Aircraft noise would not result in an unacceptable educational environment (Paragraph 559).

**5.3.23** Whilst observing these landscape concerns put forward by East Herts Council itself in relation to the Schools Inquiry, caution must be exercised in applying these conclusions from a decision-taking (planning application) context and applying them to a plan-making context, in which the wider strategic context needs to be taken into account. The relative importance of the landscape in this location will need to be assessed as part of the balance of planning considerations for this area, for Bishop's Stortford, and for the district as a whole.

**5.3.24 Structure and Connectivity:** Friedburg and Villiers-Sur-Marne Avenues could provide connectivity with the Thorley Centre, and London Road provides access into the town. The area is clearly structured by the

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5 The Planning Inspector's Report balances the considerations relating to the particular scheme proposed in the planning application. It is not possible to say whether a different scheme would have resulted in the same conclusions.

surrounding roads on all sides. The Roger Evans Masterplanning Study noted the disorientating effect of the looping Thorley street layout and culs-de-sac to the north, but the area is sufficiently large to provide opportunities for well structured internal layout. The Hertfordshire Way long-distance footpath runs through the site east-west, and does not connect into the town but into the surrounding countryside. <sup>(6)</sup>

- 5.3.25 Function and Capacity:** development could be of sufficient scale to provide some facilities, although probably not a full neighbourhood centre. Thorley shopping centre would provide access to a range of facilities approximately 1km to the north. Further work will be needed to ascertain whether the area could be suitable for some additional employment.
- 5.3.26 Open Space and Green Infrastructure:** Southern Country Park and the Stort corridor can provide supporting GI networks. Within the area of search, the stream to the south could provide a GI feature with a strong sustainable drainage function, and the wooded areas within the site should be preserved if this area were to be required for development. The open countryside is easily reached by means of Church Lane and a number of public rights of way beyond.

### Key Points - Bishop's Stortford Urban Form

- 5.3.27** Development within the built-up area of Bishop's Stortford could provide positive opportunities for enhancement of the town's urban form, particularly at the Goods Yard. However, care must be taken to ensure that the educational needs of the town are met throughout the plan period to 2031, which may mean either protecting sites for educational use, providing new sites for educational use, or a mix of both approaches.
- 5.3.28** Development in Area of Search 2: North would have some negative landscape impacts, although the existing features have the potential to provide a coherent structure to development in this location, and the area is well located in terms of connectivity with the town. Development here could also serve to reinforce the town's capacity, perhaps with the provision of an employment area.
- 5.3.29** Development in Area of Search 3: East (Sub-Area B) would have limited impact on landscape or the structure of the town, although it would not be sufficiently large to add to the capacity of the town and would rely on connections to the town centre along Dunmow Road.
- 5.3.30** Area of Search 4: South (Sub-Area A) would be visually prominent given the sloping nature of the site, and has less potential for integration into the structure of the town than Area of Search 2, although it does lie within the obvious limits presented by St. James' Way.

<sup>6</sup> In the context of the schools application, the Planning Inspector concluded that the harm to the Hertfordshire way from the proposed Schools scheme would be likely to be significant (Paragraph 586).

- 5.3.31** As with other areas assessed across the district, urban form considerations in Bishop's Stortford will need to be assessed as part of the overall balance of local and strategic considerations set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

### Buntingford

- 5.3.32** Buntingford sits astride the River Rib on the road from London to Cambridge, halfway between Ware to the south and Royston to the north, in the rural north of the district. The town is located in a rural landscape characterised by the narrow valley of the Rib nesting in elevated plateaus. The majority of the town is to the west of the river utilising the slighter flatter slopes of the valley, although these also then rise steeply into the landscape beyond. The environs of Buntingford are set by the historic buildings Corneybury and Layston Church to the north and east of the town, the former Sainsbury's Distribution Depot to the south, and the proximity of the village of Aspenden to the southwest. The A10 bypasses the town to the west cutting through the valley slopes. Although not a dominant feature in Buntingford as a whole, the river flows northeast to southwest through the town creating an important amenity, wildlife and environmental corridor that contributes significantly to the character of the locality, especially on its northern reaches.
- 5.3.33** Buntingford is defined by the staggered cross-roads at the market place where the east-west Baldock to Newport route bisects the north-south axis of the High Street / Ermine Street / London Road. Historically the town remained compact although significant expansion occurred in the second half of the 20th Century. This development is characterised by culs-de-sac supplemented by public footpaths which, despite creating an illegible built form, are nonetheless a feature of the town. On the whole, the character of many of the residential areas has not been diluted by redevelopment of individual plots, and as such, they still exhibit strong design coherence. Much of the town centre and historic areas of the town are covered by a Conservation Area, including with many listed buildings.
- 5.3.34** Sieve 2 explained that the town centre has a limited range of shops and facilities based on convenience shopping, and has been proposed for designation as a Minor Town Centre, along with Ware and Sawbridgeworth. For this reason it appears doubtful whether the town could successfully integrate development at the higher end of the growth range set out, although at lower levels some growth could reinforce the vitality and viability of the existing facilities and the High Street. Given the small size of the town new development would be likely to turn to the town centre for the provision of services and facilities. It seems unlikely that even at the higher levels of growth, new developments would be able to support new centres, although there may be some scope for the location of additional or expanded facilities in any new developments, based on assessment of the needs of the whole town.

- 5.3.35** The River Rib provides an important green infrastructure corridor that penetrates the town and this is accompanied by the areas of open space including the playing fields on Bowling Green Lane. Poor provision of accessible natural green space is an issue in Buntingford and as such, green infrastructure enhancement issues mainly relate to improvements to links such as along the river corridor and disused railway and integration of the hard southern edge of Buntingford. Enhanced hedgerow planting would be beneficial to the A10 bypass to improve the setting and approach to Buntingford in the landscape. The presence of parkland associated with Corneybury to the north of the town is another town-wide asset that could be exploited further for biodiversity and community benefit.

**Area of Search 6: Buntingford South and West (Sub-Areas B and C (within bypass only)) - 620 dwellings**

- 5.3.36 Landscape and Setting:** This area of search is physically contained between the edge of the existing built-up area and the A10 bypass, which forms its southern and western boundary. The A10 forms a defensible edge to the westward development of Buntingford. Development could begin to compromise the setting of Aspenden which along with the neighbouring village of Westmill are regarded as the most distinctive features of the High Rib Valley landscape character area. The A10 bypass is locally intrusive in terms of noise and visual impact. Development west of the sewage works in Sub-area B would climb the valley slopes. Whilst it would be physically contained by the A10 bypass, the extent to which this forms an effective visual buffer to the landscape beyond is questionable. Development of the remainder of Sub-area B (to the north of the sewage works) would conserve and respect the valley setting. Although on high ground, development in Sub-area C respects the historical north-south axis of the town could also assist with improving the appearance of the town when arriving from the south.
- 5.3.37 Structure and Connectivity:** In terms of connectivity, there is potential for access off existing estate roads including Lyunes Rise, Longmeads, and Olvega Drive as well as the main roads of Baldock Road, Aspenden Road and London Road. Along with integration of existing footpaths, these would help stitch development into the structure of the existing town. However, the long delineations of the boundaries to the Monks Walk and Lyunes Rise development would give the suggestion that development in this area of search could be seen as another estate appendage to the town rather than a coherent and integrated part of Buntingford.
- 5.3.38 Function and Capacity:** Being adjacent to Watermill Industrial Estate, this area could provide additional land / employment opportunities. Development of some 620 dwellings would also warrant additional community facilities including open space.

**5.3.39 Open Space and Green Infrastructure:** This area of search provides the opportunity to both enhance existing green infrastructure and provide additional open space provision through the creation of a green wedge between Aspenden Road and the disused railway. Not only would this wedge strengthen the existing river corridor but by linking it to the disused railway would provide new links to natural green space. Open space in this location, would ensure separation between Buntingford and Aspenden but also effectively use land in the flood plain, perhaps even as including a new home for Buntingford Football Club.

### Area of Search 7: Buntingford North (Sub-Area A only) - 500 dwellings

**5.3.40 Landscape and Setting:** Bounded by Ermine Street to the east and the A10 bypass to the west, the landscape and setting of this area is defined and characterised by Cornebury parkland, which is noted as being one of the most distinctive features of the High Rib landscape character area. Although the northern extremity of this area is some distance from the town centre, and development here represents an elongation of the town, it is within the valley setting that is the defining feature of Buntingford. As such, it would enhance local distinctiveness by ensuring that Buntingford is contained within its landscape context. Although the A10 bypass forms a boundary to development, in this location the A10 is relatively open (as opposed to the cutting to the south) and the extent to which this forms an effective visual buffer to the landscape beyond is questionable, especially since the land in this area begins to rise to the west and north.

**5.3.41 Structure and Connectivity:** In addition to connections onto Ermine Street, a key connection would be to the south onto Bowling Green Lane. Use should also be made of the stretch of former road to Throcking in order to fully integrate development into the existing structure of the locality. One feature of the existing built form of the High Street is similarly sized square 'blocks'. This pattern could be replicated northwards to further stitch development into the existing built form.

**5.3.42 Function and Capacity:** The area is immediately to the north of the Park Farm employment area and includes a proposed extension that has yet to be built. Given the relationship of this area at the top of the High Street, provision of employment or commercial uses here could compliment the existing town centre. Indeed, there are considered to be few alternative opportunities to increase the capacity of Buntingford town centre. The area is also adjacent to Freman College and could provide land such as playing fields to enable the school buildings to be expanded to meet education need in the town.

**5.3.43 Open Space and Green Infrastructure:** The playing fields of Freman College, Bowling Green Lane and Edwinstree Middle School form a key green wedge that penetrates the town from the north. Development of this area provides the opportunity to strengthen this wedge by delivering open space to the west.

### Area of Search 8: Buntingford Northeast (Sub-Area B only) - 300 dwellings

**5.3.44 Landscape and Setting:** Bounded by The Causeway and Layston School to the north and Hare Street Road to the south, this area lies on the eastern slopes of the valley. The topography in this area forms a distinctive landscape 'bowl' which could 'contain' development within the valley setting. Development in this location would push the extent of the town eastwards beyond the current limits of the built form on Hare Street Road itself. Part of the Wyddial Plateau landscape character area, the upper slopes and ridge present an open and elevated landscape. The western boundary of the area is defined by the extent of the existing built-up area of Buntingford. The eastern edge is less well defined although a fairly recent tree/hedge belt has been planted which is slowly maturing to provide some definition. Further east, a public right of way skirts the ridge line although contains few if any vertical elements to act a physical barrier to development. It is therefore considered that the tree/hedge belt should be the maximum limit of any development.

**5.3.45 Structure and Connectivity:** The area is within 800m /10 minutes from the town centre. The obvious connections are to Hare Street Road to the south, although this alone would be insufficient to stitch the development into the town. An existing Public Right of Way runs diagonally northwest to southeast across the area: a course which is seemingly incongruous with the structure and layout of the town since the defining feature of Buntingford is its north-south axis sitting in the narrow valley of the Rib. This is strengthened by the linear nature of Sunny Hill, Archers and Paddock Road to the west. It is considered appropriate, therefore, to continue this structure by providing a new direct north-south route, acknowledging topography, connecting The Causeway with Hare Street Road. Doing so would of course involve a land swap with Layston School, whose axis would alter from east-west to the north of the site to north-south adjacent to the existing built form and effectively forming a buffer between existing and new development.

**5.3.46 Function and Capacity:** Given this areas relationship to the town centre, it is not considered that commercial development in this area would be appropriate. Notwithstanding this, the area is adjacent to Layston School to the north and allotments to the south and could provide additional land to meet future needs of both these facilities. Indeed, development of this area could enable expansion of Layston School to meet identified education

need in the town. The area is also close to Layston cemetery and anecdotal evidence suggests that additional burial space is also required. Again, land in this area could provide for additional capacity.

- 5.3.47 Open Space and Green Infrastructure:** The existing boundary of the town is considered quite ‘hard’ in landscape terms and there is considered to be little penetration of green infrastructure into the town from the east. Certainly, the realignment of Layston School and additional open space between the existing built-form and new development would embed green infrastructure into the built form. Enhancement of the existing tree / hedge belt could also contribute to a network of interconnected green routes.

### Area of Search 9: Buntingford East - 500 dwellings

- 5.3.48 Landscape and Setting:** In Sieve 1, it was concluded that 20 hectares of this large area of search may be suitable for development: i.e. the area roughly bounded by Hare Street Road to the north, a recently planted curving tree belt to the east, the former Sainsbury’s Distribution Depot to the south, and the existing built form (Snells Mead, Layston Meadow, Plashes Drive, Owles Lane, London Road and Windmill Hill) to the west. Similarly to Area of Search 8 (above), this area forms the eastern valley slopes of the Rib rising up from the town to an open arable plateau. Development in this location would push the extent of the town eastwards beyond the current limits of the built form on Hare Street Road and the distribution depot which is cut into the landscape on its eastern side. Despite this, the depot is still a prominent and dominant feature in the landscape, due in part to its bulk but also the rising topography of this area, emphasising the fact that the tree belt which skirts the ridgeline may indeed be too far east to ensure that any development respects the valley setting of Buntingford.
- 5.3.49 Structure and Connectivity:** The area is just over 800m / 10 minutes from the town centre. The area could be well integrated to the existing built-up area using accesses to Hare Street Road, Snells Mead, Layston Gardens and Owles Lane. However, access onto Hare Street Road may contradict the topographical context of the area. The eastwards continuation of existing accesses would create the most coherent structure in addition to a north-south route mirroring London Road itself.
- 5.3.50 Function and Capacity:** Commercial development may be appropriate to the south as an extension to, and accessed from, the distribution depot. However, this site is currently proposed for redevelopment so it is considered unlikely that additional opportunities would arise. The area is bounded by playing fields and allotments to the north. Development in this area could provide an opportunity to create an additional large open space, particular for children’s play and recreation.



**5.3.51 Open Space and Green Infrastructure:** In addition to the open space referred to above, the eastward extension of accesses through the area could create green infrastructure routes that penetrate through into the town. Enhancement of the existing tree belt could also contribute to a network of interconnected green routes.

### Conclusion - Buntingford Urban Form

**5.3.52** The scale and design of new development are likely to be critical factors in the ability of the town to maintain coherent urban form. Development to the north (Area of Search 7) and to the south (in Area of Search 6: Sub-area C) would do most to respect the valley setting of the town. However, all areas offer opportunities for additional commercial and community facilities, which would strengthen the minor town and rural service centre role of Buntingford. Development to the north, south and west would have a very defensible and physical boundary limit in the A10, whilst to the east, limits are less tangible. However, in both directions to the east and west, development would begin to creep up the valley slopes diluting the historic north-south axis of the town. Whilst residential development in part of Area of Search 6: Sub-area B adjacent to Watermill Industrial estate would be appropriate in landscape and setting terms, this area would not be suitable for residential, not least because of the sewage works, but because the area would be poorly integrated to the existing built form.

**5.3.53** In terms of urban form, growth at the lower end of the range of development options around 500 dwellings would be more appropriate, fulfilled by the partial development of areas in all directions, rather than the creation of a relatively large urban extension which, apart from being incongruous to the setting and context of Buntingford, may well unbalance the town in terms of urban form.

### Hertford

**5.3.54** Hertford lies towards the south of the district in rural surroundings at the confluence of four rivers (Beane, Lea, Mimram and Rib), and historically the town's shape was largely formed by this river valley setting. Hertford is further characterised by its Green Fingers, a series of green wedges which penetrate to the central core of the town. While the town centre is situated in a valley, the settlement has expanded over time to include areas, such as Bengeo, Morgans Walk, Sele Farm and Foxholes, which are all located at much higher levels. To the east of Hertford lies the neighbouring town of Ware, with the river, and later rail, connections between the two closely situated towns being key drivers in their development.

**5.3.55** As the County Town, and situated on an old coaching route, Hertford's shape has been partly influenced by travel patterns relating to road, river and rail, although the town owes its relatively small size to the fact that it

has been bypassed by major routes. Whilst the A414 Gascoyne Way relief road has greatly improved the town centre environment, it has been to the detriment of the character of the town as a whole, which is bisected in two. Hertford's town centre retains much of its medieval core, and includes many buildings of historic significance, with a high proportion of them being listed buildings. This high townscape quality is reflected by its Conservation Area designation and much of the medieval street pattern remains. Outside the town centre, residential developments of varying ages and quality have emerged over time and these provide a range of accommodation options for residents. The area to the south of Gascoyne Way is predominantly residential with some employment activity, notably public service offices, but without the retail vibrancy of the central area.

**5.3.56** Sieve 2 explained that Hertford provides some convenience and comparison shopping opportunities in its role as a Secondary Town Centre, although there are no identified opportunities for expansion of the town centre. This suggests that Hertford could 'anchor' some limited growth at urban extensions.

**5.3.57** Hertford benefits from a number of green infrastructure assets including Hartham Common and the town's 'green fingers'. The rivers themselves act as green (or blue) corridors providing for an interconnected network. These along with Kings Meads to the east should be reinforced as strategic green infrastructure. The town also benefits from a number of historic parks in the vicinity including Balls Park, Goldings and Brickendonbury. Further afield, and of greater strategic importance is the presence of the Broxbourne Woods complex.

### Area of Search 11: Hertford West - 600 dwellings:

**5.3.58** **Landscape and Setting:** An extension to the Sele Farm area of Hertford on the plateau of the western slopes of the town. Bisected by the B1000, to the south Panshanger Parkland landscape character area slopes southwards to focus on the River Mimram. To the north, Bramfield Plain landscape character area slopes northwards to a tributary of the River Beane. There are no definitive physical boundaries to outward development although there are a number of small blocks of woodland that act as a definitive edge to development in this area and limit the westward extent of development. A sensitive location, this area forms a gateway to Hertford both from the south, but more importantly from the west along the B1000 and development here could improve the existing juxtaposition of the urban/rural fringe.

**5.3.59** **Structure and Connectivity:** To the north of the B1000, existing development forms a hard edge although there is one opportunity (Perrett Gardens) for new development to stitch into the existing layout and structure. To the south, the B1000 and Thieves Lane form the threshold to the existing built form. Here opportunities should not be missed to create

a fully connected and legible structure and layout rather than succumb to the temptation of a car dominated layout creating an appendage to the town. An integrated approach would enable the development to make the most of existing public rights of way in the area and providing access to the surrounding countryside.

**5.3.60 Function and Capacity:** Although some distance from Hertford town centre, development in this area could complement the existing facilities in the locality including Sele School, Hollybush School, shops at Fleming Crescent, and Sele Community Centre. As an example, given the proximity to both Sele and Hollybush schools, should these schools need to expand this area could provide detached playing fields in order to provide for additional education capacity. Although significant commercial opportunities would be inappropriate, development of some 600 dwellings would warrant additional community facilities including open space.

**5.3.61 Open Space and Green Infrastructure:** The small blocks of woodland offer the best opportunity to embed open space and green infrastructure into the development, including by enhancing the existing rights of way to create a network of interconnected green routes. These in turn could lead to Panshanger Country Park: a strategic piece of green infrastructure between Hertford and Welwyn Garden City. Panshanger Country Park, ancient woodland and Archer's Spring should all be retained and enhanced with suitable protections as important strategic green infrastructure.

#### **Area of Search 12: Hertford North (Sub-Area C only) - 100 dwellings:**

**5.3.62 Landscape and Setting:** Sub-area C is on the high ground of Bengoe bisected by the B158 that splits the area in two on a north-south axis. To the east, the Lower Rib Valley landscape character area slopes northeastwards towards the River Rib in an open and undulating valley with the rising countryside beyond. To the west of the B158, the landscape of the Stoneyhills character area rises upwards, characterised by mineral workings. Sieve 1 concluded that 100 dwellings to the east of the B158 may be most appropriate in this area, although there are few physical features that would limit outward expansion of development. Development here could however, greatly improve the rather abrupt transition from urban to rural character. To the west of the B158, development would be in the 'v' created by the B158 and Sacombe Road, although again there are only minor field boundaries to contain development.

**5.3.63 Structure and Connectivity:** The main access to development in this area would be off Wadesmill Road (B158) although there are a number of opportunities to stitch development into the existing structure and layout of the locality including Temple Fields (to the east) and Sacombe Road (to the west) and the various public rights of way that traverse the area. Enhancement of existing routes would also encourage access to the surrounding countryside.

- 5.3.64 Function and Capacity:** Although some distance from Hertford town centre, the area is close to a range of community facilities including Bengoe Primary School, and shops on both The Avenue and Bengoe Street further to the south. It is unlikely that this scale of development could provide a new centre with a full range of facilities, although town-wide assessment may indicate that some land here could provide for community facilities for wider use. Commercial uses in this area are not considered appropriate. There may also be opportunities to swap the existing allotments at the junction of Wadesmill Road and Sacombe Road for superior provision further to the north.
- 5.3.65 Open Space and Green Infrastructure:** To the north the existing rights of way should be used to structure site-level green infrastructure, possibly with additional planting. Enhancement of existing rights of way could contribute to creating a network of interconnected green routes. Additional allotment land could provide the appropriate transition from urban development to rural countryside. There is also potential to provide additional and enhanced access to the River Rib pastures further to the east, although this may depend on the scale of development.

### **Area of Search 13: Hertford South (Sub-Area C only) - 100 dwellings:**

- 5.3.66 Landscape and Setting:** Bounded by London Road (B1197) to the east, Morgan's Walk to the west and bisected on a north-south axis by Mangrove Lane, this area can be characterised as a rural periphery of Hertford. Comprising the undulating Bayfordbury, Brickendonbury and Balls Parklands landscape character area, a central feature is the brook running through Brickendonbury Farm into Hertford. Part of this area also forms one of Hertford's Green Fingers, although arguably the broadest and least penetrating especially since it does not follow the course of a main river. Notwithstanding this, the landscape in this area has been, and continues to be, shaped by the presence of large country mansions and estates. There is no southern physical boundary to limit the southern extent of any development, although at the end of Sieve 1 it was concluded that only relatively small scale development (100 dwellings) may be appropriate.
- 5.3.67 Structure and Connectivity:** The key route is Mangrove Lane, although this is more of a narrow byway as opposed to a country road. This would form the backbone to the layout and structure of any development as there are considered to be few other opportunities to stitch development into the existing structure of the town. The area is served by public rights of way and these should be enhanced. Whilst this area does form a southern gateway to the town, it is not a key route and any development should enhance the transition from urban Hertford to rural Hertfordshire. Perhaps uniquely to this area, is a lack of a defined edge to the town, either built form or road. This is mostly due to the presence of Simon Balle School and Balls Park and as such, the urban area bleeds into the countryside.

Thus, subject to the specific location of any development, there may be a certain amount of disconnect between new development and the existing built-up area. The town centre is approximately 1km to the north.

**5.3.68 Function and Capacity:** To the south development would be likely to be relatively small-scale and relate principally to the town centre, although it would be well located for access to the existing schools. There could be potential for development to enable expansion of existing schools and provide additional community open space. Additional commercial land would not be appropriate, especially given highway constraints.

**5.3.69 Open Space and Green Infrastructure:** To the south additional open space is likely to be needed to compensate for the possible loss of existing space including expansion of Simon Balle school. The brook to the south would be retained as a wider green infrastructure feature external to the development area. If new development is focused along Mangrove Lane, this would have the effect of splitting the Green Finger in two; however, this has already occurred to a large extent with Oak Grove, Mangrove Drive, and Ashbourne Gardens. The focus of the new 'western' finger could be the existing brook and Morgans Walk and the new 'eastern' finger Simon Balle School playing Fields and Balls Park. Although such an approach would be a fundamental change, it is considered that at the settlement-wide scale it would enhance the definition of the town in urban form terms.

## Key Points - Hertford Urban Form

**5.3.70** The relatively low levels of peripheral development tested could be accommodated without significant harm to the urban form of Hertford. To the west (Area of Search 11) there is an opportunity to strengthen the setting of the town through the creation of Panshanger Country Park strategic green infrastructure. To the north (Area of Search 12), development could help improve the relationship between the urban and rural, and to the south (Area of Search 13), whilst amending the current extent of the Green Finger, development could be accommodated without significant harm to the town. Unlike many other locations across the District, areas of search around Hertford are characterised by a lack of an existing physical barrier to act as a limit of growth. As such, limited development as proposed is considered appropriate.

## Sawbridgeworth

**5.3.71** Sawbridgeworth is located on the western slopes of the River Stort halfway between Harlow New Town to the south and Bishop's Stortford to the north. The River Stort runs to the east of the town, which along with the railway line, forms the boundary between Hertfordshire and Essex, and physically separates the village of Lower Sheering from Sawbridgeworth. Further to the south along the roads to Harlow and High Wych, is suburban sprawl which forms an awkward appendage to the town. Notwithstanding this,

the land here forms a significantly important break separating and distinguishing the settlements of Harlow, Sawbridgeworth and High Wych. The position of the railway line adjacent to the River Stort has resulted in pockets of wetland between the two embankments which have since become valuable wildlife havens, one area of which is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Being located within a river valley, much of the built-up area of Sawbridgeworth is rising westwards with much of the landscape reflecting the gentle rises and falls of tributaries feeding the River Stort. The rich fluvial soil has been cultivated for agriculture with wide stretches of flat, open arable farmland surrounding the built-up area.

- 5.3.72** The town centre is located on an east-west axis to the east of London Road rather than the main north-south route (A1184), although the centre itself is not centred on the crossing of the river. In essence, the structure of Sawbridgeworth is defined by the crossroads of London Road and Station Road / West Road with development in all directions, although weighted towards the south. Much of the town centre is covered by a Conservation Area, with many listed buildings and a historic character. To the west of London Road is mainly post-war residential development of a suburban character. However, the trend towards culs-de-sac and single access estate roads during the 1980s and 1990s has resulted in a closed urban fringe, where the edge is delineated by back gardens rather than by roads. As such, there are few points where access could be gained through the current edge to create new estates that are well-connected with the existing built-up area.
- 5.3.73** Sieve 2 explained that the town centre has a limited range of shops and facilities based on convenience shopping, and has been proposed for designation as a Minor Town Centre, along with Ware and Buntingford. For this reason it appears doubtful whether the town could successfully integrate development at the higher end of the growth range set out, although at lower levels some growth could reinforce the vitality and viability of the existing facilities. Given the small size of the town, new development would be likely to turn to the town centre for the provision of available services and facilities.
- 5.3.74** The greatest green infrastructure asset in the locality is the River Stort and it's environs. However, the existing built-up area of the town acts as a barrier to connectivity with the river valley. Pishiobury Park and the Rivers Nursery Orchard are significant green infrastructure assets but their accessibility is limited. Opportunities should be taken should development occur to create links between new neighbourhoods and existing green infrastructure assets, or to create new assets that could be supportive and supplementary to the habitats and species that inhabit the Stort valley and the orchards.

**Area of Search 16: Sawbridgeworth West (Sub-Area A – North of West Road)  
- part of 200 or 2,800 dwellings:**

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- 5.3.75 Landscape and Setting:** The Thorley Uplands Landscape Character Area (number 85) which covers this area and Sawbridgeworth North Area of Search is extremely large and covers all the land between Sawbridgeworth and Bishop's Stortford, including Spellbrook, and extending west towards Green Tye. The landscape is a gently rising slope with open arable farmland. Very large fields with no hedgerows are locally characteristic. The area is remote but not tranquil. The LCA states that this character area is a "most unusual area; elemental and simple and of a scale undreamed of in the cluttered south east of the county." It is classified as 'Conserve and Strengthen' in the LCA and as such scored 'red' in the topic assessment.
- 5.3.76** The landscape areas surrounding the town are very large areas, the main distinguishing features of which are diluted the closer to the built-up area of the town they are. Despite this, given the changes in topography, the land immediately adjacent to the west of the built-up area of Sawbridgeworth and the A1184 is the most visible part of the landscape character area. A large scale development which would need to cover much of this eastward facing slope would therefore cover much of this visible landscape and as such would degrade the openness of the current uninterrupted extensive views out from the urban area. A smaller amount of development built close up to the existing built-up area north of West Road would be more suitable in terms of protecting the landscape from encroachment and preserving the openness of the majority of the eastward facing slopes of the Thorley Upland character area.
- 5.3.77 Structure and Connectivity:** There are clear opportunities to extend the urban fringe around Mandeville School using existing roads and potential new links from developments under construction. Should development occur to the north of West Road, there is the potential to make Mandeville and Leventhorpe Schools more integrated into new development, potentially opening up access to shared community facilities at each school.
- 5.3.78 Function and Capacity:** The option for large-scale growth to the west of the town would probably make the provision of a new centre viable, or would require at least one new local parade for convenience needs. However, given the proximity to Harlow and Bishop's Stortford, it is highly likely that many residents of a large-scale western urban extension would travel to these neighbouring centres instead of using the facilities in Sawbridgeworth town centre.
- 5.3.79 Open Space and Green Infrastructure:** The brook that runs through this area could be used to redefine and soften the edge of a new neighbourhood and act as a tool for opening up and encouraging access to the countryside to the west of the town. If the football ground was relocated to a new site on the outer edge of the built-up area, this could serve to redefine the edge of the urban area, and as it would be a less 'urban' feature, could act as a softer link to the wider countryside around the town.

## Area of Search 16: Sawbridgeworth West (Sub-Area B - South of West Road) – part of 200 or 2,800 dwellings:

- 5.3.80 Landscape and Setting:** The High Wych Slopes Landscape Character Area (number 84) runs to the south of LCA 85 and contains the village of High Wych and hamlet of Allen’s Green. The area is described as a “south-facing slope of mixed farming within a small irregular field pattern, usually ditched rather than hedged. An area of transition, showing increasing urban influence in the southern part.” This character area is considered more able to accommodate development than area 85 (above) as much of the landscape has already been harmed by historic extensions and ribbon development towards High Wych. The LCA report states that the change within this area from north to south provides a good indication of the effect of creeping urbanisation. At the end of Sieve 3, it was decided that development should be limited in this location to land north of The Crest, as development west of The Crest would be likely to result in the removal of the strategic gap between Sawbridgeworth town and High Wych village. In terms of the landscape character area, the impacts of historic encroachment would be exacerbated. This coalescence would also harm the Rivers Nursery Orchard, a Local Wildlife Site and area of significant local importance.
- 5.3.81 Structure and Connectivity:** The current urban fringe around Chalks Farm (Coney Green) south of West Road is more constrained. The brook acts a defining boundary to the built-up area and new infrastructure such as link roads or footbridges would be needed to join existing estates with new developments. In order to ensure connectivity it would be unsuitable to create culs-de-sac. Grid formats are the most permeable urban forms, offering more opportunities to join existing and new neighbourhoods together and to enable movement through the estate. In terms of scale, it would be much harder to create connections with the existing built-up area if there was a larger scale of development. Depending upon the design of any new road bypassing the town, it may not be possible to create new access points, in which case any new developments would need to be accessed through the existing built-up areas, possibly leading to tensions between existing and new neighbourhoods.
- 5.3.82 Function and Capacity:** The option for large-scale growth to the west of the town would probably make the provision of a new centre viable, or would require at least one new local parade for convenience needs. However, given the proximity to Harlow and Bishop’s Stortford, it is highly likely that many residents of a large-scale western urban extension would travel to these neighbouring centres instead of using the facilities in Sawbridgeworth town centre.
- 5.3.83 Open Space and Green Infrastructure:** There is an existing small recreation ground on the southern side of West Road between the existing built-up area and the ribbon development of houses along West Road.



Should development occur south of West Road it would be important to ensure this recreation ground remains and this could be extended southwards along the brook to create a green corridor between the existing built-up area and the new neighbourhood. This could have the dual use of recreation and flood attenuation. A new footbridge link to Coney Green could serve to create a pedestrian link between existing and new roads.

### Key Points - Sawbridgeworth Urban Form

**5.3.84** Although large-scale development to the west of the town would be contained by a bypass, which would act as a physical edge to development, development of this scale would be likely to have serious adverse impact on the urban form of the town. The new neighbourhoods would be located at some distance from the town centre and would be likely to encourage travel away from the town even for convenience shopping as new local shopping parades may be required to support new neighbourhoods. One benefit would of course be a reduction in pollution and congestion in the town centre as through traffic is diverted along the bypass. However, these benefits do not necessarily outweigh the creation of an unsustainable extension to the town. Furthermore, the construction of a bypass is not solely dependent upon development to the west of the town and could come forward irrespectively. In contrast, relatively small-scale development to the west, in the vicinity of West Road, would reduce the risk of unsustainable patterns of development. A smaller level of development would be easier to fit alongside the existing built-up area, in terms of connections to existing infrastructure and the pattern of built form.

### Ware

**5.3.85** Ware sits astride the River Lea (River Lee Navigation) at the fording point of the highway between London and Cambridge. The river has been the focus of the town's historical development and the town grew as a centre for malting. The town centre is on the northern bank of the Lea as is the vast majority of the town as it climbs out of the valley; the roman road north running between two tributaries forming a y-shape. Suburban development in the second half of the 20th century is on the high valley tops to the north of the town, and there is also similar development on the southern slopes although this is far less extensive. The New River also runs through Ware and, like the river, is a defining characteristic of its setting, especially when approaching from the southeast and southwest.

**5.3.86** The town centre is focused on the High Street, being of mediaeval plan characterised by Burgage Plots: long narrow plots of land running between the High Street and the river. As such, the town centre retains much of its medieval core, and includes many buildings of historic significance, with a high proportion of them being listed buildings. This high townscape quality is reflected by its Conservation Area designation and the remnants of the town's malting heritage can also be seen. Sieve 2 explained that the town

centre has a limited range of shops and facilities based on convenience shopping, and has been proposed for designation as a Minor Town Centre, along with Buntingford and Sawbridgeworth. Large-scale development has the potential to provide a local centre, akin to the shopping parades around the town and could also draw on the catchment from existing adjacent residential areas.

- 5.3.87** The greatest green infrastructure assets of the town are the River Lea and New River which act as a green (and blue) corridor through the town centre, connecting the floodplains of Kings Meads to the west with the open space of the Lee Valley Regional Park to the east. Two tributaries of the Lea also run southwards through the town.

### Area of Search 19: Ware North - 200 or 1,700 dwellings

- 5.3.88** **Landscape and Setting:** To the east of Wadesmill Road, Sub-area B is part of the large Wareside - Braughing Uplands landscape character area which wraps around the north and east of the town. In this undulating plateau there is a sense of being high in the landscape and a key feature is the valley formed by the brook that runs southwest into the town down to the Lea. Sub-area A forms the triangle of land sandwiched between Wadesmill Road and the A10 bypass (the Nun's Triangle) being part of Poles Park / Hanbury Manor Registered Historic Park and Garden. Distinct from the agricultural landscape of Sub-area B, this parkland area is notable for its mature trees.

- 5.3.89** **Structure and Connectivity:** The existing built-up area immediately to the south of this area is characterised by suburban culs-de-sac that turn their back on the countryside to the north. A number of public rights of way cross the area. Opportunities to stitch any new development into the fabric of the existing town are limited to Wadesmill Road adjacent to Wodson Park leisure centre (to the west) and Fanhams Hall Road (to the east). The scale of development will be a huge determinant of how well development in this area connects to the existing built-up area, and large scale development would probably warrant a new east-west link across the area; although this should not necessarily be the focus of the structure at the expense of a fully integrated, permeable and legible layout. Irrespective of this, the area of search is some 1.5km from the town centre.

- 5.3.90** **Function and Capacity:** The scale of development will determine the level of facilities provided. A smaller-scale development in the High Oak Road area would only be able to provide limited facilities, and would look towards the town centre. A larger scale could provide a local centre similar to that at Kingsway. Development in this area could provide for additional recreation facilities at Wodson Park.

**5.3.91 Open Space and Green Infrastructure:** The land to the north (High Oak Road) is used for informal recreation (e.g. dog walking, annual firework display) and land off Fanhams Hall Road is used as playing fields. Any development would either need to retain land in this area or incorporate compensatory open space. Either way, the open space in this location would form a key green infrastructure asset and supplement the brook running from southwards as a local green infrastructure feature.

### Area of Search 20: Ware East (Sub-area A only) - 1,300 dwellings

**5.3.92 Landscape and Setting:** Whilst also part of the Wareside - Braughing Uplands landscape character area, the east of Ware exhibits different characteristics to the north, being a more open and exposed landscape. Indeed, development in this location could breach the ridgeline currently separating the town of Ware from the valley of the Ash. The road from Wareside forms a gateway to the town from the rural east, although with the northeastern suburban estates sitting somewhat below the ridge, the town proper is not experienced until much lower in the valley near Widbury Gardens. Development in this area would need to respect the approach to Ware.

**5.3.93 Structure and Connectivity:** Although the suburban development forms a well-defined edge to the town, a number of routes punctuate the built form, including (north to south) Ash Road, Beacon Road, Elms Road and The Vineyard as well as access off Cozens Road and Widbury Hill itself. Existing public rights of way would form a useful structure to any development. Thus development in this location could stitch well into the existing fabric. Given the rectangular shape of the area of search, large-scale development would best be achieved as discrete blocks rather than as a single whole with a defined centre.

**5.3.94 Function and Capacity:** At the end of Sieve 2 it was concluded that east of Ware should only come forward alongside north of Ware. In terms of functionality, this area needs to be considered in those strategic terms. Notwithstanding this, development in this location does present local opportunities including provision of additional land to expand Priors Wood School and Beacon Road recreation ground.

**5.3.95 Open Space and Green Infrastructure:** The existing public rights of way that run on an east-west axis could be enhanced as green corridors that penetrate through the development into the town. A green infrastructure buffer could also be created along the outside edge of the development thus helping to resolve any issues in respect of setting. Such infrastructure could also link to the existing small blocks of woodland helping to strengthen them. Additional open space would also need to be provided.

### Conclusion - Ware Urban Form

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**5.3.96** Development to the north and east of Ware would arguably be out of scale with the existing Minor Town Centre role of Ware, and in this there are similarities with large-scale development options west of Sawbridgeworth. Although at lower levels some growth could reinforce the vitality and viability of the existing facilities, like Sawbridgeworth, there would be some risk that residents would travel elsewhere for shopping and other purposes. In contrast with Sawbridgeworth, however, to the north and east of Ware there are no serious complications in terms of strategic gaps. In respect of large scale development to the north, there may be integration issues in respect of layout and connectivity, whilst to the east, visual landscape setting is an issue. It is considered that, although physically separate from Poles Park and Hanbury Manor, the remnant of the Historic Parkland at the Nun's Triangle is still coherent. Indeed, its greatest value would be as public parkland to meet the recreation and leisure requirement of any new residents housed in development to the north of Ware.

## Villages

**5.3.97** The initial scale assumption for the villages was 10%, and no specific directions of growth have been assumed. Given the detailed nature of urban forms considerations at each village it is considered that the most appropriate way to assess urban form is for further studies to be undertaken for each village, whether by the District Council as Part 2 of the District Plan, or by Parish Councils as part of a process of Neighbourhood Planning.

## Welwyn Garden City

**5.3.98** Welwyn Garden City was the second of the pioneering 'Garden Cities' and is generally acknowledged to be one of the more successful examples of a planned new settlement. In terms of function and capacity, it plays an important strategic role for the wider area, with a strong town centre offer, excellent access to main transport links including the mainline train station, and the A1(M), which may be accessed from the south and east via the A414. The A1(M) limits growth to the west.

### **Area of Search 61: East of Welwyn Garden City: Up to 2,000 dwellings:**

**5.3.99** **Landscape and setting:** the area of search is located within the Welwyn Fringes Landscape Character Area, and Panshanger Parkland Landscape Character Area is located on the opposite side of Panshanger Lane. It is currently used for arable cultivation. The area is largely flat, although there is a dip around Birchall Farm, where there is a large pond. It is largely screened from the wider area, and is not visible from the sensitive landscape of the Mimram Valley, which lies beyond the woodland to the north.

- 5.3.100 Structure and Connectivity:** the area of search is located immediately adjacent to the existing urban area of Welwyn Garden City. Existing features provide potential for a coherent urban structure, including the woodland blocks, hedgerows, Panshanger Lane and the potential new Country Park beyond, Moneyhole Park and Green Lane, and the A414 to the south-east. A public right of way crosses the area from Panshanger Lane in the east to Moneyhole Lane in the west. National Cycle Route 61 passes along the B195 (Blackfan Road/Birchall Lane) and this road would provide the main route into Welwyn Garden City by a range of different modes of transport.
- 5.3.101** It is understood that Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council does not favour development options to the south-east of the town, including the area across Birchall Lane because of concerns over contaminated land and the poor connectivity. However, Area of Search 61 does not rely on delivery of new development within Welwyn Hatfield for coherent structure and connectivity and this is not considered to be an obstacle to possible development of the land within East Herts District.
- 5.3.102 Function and capacity:** The area could be large enough to support some additional facilities, possibly a new primary or even secondary school site, and a Local or District centre. Given the location adjacent to the A414 with good access to the A1(M), there could be some potential for employment.
- 5.3.103 Open Space and Green Infrastructure:** Adjacent to the site area there are blocks of ancient woodland, including Blackthorn Wood, Henry Wood and Birchall Wood which would need to be protected as GI assets if development in this area were to come forward. On the opposite side of Panshanger Lane there are proposals for a new Country Park. Within the site there are two ponds at low points which could have GI potential. Moneyhole Park could provide accessible open space from parts of the area.

## Key Points - Welwyn Garden City Urban Form

- 5.3.104** Development east of Welwyn Garden City could provide a coherent urban form. Key factors include the firm edges provided by the proposed Panshanger Country Park, the internal structure provided by the woodland blocks and Moneyhole Park, and the strengths of Welwyn Garden City in terms of its past and current function and capacity.

## Harlow

- 5.3.105** Harlow was originally masterplanned by Sir Frederick Gibberd with attention paid to the layout of the town within the landscape. Harlow is structured by a number of distinct neighbourhoods divided by green wedges, some of which contain the main roads within the town. The green wedges have left an ambiguous legacy for the town. On the one hand, they are a

distinctive part of the form and structure of Harlow and provide substantial community benefits including extensive open space. On the other hand, the roads within the green wedges have led to a degree of severance between the neighbourhoods and key destinations such as the stations and the town centre, which discourages the movement of pedestrians and cyclists.

- 5.3.106** This section considers Area of Search 62: North of Harlow (10,000 dwellings) and Area of Search 69: Hunsdon Area (new settlement - 5,000 dwellings) together, because of the considerable overlap between the two geographical areas and also between the planning concepts of 'urban extension' and 'new settlement'.

### **Area of Search 62: North of Harlow: 10,000 dwellings**

- 5.3.107** Area 62 comprises three separate sub-areas equating with relevant parts of the Landscape Character Areas as follows:

- Sub-Area A: Area 83 (Hunsdon Plateau)
- Sub-Area B: Area 81 (Stanstead and Pishiobury Parklands)
- Sub-Area C: Area 82 (River Stort)

### **Sub-Area A - share of 10,000 dwellings:**

- 5.3.108** This sub-area is the northernmost of the three sub-areas. Development of Sub-Area A is considered as part of a larger development involving Sub-Area B to the south. The notion of a detached 'new settlement' in Sub-Area A alone is assessed under Area of Search 69: Hunsdon Area below.

- 5.3.109** **Landscape and Setting:** Sub-Area A lies 2-3km away from the edge of Harlow. The Landscape Character Assessment states that this area is characterised by *'large scale open arable farmland on a flat upland plateau, with smaller fields and woodland to the north west of Hunsdon'*. Key features of this area include Hunsdon Airfield, the visually intrusive high-voltage overhead power lines (pylons) and the woodland blocks to the north. Development in this area would in itself be unlikely to have significant impact on the setting of Harlow, but it would significantly impact the setting of Hunsdon and the open countryside. If large-scale development were to happen in this area, it would be likely that most of Hunsdon airfield would be required for development. Whatever approach to layout and design were proposed, the character of Hunsdon as a distinct village in an open landscape would be unavoidably and significantly impacted.

- 5.3.110** A number of studies and other documents have addressed the landscape north of Harlow. The Harlow Area Landscape and Environment Study (CBA, 2005) states the *'desirability of retaining the rural character of largely*

*undeveloped/open countryside to the north of the Stort Valley, and avoiding an increased sense of urbanisation through erosion of the individual identity of rural settlements and their dispersed pattern within the landscape'* (volume 2, page 10). This is clearly the concern of the STOP Harlow North proposal for Gilston Great Park (2006), which draws attention to the potential of the landscape for enhancement.

- 5.3.111** Based on the CBA study, the Harlow Options Appraisal (2010) applied red/amber/green 'traffic light ratings to landscape sensitivity in each direction around Harlow as part of a constraints-led approach. It concluded that there were very large areas of 'high sensitivity' landscape around Harlow, particularly to the south, west and the Stort Valley to the North. Areas of moderate landscape sensitivity included the area around Old Harlow to the east, land in Epping Forest District to the east of Harlow District, and the area in East Herts to the north of the Stort Valley. The area within Harlow District east of the town was assessed as 'low sensitivity'.
- 5.3.112** The Harlow Area Study (Matrix, 2005) notes that Sir Frederick Gibberd intended the railway line and the 'Hertfordshire Hills' to form a clear northern limit to growth and acknowledges the landscape to the north, but challenges the continued relevance of this limit, given wider growth pressures and Harlow's good access to London and the M25 as well as its regeneration needs.
- 5.3.113** **Structure and Connectivity:** There are three main concerns relating to structure and connectivity, which apply in both sub-areas A and B. These are firstly, the separation from Harlow caused by the Stort Valley, secondly, the discordant features of the overhead power lines running through the area, and thirdly, the structure in relation to the existing villages in close proximity. These are addressed in turn.
- 5.3.114** Firstly, the Stort Valley is over 1km wide, and is a sensitive valley landscape and for this reason development in most of Sub-Area C has already been ruled out. One of the key issues for development in Sub-Areas A and B is whether a) could become part of a single 'Harlow' with a coherent identity on both sides of the Stort valley, or whether b) the valley would sever new development from Harlow and therefore constitute a separate settlement with its own distinct identity, or whether c) the Stort is an insurmountable obstacle to a sustainable pattern of development.
- 5.3.115** Taking account of the planning requirements set out in the NPPF, the issue of structure and connectivity cannot be resolved conclusively without consideration of a number of wider issues, relating to the urban form of the existing villages in the area as well as understanding of the options for a coherent regeneration strategy for Harlow, and 'objectively assessed' pressures for growth and development.

- 5.3.116** Secondly, there is a high-voltage overhead power line running through the middle of Sub-Areas A and B. For health and safety reasons, regulations require a 'wayleave' of 400m on either side of such power lines (i.e 800m across). As an artificial straight line with no reference either to the existing town of Harlow nor to any natural features such as topography or watercourses, it is difficult to see how the power line could be convincingly integrated into GI or other landscape or open space networks. <sup>(7)</sup> For example, at Great Ashby north of Stevenage the limitations to coherent urban form resulting from a similar power line are clear, even though the wayleave is considerably narrower than current requirements (only 50m each side).
- 5.3.117** Thirdly, the impact on the existing context including the nearby villages needs to be considered. Failure to achieve coherent urban form would have significant negative impacts not only on the settlements in East Herts, but also on Harlow in its objective to attract high skilled workers to the town.
- 5.3.118** The villages of Eastwick and Gilston would be unavoidably surrounded by development. The outlying villages of Hunsdon, Widford and High Wych would all be slightly different in their relationship to any possible future development. Widford lies behind a number of woodland blocks which could provide a firm buffer to development in the north. However, there are no such obvious existing buffers to Hunsdon and High Wych, which both lie approximately on the edge of the maximum possible extent of development. If the principle of development to the north were to be agreed in the District Plan, there would be pressure to develop as much of this area as possible.
- 5.3.119** It is therefore necessary to consider whether the villages would be separated from new development by some form of landscape buffer, or whether they would be integrated into it. Sawbridgeworth lies close beyond High Wych, and therefore the case for a clear buffer is strong in Green Belt terms. <sup>(8)</sup> However, Hunsdon is an isolated village and therefore any buffer with new development nearby would be likely to come under greater pressure.
- 5.3.120** The above analysis of landscape and urban structure shows that the East of England Plan suggestion that the area could eventually accommodate up to 25,000 dwellings betrays a lack of understanding of the local context: the area north of Harlow is not a 'blank slate' for limitless growth.
- 5.3.121** Two design concepts for development in Sub-Areas A and B should be assessed in relation to the structure and connectivity concerns identified.

7 National Grid's publication on this topic makes clear the limitations of attempts to integrate power lines into successful urban form.

8 Green Belt, including its purpose in the protection of historic towns, will be assessed further in the section on Green Belt later in this chapter.



- 5.3.122** Firstly, if the current form of Harlow were to provide a template, development would be structured around Green Wedges dividing separate neighbourhoods. Under this concept, Hunsdon would probably be integrated into the enlarged Harlow in the same manner as Old Harlow is integrated into Harlow, although there could be some scope for a relatively narrow open space buffer east of Hunsdon as a 'green wedge'.
- 5.3.123** A second option could be for a number of connected 'villages', perhaps reflecting some of the features of Hunsdon, for example. As the village concept is not explicitly related to Harlow it could provide a more coherent 'stand-alone' form to incorporate an irregular (rather than linear) 'wayleave'. However, this would be likely to reduce the amount of land available for development in order to soften the linear edges through uneven set-back from the 400m line on both sides, and could be vulnerable to pressure to 'squeeze' development value from the land. This option could relate better to the existing villages in the area, although it would still significantly impact their character in terms of their countryside setting.
- 5.3.124** **Function and Capacity:** if Sub-Area A were to be developed it would be located towards the outer area of the development, and most retail and main functions would be likely to be built to the south in Sub-Area B. However, given the potential scale of development in this sub-area, it would be likely to contain one or more schools and possibly neighbourhood centres. However, as shown above, the area north of Harlow does not have limitless capacity in terms of area to expand. The area north of the Stort is isolated from the M11 and would therefore be dependent on the provision of a new M11 link road, if its function and capacity is to be extended beyond being primarily a residential area.
- 5.3.125** **Open Space and Green Infrastructure:** This Sub-Area contains a number of separate woodland blocks, including Marshland Wood, Queens' Wood, Battle Wood, Black Hut Wood and Maplecroft Wood. Sub-Area A contains the upper reaches of the tributaries flowing south to the river Stort. The streams and woodland blocks could form important structuring elements, perhaps in the manner of Todd Brook, Vicarage Wood and Netteswell Plantation within Harlow. It could be possible for development in this area to link together these features into coherent networks of Green Infrastructure, perhaps with the provision of a Country Park based around the woodland to the north.
- 5.3.126** Another consideration relates to the nature of a buffer with Hunsdon. Potentially such a buffer could provide open space and Green Infrastructure, although there are no streams or areas of designated habitats here which would be likely to form a basis for such a project. If large-scale development were to occur in Sub-Area A then it is likely that the majority of Hunsdon Airfield would be required for development, and therefore a buffer with Hunsdon would probably not be more than 100m

wide. The concept of an 800m wide stretch of Green Infrastructure along the line of the overhead power lines is unconvincing, as it would result in an artificial and intrusive feature within the urban form.

## Sub-Area B - share of 10,000 dwellings:

**5.3.127** This sub-area lies south of Sub-Area A, and the southern boundary lies along the A414 and High Wych Road/Redricks Lane.

**5.3.128** **Landscape and Setting:** The Landscape Character Assessment states that this area is characterised by *'parkland and arable farmland on gently undulating south-facing slope interrupted by valleys of the Stort's tributaries. Cultural pattern overrides topographical change. An area of ancient settlements, dominated by the many parklands on the south-facing slopes above the Stort Valley'*. In relation to Gilston Park, the LCA notes that *"there are a number of veteran trees, although Gilston Park has some notable veteran trees and a lake, but has lost much of its grassland to the plough"*. Streams including Pole Hole Brook, Fiddler's Brook, Eastwick Brook, and Hunsdon Brook provide an important part of the landscape, and are also significant in terms of structure and Green Infrastructure (see below). The hedgerows in this area are important landscape features, particularly along the narrow lanes. Other notable features of this area include Golden Grove and Home Wood.

**5.3.129** Much of the area slopes towards the Stort Valley to the south, and therefore development in large parts of the sub-area would be visible from Harlow. Development in this area would change the form of the town and its current landscape setting, although the Harlow Area Landscape and Environment study suggests that the impacts would probably be less severe than those south of Redricks Lane. Development north of High Wych Road, in the vicinity of Channocks Farm and Sayes Park Farm, would not be visible from the Stort valley but would impact on the setting of High Wych.

**5.3.130** The setting of the villages of Eastwick and Gilston would be unavoidably and significantly impacted by development in Sub-Area B. A landscape buffer with High Wych could be introduced. As discussed above, a development concept involving linked villages could have more potential to integrate the existing villages with new development. However, the open landscape setting of all three villages would be significantly changed.

**5.3.131** **Structure and Connectivity:** Development in Sub-Area B would be linked to Harlow by means of the existing road bridge across the River Stort and the railway line, possibly supplemented by a new bridge immediately adjacent.<sup>(9)</sup> The other discussions about two concepts of structure are the same as under Sub-Area A above. If a direct link road to a new junction on the M11 were provided, this would mean that north of Harlow would

become attractive to commuters as a residential location. This would further the impression that the development would not form a self-contained part of Harlow. It may be that in the long term residents would seek employment nearer to home, possibly in Harlow, as they tire of long commuting distances to work. To enhance this connectivity, frequent bus services into Harlow would be required.

- 5.3.132 Function and Capacity:** The Harlow Regeneration Strategy's vision for growth would see Sub-Area B, particularly the area immediately north of the Burnt Mill Roundabout, playing a key role in the northwards shift of the centre of gravity in the town, linked to development at Harlow Town Station. However, the area is unlikely to host significant employment development, (see Section 5.2: Economic Development) and would probably be largely residential in character, supported by a District Centre and local centres, rather than major retail development, which could undermine Harlow Town Centre. Development north of Harlow could be of sufficient scale to provide a number of distinct neighbourhood centres within easy reach of new neighbourhoods.
- 5.3.133 Open Space and Green Infrastructure:** The Stort Valley would become a central piece of Green Infrastructure, if large-scale development in Sub-Area B were to go ahead. However, it is debatable whether the valley would form a central 'green spine' to a single integrated Harlow, or whether it would divide Harlow from a separate development. If development north of Harlow is to go ahead, it would need to be of sufficient scale and sufficiently well connected to Harlow to be able to unite, rather than divide, the expanded town.
- 5.3.134** The streams running south into the river could also become important GI features within a development, possibly also providing a natural line for pedestrian routes south to Harlow Town station. These streams are known to be important habitats for a variety of flora and fauna. Gilston Park is located in the centre of the area promoted for development, but is separately owned to the remainder of the area north of Harlow and it is unclear whether the park could become an open-access Country Park serving development for the area. However, a right of way does pass through the parkland, from which there are views of the lake.

### **Sub-Area C - 270 dwellings at Terlings Park only**

- 5.3.135** Sub-Area C covers the Stort valley south of Redricks Lane and the A414. The only location within Sub-Area C for further assessment for development is Terlings Park.
- 5.3.136** The remainder of Sub-Area C was mostly discounted at Sieve 1 for reasons relating to landscape, flood risk, and urban form, but is nevertheless of importance to discussion of Sub-Area B and therefore some observations are required here.

- 5.3.137 Landscape and Setting:** Terlings Park is currently occupied by disused buildings and therefore the additional impact of development here on landscape and setting would be small. However, Terlings Park is located in one of the most sensitive parts of the Stort Valley landscape so any development proposals would need to be sensitively designed and screened.
- 5.3.138** Development in Sub-Area B on the south facing slopes west of the Burnt Mill Roundabout is likely to be visible from the valley. This would result in a significant impact on the landscape of the valley, although this is arguably already compromised to varying degrees by the A414 dual carriageway, railway line, and overflying aircraft. Development on the slopes south of Redricks Lane has already been ruled out on landscape grounds.
- 5.3.139** Further work is needed to ascertain the need for new infrastructure, but the construction of new bridges could have a significant effect on the landscape quality of the valley. The strategic gap between Sawbridgeworth and Harlow is likely to be especially sensitive in this regard, and the implications of a bridge in this area for Green Belt purposes will require further assessment, if a bridge is shown to be necessary.
- 5.3.140 Structure and Connectivity:** Terlings Park is separated from Harlow by the River Stort and the railway line. There is a public right of way connecting indirectly with Harlow by means of footbridges across the railway and the river. Overall, it is not well connected to the town. If this option were to come forward it would form a separate 'stand-alone' development, rather than having a particular connection to Harlow.
- 5.3.141 Function and Capacity:** Terlings Park is currently a brownfield site, consisting of a number of large disused buildings. It is understood that this site has been extensively but unsuccessfully marketed for employment use, and therefore residential use is proposed. Given the relatively limited extent of the site it is unlikely that it would be able to support substantial new functions, and would be likely to rely on Harlow or other centres for most facilities. As mentioned above, it would therefore be essential that development in this area should be linked to Harlow by frequent bus service.
- 5.3.142 Open Space and Green Infrastructure:** Terlings Park is situated within the Stort Valley, which is acknowledged to be a major piece of strategic Green Infrastructure. Therefore any development at Terlings Park would need to be appropriately integrated into the wider context, including the provision of good access. Sub-Area C includes a number of wildlife habitats including Hunsdon Mead, Eastwick Mead, and Parndon Mead, as well as Harlow Marsh and Hollingson Meads. Effective drainage measures would be required to ensure that run-off from development in the area does not adversely impact these sites but instead matches existing greenfield runoff rates.

### Area of Search 69: Hunsdon Area - 5,000 dwellings

- 5.3.143** The Hunsdon area 'new settlement' concept overlaps with the urban extension concept for development north of Harlow. Many of the considerations relevant to this area of search have already been addressed above. This section assesses the distinct concept of a new settlement in Sub-Area A, with no development in Sub-Area B., i.e. a 'detached' new settlement, with an undeveloped gap to the south before the Stort valley is reached.
- 5.3.144** **Landscape and Setting:** Purely in landscape terms, it could be argued that a location 2-3 km north of Harlow would be less visible from Harlow and would have less impact on the quality of the Stort valley, although as already noted, there would be unavoidable impacts on the setting of Hunsdon.
- 5.3.145** **Structure and Connectivity:** A detached new settlement would by definition have no immediate connection with Harlow in terms of urban form. New highways would need to be constructed to link with Harlow. There would be likely to be more connection with Hunsdon, although it would be likely that, given limitations on the available space, the new settlement would adjoin Hunsdon without either integrating it or, conversely, being separated from it to achieve a distinct identity.
- 5.3.146** **Function and Capacity:** There is insufficient land available for a detached new settlement to provide a full range of functions necessary to meet high levels of self-containment and sustainability. The only clear location for a detached new settlement would be in the area north-west of the end of Eastwick Hall Lane, south of Blackhut Wood and east of Hunsdon, including the whole area of Hunsdon Airfield. The maximum extent of this area is 150 hectares, which at 20 dwellings per hectare suggests a maximum 3,000 dwellings, including the full range of supporting infrastructure necessary for a new settlement.<sup>(10)</sup> In addition, a detached location lacks the advantages of development options further south, such as access to railway stations, roads, and the facilities of Harlow.
- 5.3.147** **Open Space and Green Infrastructure:** A detached new settlement would be surrounded by open countryside. To the north lie the woodland blocks noted above. To the east lies the row of pylons as discussed above, which could provide scope for some GI features within the 'wayleave'. The area to the south could be managed as a Country Park or other open space feature.

### Key Points - Harlow Urban Form

<sup>10</sup> By comparison, the built-up area of Sawbridgeworth is approximately 170 hectares (not including Pishiobury Park) and has around 3,100 dwellings.

- 5.3.148** Development to the east of Harlow would be preferable in terms of its landscape and urban form impacts. The visual impact on the Stort valley of development to the north could be reduced by avoiding development on the High Wych slopes and in the valley itself. Development west of the A414/Burnt Mill Roundabout would be visually intrusive within the valley. The open landscape to the north, which provides the setting for a number of villages, would be radically changed whatever layout and design concept is applied to new development in this area. Whether development should occur to the north will depend on the overall balance of planning considerations as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 5.3.149** The concept of a 'detached' new settlement makes little sense because it would not be able to achieve the necessary capacity, and would therefore be dependent on Harlow but separate from it. This would be likely be inefficient in planning terms, and would fail to make use of existing infrastructure further south.
- 5.3.150** Development at Sub-Areas A and B would be more likely to form a separate settlement with its own identity, rather than an integrated part of Harlow. This is partly due to the width of the Stort Valley, but also the requirement for a wayleave around the row of pylons, which would not be compatible with an extension of Gibberd's Green wedges northwards. This would suggest that alternative development proposals such as linked new villages would be more appropriate, although again, this concept would suggest a separate settlement, rather than an urban extension integrated with Harlow. Ultimately whether development north of the Stort could function as part of Harlow may be more a matter of the lifestyle choices and travel patterns of the residents of new development rather than of planning and urban form.
- 5.3.151** In terms of urban form, development at Terlings Park would not form part of any existing settlement, although it would provide good access to Harlow Town Station for access to London and other destinations, as well as to Harlow itself. Development at Terlings Park would need to be carefully designed to ensure that it takes account of its sensitive landscape context within the Stort valley.

## 5.4 Schools

- 5.4.1** This section will be completed for presentation to Members in February 2013 following further work with Hertfordshire County Council to agree locations where there may be a reasonable prospect of providing additional educational capacity to support new development.

### 5.5 Highways

- 5.5.1** This section to be completed for presentation to Members in February 2013 following results of transport modelling from the Harlow Stansted Gateway Transport Model (HSGTM) from Essex County Council and further highways feasibility and delivery assessment from Hertfordshire County Council.

### 5.6 Habitats

- 5.6.1** This section to be completed and presented to Members in February 2013 following receipt of transport data from the HSGTM.

### 5.7 Green Belt Review

- 5.7.1** This section to be completed and presented to Members in February 2013.

### 5.8 Delivery

- 5.8.1** This section to be completed and presented to Members in February 2013, following further clarification of infrastructure matters and collation of information from landowner/developer questionnaires.

### 5.9 Conclusions

- 5.9.1** This section will draw together the significant findings from the assessments and differentiate between the remaining areas of search to further refine the short-list of options.

