

Chapter 3

The Development Strategy

Chapter 3 The Development Strategy

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1** This chapter sets out the Council's strategy for delivering growth in East Herts over the Plan period up to 2031. It looks at the amount of new development that will be delivered, and where it should be located across the District. It also identifies the need for new site allocations/broad locations to deliver this strategy, and what new infrastructure and services may be required.
- 3.1.2** The strategy seeks to deliver the vision and objectives in Chapter 2 and ensure that growth in East Herts is 'sustainable'. Sustainable development is defined as 'development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. In essence it means trying to provide growth which meets the needs of local people, whilst minimising adverse economic, environmental and social impacts (now and in the future). The amount and location of growth is important. It is also critical to ensure that growth is accompanied by the required infrastructure and services in order to support the quality of people's lives.
- 3.1.3** This chapter also sets out how local people can facilitate the delivery of growth themselves, and influence their local area – through Neighbourhood Planning. The Government's localism agenda has raised the profile and importance of community involvement in planning. The District Council is supportive of this approach.

3.2 Level of Growth

- 3.2.1** This section looks at the amount of housing, employment and retail growth that the District Council will seek to facilitate over the Plan period. Other types of growth or development will also be needed in the District over the Plan period including, for example, green infrastructure and community facilities. These requirements are explored further in the relevant topic chapters (see Part 2 of the Plan) and settlement chapters.

Housing Growth

- 3.2.2** Following the abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies the District Council is responsible for identifying a housing 'target' in the District Plan. The right level of housing can help to support economic growth, meet local housing needs, and facilitate the delivery of infrastructure. Having a housing target also allows a local authority to work with service providers and other organisations to ensure that suitable infrastructure is provided to meet the needs of new development.
- 3.2.3** The housing requirement for East Herts needs to be justified and based on an objective assessment of need (NPPF paragraph 47). This involves looking at housing needs and demands (including demographic evidence, affordability levels, jobs growth) – but also taking account of supply, delivery and strategic matters which may have an impact (including land availability, infrastructure capacity and market

deliverability). It also involves co-ordination with the strategies of neighbouring authorities, and working together to ensure that the needs of the market area are met.

Further details and analysis of the East Herts housing requirement can be found in the following documents:

- The Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update 2012
- Greater Essex Demographic Forecasts Phases 1 and 2 (March 2012)
- Greater Essex Demographic Forecasts Phase 3 (July 2012)
- Greater Essex Demographic Forecasts Phase 4 (January 2013)
- Sub-District Population and Household Forecasts - Parish Grouping and Towns: Phase 1 (May 2012)
- Sub-District Population and Household Forecasts - Parish Grouping and Towns: Phases 1 and 2 (October 2012)
- Household Interim Projections for East Herts: 2011-2021, England. Department for Communities and Local Government (April 2013)

3.2.4 Combining the most recent national household interim projections for East Herts, for 2011 to 2021, published April 2013, with the basis of the district-wide Greater Essex Demographic Forecast rates of growth, when converted to dwellings, the evidence indicates that there is likely to be a need for at least 15,000 additional dwellings to be built between 2011 and 2031. This represents an annual average rate of 750 dwellings per year.

3.2.5 This rate is more than the previous Regional Strategy target and will be very challenging. Section 3.3 below sets out in detail where housing growth will be focused.

Economic Growth

3.2.6 Future employment needs are identified in the Council's 'Jobs Forecast and Strategic Economic Development Advice' (2012). Forecasts indicate to 2031 that employment in the sub-region will grow by some 60,000 jobs, of which 9,700 are expected to be created in East Herts. The forecasts suggest that of the 9,700 additional jobs, over 6,100 will be created in the financial and business services sector.

3.2.7 This Plan seeks to ensure sufficient provision of land and premises for office, industrial and warehousing uses (B1, B2, B8 uses) in sustainable locations which meet the needs of local businesses. As such, a potential additional 11-13 hectares of Employment Land is identified in the following locations:

- 3 hectares to the north of Buntingford Business Park
- 4-5 hectares within the development at North of Bishop's Stortford
- 4-5 hectares within the development at South of Bishop's Stortford

3.2.8 In order to recognise the valuable role existing businesses have, the following locations have also been designated as Employment Areas:

- 0.23 hectares at Millside Industrial Estate, Bishop's Stortford
- 0.36 hectares at Southmill Trading Estate, Bishop's Stortford
- 9.36 hectares at Pegs Lane/Hale Road, Hertford
- 0.84 hectares at the Taylor Trading Estate, Hertford
- 0.43 hectares at Leaside Works, Stanstead Abbots
- 0.59 hectares at Riverside Works, Amwell End, Stanstead Abbots

3.2.9 In addition, the Council encourages the provision of new employment land created through mixed-use developments, which should contain small-scale business units. These will make valuable contributions to balancing new residential developments with local employment opportunities. These employment areas may be designated through future revisions to the District Plan.

3.2.10 All existing Employment Areas designated in the 2007 Local Plan will retain their designation. More detail on the approach to employment is contained in the settlement chapters and in Chapter 14 (Economy). Proposals that affect designated and non-designated Employment Areas will be considered in accordance with Policies ED1 (Employment) and ED2 (Rural Economy).

Retail Growth

3.2.11 As the population grows additional retail development will be required to provide shopping opportunities at the local level. The Council's 'Retail and Town Centres Study Update' (2013) assesses qualitative issues and quantitative requirements for additional retail floorspace to meet future needs. The Study concludes that there will be a need over the Plan period for:

- Convenience (food) retail – an additional 7,600m² (net) of new floorspace
- Comparison (non-food) retail – an additional 6,100m² (net) of new floorspace

3.2.12 These floorspace requirements take into account commitments, assuming that these will have come forward by 2021, but not the potential reoccupation of vacant floorspace.

- 3.2.13** The Plan seeks to ensure that new retail development occurs in a manner that secures the vitality and viability of the District's retail centres but is not too restrictive as to stifle innovation and investment. There is a need for a balanced approach to enabling retail centres to respond to changing retail behaviour, whilst preserving and enhancing the essence and historic character which is key to the attractiveness of the District's historic market towns.
- 3.2.14** More detail on the approach to retail requirements is contained in the settlement chapters and in Chapter 15 (Retail and Town Centres).
- 3.2.15** New retail provision will be encouraged within major urban extensions in order to support the new and existing communities. These will be neighbourhood centres or local parades as appropriate and will complement the existing town centres.

DPS1 Housing, Employment and Retail Growth

In the period 2011 to 2031 the District Council will:

- (a) Identify land to accommodate at least 15,000 homes in the District up to 2031.
- (b) Maximise opportunities for jobs growth in the District, with the aim of achieving a minimum of 9,700 additional jobs in East Herts. This will include making provision for 11-13 hectares of new employment land for B1/B2/B8 uses.
- (c) Encourage an additional 7,600m² of convenience and 6,100m² of comparison retail floorspace in the District.

3.3 Development Strategy

- 3.3.1** This section sets out where growth should be focused, and where it should be restricted. The aim is to ensure that growth takes place in the most suitable locations in the District i.e. where it is needed, where it is deliverable, and where it is sustainable. This section sets out the broad policy framework, which is then carried through into the separate settlement-level policy sections.

Testing Alternative Options

A Supporting Document to the District Plan sets out the extensive process of selection of the housing and development allocations contained in the Plan. This document explains how a large number of initial options known as 'Areas of Search' were tested against a wide range of assessment criteria, and how these options were gradually narrowed down and shaped into a development strategy.

An Interim Sustainability Appraisal of the draft Plan and rejected options has been prepared to ensure that the social, economic, and environmental implications of the Plan have been fully taken into account. Previously discounted options including new settlements have been assessed through the Appraisal process.

The Supporting Document and Sustainability Appraisal are available on the Council's website at: www.eastherts.gov.uk/districtplan

Guiding Principles and Strategy

- 3.3.2** In order to help formulate the Plan a number of principles have been developed. The principles are based on national policy and legal requirements applied to the local circumstances of the East Herts area. The strategic principles guiding the development strategy are as follows:

Guiding Principles

1. To seek to meet the housing requirement within each housing market area, even where local constraints mean that each settlement may not be able to meet its own needs;
2. To prioritise the development of brownfield land and other appropriate sites within the urban areas of the settlements, but to avoid over-development of such sites;
3. To promote self-containment by directing development to areas where there is reasonable proximity to services and facilities, and which reflect existing travel to work areas, school catchments, and retail spend patterns and functional geographies;
4. Wherever possible to utilise readily available features to provide clear and unambiguous Green Belt boundaries;
5. To allocate development sites unless there are clear planning reasons for not doing so, in order to provide clarity and certainty for local people, businesses and the development industry;
6. To co-operate with adjoining authorities on cross-boundary strategic matters where it is reasonable to do so;
7. To focus development in locations where the impacts on the historic and natural environment are minimised;
8. To acknowledge that in the long term, the capacity for the market towns and villages to grow is constrained by the existing capacity and future potential of these settlements, and therefore long-term planning will need to look towards large-scale strategic development options;

9. To protect and enhance the rural area and the Green Belt outside the allocated development areas to preserve the countryside and the rural character of the District;
10. To encourage limited small-scale development in and around the identified villages, with an opportunity for neighbourhood planning to influence the type and location of development sites.

3.3.3 The strategy must conform to a number of housing requirements set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

3.3.4 Firstly, the NPPF requires that **objectively assessed housing needs should be met**. As set out above in Section 3.2, based on the 2011 Census and 2013 projections issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government, the projected housing need across the District is for around 750 dwellings per year. Local planning authorities cannot adjust the identified level of housing need, but must seek to meet it. East Herts' projected need is back-dated to 2011, when the previous Local Plan figures end.

3.3.5 Secondly, the NPPF requires a **supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing against housing requirements**. Because the Plan will be adopted in late 2015, the first five years are 2016-2021. This is the period when homes are anticipated to be delivered at sites allocated in the District Plan.

3.3.6 In the period 2011-2016 (the 'pre-plan' period) it is anticipated that only 2,654 homes will be built, leaving a shortfall of 1,096 homes when measured against the projected need of 3,750 over 5 years. Given the long lead-in times in terms of infrastructure provision, it is not realistic to expect the larger site allocations and the Broad Locations to contribute to reducing the total shortfall in the first five years. Similarly, the smaller sites cannot deliver sufficient volume to address the shortfall without the larger sites which can only be delivered later in the plan period. Therefore Policy DPS2 (The Development Strategy 2011-2031) requires the shortfall to be made up over the 15 years of the Plan. Over this time-frame, one years' worth of the shortfall amounts to 73.1 dwellings, or 365 additional homes in each five-year period. Spreading the shortfall over the Plan will enable a proportion of the shortfall to be met by the larger site allocations and the Broad Locations.

3.3.7 Thirdly, the NPPF also requires the provision of an **additional buffer of 5% (moved forward from later in the plan period) to ensure choice and competition in the market for land**. A 20% buffer should be applied where there is a persistent record of under-delivery. In East Herts Council's view there has been no persistent record of under-delivery. Applying a 5% requirement to 4,115 (3,750 need plus 365 shortfall) leaves a buffer requirement of 206 homes in the first five years.

- 3.3.8** Policy DSP2 (The Development Strategy 2011-2031) below reflects the requirements of national policy and the guiding principles, and sets out the high-level approach which sets the framework for the place-specific policies set out in the District Plan.

Policy DPS2 The Development Strategy 2011-2031

I. Provision will be made to meet the projected housing need of at least 750 homes per annum, making a total minimum requirement of 15,000 homes in the period 2011-2031.

II. In the period 2011-2016 prior to adoption of the Plan, there will be an estimated shortfall of 1,096 homes, which will be addressed through provision of the same number of additional homes spread over the remaining 15 years of the Plan (i.e. approximately 73 homes each year between 2016 and 2031).

III. In the first five years of the Plan after adoption (2016-2021), the housing requirement will total at least 4,322 homes, comprising:

- (a) 3,750 based on projected housing needs for 5 years;
- (b) 365 towards compensation for the anticipated shortfall in the period 2011-2016 before adoption of the Plan;
- (c) 206 to allow a 5% buffer for choice and flexibility, brought forward from later in the plan period.

IV. Brownfield locations in the towns will be prioritised for mixed-use development. The remainder of the housing and development needs in the first five years of the Plan (2016 - 2021) will be met on a range of greenfield sites allocated on the edges of the five towns;

V. In the period 2021 - 2031, housing needs will be met at the identified Broad Locations for Development listed in VI. below;

VI. Land North and East of Ware, East of Welwyn Garden City and land in the Gilston Area, are identified as Broad Locations for Development, subject to testing and examination through a further Development Plan Document (DPD) or Documents in accordance with Policy DPS4 (Broad Locations for Development); and

VII. Development in the villages shall be delivered in accordance with local initiatives led by Parish Councils, subject to the review triggers set out in Policy VILL1 (Group 1 Villages).

- 3.3.9** The main policy elements of the development strategy are shown on the Key Diagram. Inset maps showing further detail on particular locations are shown in the relevant section of the document. The Key Diagram including the main map and inset maps is included at Appendix A.

Housing Supply

3.3.10 There are a number of potential sources of housing supply as follows:

- **Completions and commitments** are shown in the period 2011-2016, based on monitoring data up to March 2013.
- Within the urban areas of the towns, there are a number of sites identified through the **Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA)**. The sites are subject to annual monitoring and updating, the details of which are available at www.eastherts.gov.uk/slaa.
- It is also anticipated that there will be a number of permissions granted at sites not identified in the SLAA. These are known as **windfalls**. A windfall allowance has been made on the basis of an analysis of past windfalls and assessment of how this is projected to continue into the future.
- Those sites where there is a high degree of confidence that they will come forward and can contribute to the housing supply have been given a status as **site allocations**. These are shown on the Policies Map and the site locations are shown in red alongside each of the site specific policies in the settlement chapters. Large strategic development locations within the towns have been allocated as sites with specific policy requirements.
- Finally, **Broad Locations for Development** indicate strategic scale locations where the Council accepts the principle of development but there is uncertainty about aspects of the proposals which is significant enough to require further testing through further planning stages.

3.3.11 Policy DPS3 (Housing Supply 2011-2031) reflects these different sources of housing supply. It also sets out the contribution from each source for the important first five years of the Plan after adoption (2016-2021). The housing supply exceeds the requirement by around 930 homes, or around 6%, which forms a suitable level of contingency in the event of delivery running behind schedule at a small number of sites. Contingency planning is necessary to allow for eventualities beyond the Council's control, including the economic cycle and factors relating to specific sites or developers, which could result in stalled sites. The Plan provides a range of sites in different locations which means that it is not reliant on delivery at a single location. A full breakdown of the housing supply is included at Appendix B.

DPS3 Housing Supply 2011-2031

The overall housing supply will meet projected housing need over the plan period 2011 to 2031.

Type	Supply Source	Housing supply: First five years 2016-2021	Housing supply: Total 2011-2031
Other	Windfall allowance	450	1,200
Other	Completions	0	1,082
Other	Commitments	0	1,572
Other	Villages	250	500
Allocation	Bishop's Stortford Urban Area	75	247
Allocation	Bishop's Stortford Goods Yard	0	200
Allocation	East of Bishop's Stortford	150	150
Allocation	Hadham Road Reserve Secondary School Site, Bishop's Stortford	0-250	0-250 ¹
Allocation	North of Bishop's Stortford	1,300	2,350-2,600 ¹
Allocation	South of Bishop's Stortford	500	750-1,000 ¹
SLAA	Buntingford Urban Area	13	13
Allocation	Buntingford South (former Depot)	300	300
Allocation	Buntingford North	0	180
SLAA	Hertford Urban Area	365	451
Allocation	North of Hertford	0	150
Allocation	South of Hertford	50	50
Allocation	West of Hertford	550	550
SLAA	Sawbridgeworth Urban Area	0	5
Allocation	West of Sawbridgeworth	400	400

Type	Supply Source	Housing supply: First five years 2016-2021	Housing supply: Total 2011-2031
SLAA	Ware Built-Up Area	20	32
Broad Location	Gilston Area	0	3,000 ²
Broad Location	North and East of Ware	0	1,800 ²
Broad Location	East of Welwyn Garden City	0	450 ²
	TOTAL	4,423	15,932³

¹ A secondary school will be provided at one of these three locations within Bishop's Stortford, in which case the lower figure will apply at that location and the higher figure will apply at the other two locations. The overall figure will not change. Supply of homes in the period 2016-2021 will not be affected at the urban extensions to the north or south.

² Housing supply figures from the Broad Locations within the plan period will be further refined. Overall housing delivery from the Broad Locations is likely to continue beyond 2031 in light of potential overall site capacities and masterplanning.

³ The total figure within the plan period is higher than the minimum required figure of 15,000 to allow for potential slippage of programme/delay, potential reduced site capacities in light of infrastructure capacities and allowances for contingency.

Broad Locations for Development

- 3.3.12** Three Broad Locations for Development are proposed: land North and East of Ware, East of Welwyn Garden City and land in the Gilston Area. Each location presents different challenges. The delivery of large-scale and long-term development in these areas is complex and challenging, and will require further work.
- 3.3.13** It is proposed to evolve and refine the approach to the Broad Locations through a Development Plan Document (DPD). If possible, work on all three Broad Locations, will be drawn together into separate sections within a single DPD. However, acknowledging the different challenges posed by each location, it may prove necessary to bring forward one or more locations early as a stand-alone DPD.
- 3.3.14** The scope of the DPD(s) will be to:
- (a) identify and allocate development sites;
 - (b) establish the requirements for an acceptable location-wide masterplan;
 - (c) provide a detailed policy framework;

- (d) establish an acceptable amount of development (housing numbers, quantum of other uses and scale and massing);
- (e) identify infrastructure requirements and phasing/trigger points for delivery; and
- (f) provide a detailed delivery framework.

3.3.15 One of the most challenging areas in relation to the Broad Locations for Development is around the area of financial viability. It will be vitally important to ensure that development can proceed at these locations to provide the necessary infrastructure, mitigate against adverse impacts and meet wider policy objectives including affordable housing. Competitive returns to landowners and developers must reflect this context and evidence of viability prepared for plan making purposes would be expected to be a material planning consideration influencing future development management decision making. Only in exceptional circumstances, such as where there are material changes in market conditions or robust evidence of unforeseen additional/abnormal development costs, would any changes which deviate from the overall sustainable development requirements, including affordable housing, be considered acceptable.

DPS4 Broad Locations for Development

I. To be acceptable, strategic scale development in Broad Locations must be based on an approved location-wide masterplan, infrastructure requirements, delivery strategy, and appropriate assessment, which satisfy the principles set out in the Broad Location policies in this Plan (WARE3, EWEL1 and GA1) and a subsequent Broad Locations Development Plan Document (DPD).

II. A location-wide masterplan must be prepared in collaboration with landowners, local communities, the Council and other key stakeholders and be consistent with CABE Design Council's 'Creating Successful Masterplans' Guidance or replacement guidance to be agreed by the Council.

III. A delivery strategy must include:

- (a) a financial viability assessment including understanding of competitive returns to landowners and developers;
- (b) a robust transport assessment which demonstrates that the likely residual cumulative impacts on the highways network would not be severe, taking account of proposed mitigation measures across the network;
- (c) details of how development would be implemented and managed once occupied (including housing stock and publicly available space);
- (d) details of land assembly and preparation, infrastructure requirements and delivery;

(e) details of development phasing and likely need for planning obligations (including financial contributions) and/or conditions;

(f) identification of any likely need for public sector assistance in land assembly or funding.

IV. An appropriate assessment must demonstrate that there will not be adverse impacts on internationally designated wildlife habitats, including Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, and Ramsar Sites.

V. If work on the Development Plan Document cannot resolve matters of feasibility then East Herts Council will seek to bring forward alternative strategic development location/s in accordance with Policy DPS6 (Long-Term Planning).

Infrastructure Planning

- 3.3.16** When development takes place it makes additional demands on infrastructure, including water and energy supply, wastewater disposal, roads, education and healthcare as well as open space, and green infrastructure. Therefore it is important to ensure that appropriate levels of infrastructure are provided to support growth and meet the objectives of the District Plan.
- 3.3.17** The process of identifying infrastructure needs is an essential starting point, and the District Council plays an important role in coordinating a range of agencies and bodies which deliver infrastructure in East Herts, to ensure delivery alongside growth. Infrastructure providers include Hertfordshire County Council (transport and education), NHS England and the Clinical Care Commissioning Group (healthcare), utility companies, as well as the District Council itself.
- 3.3.18** The planning system can be used in a number of other ways, including securing the provision of infrastructure or contributions towards infrastructure from developers. The District Plan also assists by protecting existing facilities against loss.
- 3.3.19** Policy DPS5 (Infrastructure Requirements) identifies the key infrastructure requirements that are likely to be needed over the plan period to support the levels of growth envisaged in Policy DPS2 (The Development Strategy 2011-2031). This list has been informed by discussions with key infrastructure providers. The list is not exhaustive and does not include site-specific infrastructure which may be required in connection with individual development sites to mitigate their impact.
- 3.3.20** The District Council will work closely with infrastructure providers to ensure inclusion of infrastructure schemes within their programmes, plans and strategies, and delivery of specific infrastructure requirements in conjunction with individual development schemes and the expected timing of development coming forward.

DPS5 Infrastructure Requirements

I. East Herts Council will prepare an Infrastructure Delivery Plan to address the co-ordinated phasing of infrastructure and development of items of strategic and local infrastructure.

II. Infrastructure needed to support development must be phased appropriately with the delivery of residential and other development to ensure that capacity is provided and impacts are satisfactorily mitigated in a timely manner.

III. The following strategic infrastructure will be required to support the development identified within the District Plan:

(a) upgrades to Rye Meads Sewage Treatment Works;

(b) improvements to the A414 through Hertford;

(c) new schools;

(d) healthcare facilities;

(e) improvements to the road network around Junction 8 of the M11 at Bishop's Stortford;

(f) the Little Hadham Bypass;

(g) A602 improvements;

(h) broadband telecoms.

IV. The Council will use planning obligations with landowners and developers to secure direct provision or financial contributions towards infrastructure necessary to support the District Plan, including both on-site and off-site provision to address the cumulative impacts of development on strategic infrastructure.

3.3.21 Strategic infrastructure is defined as infrastructure which meets more than site-specific needs and supports the overall level and pattern of growth outlined in the Development Strategy. Site specific infrastructure serves just the needs of the occupiers and visitors to the site that it is located in. The site-specific policies in the settlement sections within this Plan contain both strategic and site-specific infrastructure.

Long-Term Planning

3.3.22 One of the guiding principles of the District Plan is that the capacity for the market towns and villages to grow is constrained by the existing capacity and future potential of these settlements, and therefore long-term planning will need to look towards large-scale strategic development options.

- 3.3.23** The scale of such developments will require further investigation, and may depend on the location and characteristics of the area, but is likely to be at least 3,000 dwellings and possibly significantly more. This scale of development should be capable of accommodating secondary schools, a good range of shops and services and also providing suitable transport infrastructure.
- 3.3.24** Delivery of such developments is likely to take a number of years from initial inception. Prior to delivery it will be necessary to identify a suitable location(s), a willing landowner and developer, and the mechanisms by which the necessary infrastructure and facilities will be provided.
- 3.3.25** If work on the Broad Locations DPD identifies difficulties in delivery of any of the Broad Locations, then it will be necessary to bring forward alternative strategic scale options as a contingency measure in order to continue to facilitate sustainable patterns of development in the future, and to avoid unsustainable pressure on the market towns and villages.
- 3.3.26** East Herts Council will continue to prepare technical work to investigate the options for strategic scale development elsewhere in the District to meet long-term development needs. This will require close working with Hertfordshire County Council in order to understand the impacts on the transport network in particular, and also with the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to ensure that funding arrangements are taken into account through the LEP Growth Plan.

DPS6 Long-Term Planning

Working in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council, the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and other partners as necessary, East Herts Council will progress technical work to identify strategic-scale development locations to meet long-term development needs.

3.4 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

- 3.4.1** As set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the main purpose of planning is to contribute to the achievement of ‘sustainable development’. New growth in East Herts needs to be ‘sustainable’; it must support the local economy, provide social benefits (e.g. housing and community facilities) and protect and enhance the natural and built environment. The principles of sustainable development are reflected in the strategic objectives and vision in Chapter 2 – and incorporated into the policies in the Plan.
- 3.4.2** The NPPF also highlights the Government’s desire to promote and support the delivery of growth. Local authorities are urged to work proactively with applicants and approve proposals wherever possible – where they accord with policies in the District Plan. If the Plan is silent or out of date, local authorities are urged to grant approval, having regard to whether any adverse effects would significantly outweigh

the benefits, and other aspects of the NPPF. This approach has been termed a 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. The Government has issued advice that a 'model policy' should be included within local plans, which reiterates national guidance. This policy is set out below.

DPS7 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

I. The District Council will work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.

II. Planning applications that accord with the policies in this District Plan (and, where relevant, policies in Neighbourhood Plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

III. Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise taking into account whether:

(a) Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole.

(b) Specific policies in the National Planning Policy Framework indicate that development should be restricted.

3.5 Neighbourhood Planning

3.5.1 Neighbourhood Planning is a new right for communities introduced through the Localism Act 2011. Communities can shape development in their areas through the production of Neighbourhood Development Plans, Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders.

3.5.2 **Neighbourhood Development Plans** will become part of the Development Plan and the policies contained within them will be used, together with the District Plan, in the determination of planning applications. A Neighbourhood Development Plan can set out a vision for an area and planning policies for the use and development of land. Any Neighbourhood Plan prepared will need to support the strategic development needs of the District as set out in this Plan. However it will be able to shape and influence where that development will go and what it will look like.

Further information on how to produce a Neighbourhood Plan can be found in the Council's 'Interim Neighbourhood Planning Guidance Note' (December 2011), which can be viewed and downloaded at: www.eastherts.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplanning

- 3.5.3** A **Neighbourhood Development Order** can grant planning permission for specified developments in a neighbourhood area. Once established there would be no need for anyone to apply to the Council for planning permission if it is for the type of development covered by the order. This should make it easier and quicker for such development to go ahead in the future.
- 3.5.4** A Neighbourhood Development Order must still be in line with national planning policy, with the strategic vision for the wider area set by the local planning authority, and any other legal requirements.
- 3.5.5** **Community Right to Build Orders** are a new way for communities to choose for themselves where and when to build homes, shops, facilities and businesses – putting power back into the hands of local people.
- 3.5.6** Community Right to Build is an enabling right supporting local people to undertake community led development (communities collectively owning, developing and/or managing their own land and developments).
- 3.5.7** As an alternative to the traditional application for planning permission, it gives communities the power to decide for themselves what happens in their neighbourhood i.e. local people will be able to decide what their community needs. The benefits of any development, such as any profits generated, should be managed by a community organisation on behalf of the whole community.

DPS8 Neighbourhood Planning

The District Council will support in principle development brought forward through Neighbourhood Development Plans, Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders, where such development is in general conformity with the strategic objectives and policies set out in this District Plan.

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Chapter 4

Green Belt and Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt

Chapter 4 Green Belt and Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt

4.1 Green Belt

4.1.1 The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

4.1.2 In East Herts the Green Belt, which forms part of the London Metropolitan Green Belt, covers approximately the southern third of the District, and contains the settlements of Bishop's Stortford, Hertford, Sawbridgeworth and Ware, together with several villages. The Green Belt in East Herts covers approximately 17,530 hectares.

4.1.3 The District Council has sought to reduce the amount of Green Belt land required to accommodate development over the plan period. Whilst the Council could have located development exclusively outside of the Green Belt this would not have been either a realistic or a sustainable distribution and consequently would have been contrary to the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). In order to facilitate delivery of the development strategy the following sites have therefore been taken out of the Green Belt and are shown on the Policies Map as site allocations:

- Land South of Bishop's Stortford
- Land East of Bishop's Stortford
- Land North of Hertford
- Land South of Hertford (excluding the public amenity green space buffer between development and Hagsdell Stream)
- Land West of Hertford (excluding land west of Sele Farm Wildlife Site)
- Land West of Sawbridgeworth

4.1.4 Further information on each of these site allocations can be found in the relevant settlement chapter.

4.1.5 In addition to the above, the following sites have also been removed from the Green Belt to reflect the recommendations of the Green Belt Review 2013:

- Land south of Whittington Way, west of London Road, Bishop's Stortford
- Land at Glenholme and Allotments, west of B158/Wadesmill Road, Hertford
- Land at Hollybush Primary School, Hertford
- Land at Oak Grove, Hertford
- Land at Sele School, Hertford
- Land at Leventhorpe School, Sawbridgeworth
- Land at Mandeville Primary School, Sawbridgeworth
- Land west of Sawbridgeworth, including Chalks Farm Buildings, park and existing development south of West Road

- 4.1.6** The Green Belt at Watton-at-Stone has also been reviewed in the Green Belt Review 2013 to allow potential development to be accommodated in the village in accordance with Policy VILL1 (Group 1 Villages).
- 4.1.7** Land North and East of Ware, East of Welwyn Garden City and land in the Gilston Area will remain within the Green Belt until such time as it may be brought forward for development through the adoption of a Broad Locations Development Plan Document. The need for compensatory Green Belt will be considered at this time.
- 4.1.8** Other minor boundary amendments have also been undertaken as a result of digital mapping technology improvements; as a result of developments that have occurred since the Green Belt was established; and to rectify anomalies where boundaries dissect buildings for example.
- 4.1.9** As with previous Green Belt policy, inappropriate development in the Green Belt is by definition harmful and should not be approved except in 'very special circumstances'. Exceptions to this are set out in the NPPF (paragraphs 89 and 90). Any development proposals that come forward in the Green Belt will be assessed against both the NPPF and other policies in the District Plan.

GBR1 Green Belt

I. Within the Green Belt, as defined on the Policies Map, permission will not be given for inappropriate development. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

II. The construction of new buildings in the Green Belt will be considered as inappropriate. Exceptions to this include:

- (a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- (b) provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries;
- (c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
- (d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces in accordance with Policy HOU8 (Replacement Buildings in the Green Belt and Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt);
- (e) limited infilling in Group 2 Villages in accordance with Policy VILL2 (Group 2 Villages);
- (f) limited affordable housing for local community needs in accordance with Policy VILL3 (Group 3 Villages) and Policy HOU4 (Rural Exceptions Affordable Housing Sites);

(g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings).

III. Certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt. These are:

- (a) mineral extraction;
- (b) engineering operations;
- (c) local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;
- (d) the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction; and
- (e) development brought forward under a Community Right to Build in accordance with Policy DPS8 (Neighbourhood Planning).

4.2 Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt

4.2.1 The Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt covers approximately the northern two-thirds of the District. As such it is a considerable and significant rural resource where there is a strong restraint on inappropriate development as set out in Policy GBR2 below.

GBR2 Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt

I. The Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt will be maintained in the central and northern parts of the District, as defined on the Policies Map.

II. The construction of new buildings in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt will be considered as inappropriate. Exceptions to this include:

- (a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- (b) provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries;
- (c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
- (d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces in accordance with Policy HOU8 (Replacement Buildings in the Green Belt and Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt);

(e) limited infilling in Group 2 Villages in accordance with Policy VILL2 (Group 2 Villages);

(f) limited affordable housing for local community needs in accordance with Policy VILL3 (Group 3 Villages) and Policy HOU4 (Rural Exceptions Affordable Housing Sites);

(g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings);

(h) the provision of accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople in accordance with Policy HOU7 (Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople).

III. Certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Rural Area Beyond Green Belt. These are:

(a) mineral extraction;

(b) engineering operations;

(c) local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a location in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt;

(d) the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction; and

(e) development brought forward under a Community Right to Build in accordance with Policy DPS8 (Neighbourhood Planning).

4.3 Major Developed Sites

4.3.1 Previous national planning policy set out detailed development management advice in relation to major developed sites in the Green Belt; specifically in relation to infilling and comprehensive redevelopment (where the original use had ceased). In contrast the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides very little detail on this area of policy. Given the rural character of the district and the fact that there are a number of 'major developed sites' in the Green Belt it is considered appropriate to continue with a local policy approach in this respect. The Green Belt Review 2013 confirms this approach and the following sites are identified on the Policies Map as 'Major Developed Sites' in the Green Belt:

- Terlings Park, near Gilston
- Van Hage's Garden Centre, Great Amwell
- Simon Balle School, Hertford
- Haileybury, Hertford Heath

- Hayters, Spellbrook
- Rye Meads Sewerage Works, Stanstead Abbots
- Presdales School, Ware

4.3.2 Sele School in Hertford and Leventhorpe School in Sawbridgeworth were previously identified, in the 2007 Local Plan, as Major Developed Sites. However, following the Green Belt Review 2013 these sites have both been removed from the Green Belt (see paragraph 4.1.5 above) and consequently are not identified as Major Developed Sites in this Plan. In addition, Balls Park in Hertford is no longer identified as a Major Developed Site as it has been redeveloped from its previous use (former University of Hertfordshire) to residential development.

4.3.3 In East Herts there is also a strong restraint on inappropriate development in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt. It is therefore considered appropriate that a consistent approach to this part of the district should be applied. The following sites are therefore identified on the Policies Map as 'Major Developed Sites' in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt:

- Former GlaxoSmithKline site, Bury Green
- Freman College, Buntingford
- St Elizabeth's Centre, Perry Green, Much Hadham
- St Edmund's College and Prep School, Old Hall Green, Ware

4.3.4 The previous Major Developed Site boundary for the Former GlaxoSmithKline site (as identified in the 2007 Local Plan) was reviewed in the Green Belt Review 2013 and the site area has consequently been reduced in this Plan, to reflect the fact that planning permission has been granted for residential development at the southern end of the site.

4.3.5 Policy GBR3 outlines the circumstances when limited infilling or redevelopment can occur.

GBR3 Major Developed Sites

I. Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt and the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt are identified on the Policies Map.

II. Limited infilling of small gaps between existing development should:

- (a) Have no greater impact than the existing development on the openness of the Green Belt or on the character of the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt;
- (b) Not exceed the height of the existing buildings;
- (c) Not lead to a major increase in the developed proportion of the site.

III. Redevelopment or partial redevelopment should:

(a) Have no greater impact than the existing development on the openness of the Green Belt or on the character of the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt, and where possible have less;

(b) Not exceed the height of the existing buildings;

(c) Not occupy a larger area of the site than the existing buildings (unless this would achieve a reduction in height or building form/layout that would benefit visual amenity).

IV. Redevelopment or partial redevelopment of a Major Developed Site should be accompanied with a Development Brief/Masterplan and landscape scheme.

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