

Public Document Pack



Leader and Members
of the Executive

Your contact: Martin Ibrahim
Ext: 2173
Date: 2 February 2017

cc. All other recipients of the
Executive agenda

Dear Councillor

EXECUTIVE - 7 FEBRUARY 2017: SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA NO 1

Please find attached the following report which has been added to the agenda for the above meeting for the reason stated below:

12. Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan 2014 - 2031 (Pages 3 - 170)

Note – The Leader has agreed to accept this item onto the agenda as an urgent matter in order to enable statutory deadlines in the neighbourhood planning and referendum process to be met.

Please bring these papers with you to the meeting next Tuesday.

Yours faithfully

Martin Ibrahim
Democratic Services Team Leader
Democratic Services
martin.ibrahim@eastherts.gov.uk

MEETING : EXECUTIVE
VENUE : COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD
DATE : TUESDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2017
TIME : 7.00 PM

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 7 FEBRUARY 2017

REPORT BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

BUNTINGFORD COMMUNITY AREA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
2014 – 2031

WARD(S) AFFECTED: MUNDENS & COTTERED, BUNTINGFORD

Purpose/Summary of Report

- To agree the proposed modifications to the Neighbourhood Plan in part according to the Examiner's recommendations, but also with additional modifications recommended by Officers, and to agree for the Plan to proceed to Referendum.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE: That:	
(A)	the Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan is modified in part according to the Examiner's recommendations, as detailed at Essential Reference Papers 'C' and 'D' to this report but also with additional modifications recommended by Officers, as detailed at Essential Reference Paper 'D' to this report; and
(B)	Officers be requested to make the necessary arrangements to hold a Neighbourhood Plan Referendum for the Parishes of Aspenden, Buckland & Chipping, Cottered, Hormead and Wyddial on 23rd March 2017.

1.0 Background

1.1 Neighbourhood Planning was introduced by the Government under the Localism Act in 2011. Buntingford Town Council started work on a Neighbourhood Plan for the Buntingford Community Area (BCA) in 2013. The BCA Neighbourhood Plan has been jointly produced by Buntingford Town Council, the qualifying body, and the parishes of Aspenden, Buckland & Chipping, Cottered, Hormead and Wyddial. Buntingford Town Council submitted a

request for Neighbourhood Area Designation in February 2014 and this was subsequently agreed in July 2014.

- 1.2 The Town Council submitted the draft Neighbourhood Plan to East Herts Council in April 2016. Following this, a six week consultation took place between June and July 2016 to which a number of submissions were received. A summary of these submissions can be viewed at **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**.
- 1.3 In order to comply with relevant regulations, a neighbourhood plan must be reviewed by an Independent Neighbourhood Planning Examiner. East Herts Council and Buntingford Town Council appointed an Independent Examiner (IE) through the Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral Service (NPIERS). A neighbourhood plan can either be considered at a public hearing or through independent examination of written representations. In this case, it was determined that a public hearing of the Neighbourhood Plan was not necessary.
- 1.4 The role of the IE is to assess the Plan against a set of criteria (further details below), to consider whether or not to recommend that the Plan proceed to Referendum, and to decide whether the Referendum area should be extended beyond the neighbourhood area. East Herts Council received the final report from the IE on 8th November 2016. The IE recommended that the Neighbourhood Plan proceed to Referendum subject to some modifications to the Plan and that there was no need to extend the referendum area beyond the Neighbourhood Plan Area.

2.0 Report

Independent Examiner's Report

- 2.1 The IE commended the decision of Buntingford Town Council to join forces with the surrounding parishes to prepare a neighbourhood plan as it recognises the important relationship between the town and its rural hinterland and it enables the benefits of a neighbourhood plan to be available to small villages for whom the preparation of a separate neighbourhood plan may not have been a realistic proposition.
- 2.2 The role of the IE is to consider whether the Neighbourhood Plan meets the basic conditions and other requirements set out by law (they are not permitted to explore other considerations). To meet the basic conditions the Neighbourhood Plan is required to:

- Have appropriate regard to national policy;
 - Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
 - Be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan for the local area;
 - Be compatible with EU obligations; and
 - Meet human rights requirements.
- 2.3 To ensure that the Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan meets the basic conditions, the IE has recommended a number of fairly minor modifications to the Plan which clarify the way in which the policies will be applied. The IE has also recommended the deletion of Policy INFRA4, as it does not relate to the development and use of land, and INFRA5 as it adds nothing to existing policies in the Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 2.4 A number of the consultation submissions expressed concern about Policy HD1 of the Plan which sets out the scale of residential development in the neighbourhood area. This was primarily due to the Neighbourhood Plan being prepared in the absence of both an up to date Local Plan and a 5 year supply of housing land. However, the IE concluded that there is justification for the proposed development boundary and, with regard to Buntingford, that the scale of development approved in recent years means that the Plan will make a significant contribution to new housing development. However, the IE has recommended some modifications to the policy to allow small scale development outside the proposed development boundaries having regard to the NPPF.
- 2.5 The IE's report, setting out the proposed modifications, can be viewed at **Essential Reference Paper 'C'**. An updated version of the Neighbourhood Plan which incorporates the modifications can be viewed at **Essential Reference Paper 'D'**. Modifications recommended by the IE appear in red.

Additional modifications recommended by Officers

- 2.6 In addition to the modifications recommended by the IE, it is the view of Officer's that some additional modifications should be made to the Plan. These modifications generally relate to factual matters such as providing an updated position on housing numbers since the Neighbourhood Plan was published, and do not affect the intention of the Plan.

- 2.7 However, it is the view of Officer's that one significant modification should be made and this is in relation to the Buntingford development boundary. Paragraph 93 of the examiner's report highlights three main differences between the development boundary proposed in the Neighbourhood Plan to that proposed in the emerging District Plan. However, there is a fourth, which relates to land on the western side of Buntingford and the omission of the school sites at Edwinstree and Freman College from the development boundary proposed in the Neighbourhood Plan. At paragraph 94 of the examiner's report the omission of Layston School from the development boundary is discussed. The IE recommends that a modification is made to the development boundary to include the Layston School site, with the justification being 'to allow for the possibility of its expansion there is a strong case for its inclusion'.
- 2.8 Therefore, applying the same logic to the other two school sites, it is recommended that they also be included within the development boundary to allow for the possibility of expansion in the future.
- 2.9 In addition, Buntingford Town Council, the qualifying body, has proposed a modification which Officers have agreed to recommend be made to the Plan. This proposed modification relates to the identification in Policy BE2 of the Warren Nursery site in Cottered Parish as a 'main industrial site'. The site is actually in agricultural use and, whilst offers limited employment opportunities, it is not deemed significant enough to warrant specific designation as an employment site in the Plan.
- 2.10 An updated version of the Neighbourhood Plan which incorporates the modifications can be viewed at **Essential Reference Paper 'D'**. Modifications recommended by Officers appear in green.

Referendum Area

- 2.11 As part of the examination of the Neighbourhood Plan, the IE must also make a recommendation on whether the referendum area should be extended outside of the neighbourhood area.
- 2.12 The IE decided that there was not a clear need to extend the referendum area beyond the neighbourhood area.

Proceeding to Referendum

- 2.13 East Herts Council is under a duty to hold a referendum if it is satisfied that it meets the basic conditions prescribed by legislation. Failure to undertake a referendum could result in a judicial review of the Authority's decision.
- 2.14 It is recommended that the modifications proposed by the IE be accepted, the additional modifications recommended by Officers are made and that the proposed Neighbourhood Plan for the Buntingford Community Area should proceed to a referendum.

The Referendum

- 2.15 In order for the Neighbourhood Plan to be 'made' (ie. adopted) and form part of the statutory development plan, residents within the six parishes which make up the Buntingford Community Area must vote on the following question:

'Do you want East Hertfordshire District Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for the Buntingford Community Area to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?'

- 2.16 This question is set out at paragraph 1 of Schedule 1 within the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendum) Regulations 2012.
- 2.17 All those on the electoral register (at the date of the vote) within the referendum area are entitled to vote. In order for the Neighbourhood Plan to become part of the statutory development plan for the area, there must be a 'Yes' majority (over 50% who vote). There is no minimum turnout for the referendum. If there is a majority 'No' vote or a 'tied' vote, then the Neighbourhood Plan will not come in to force.
- 2.18 Notice in the prescribed manner must be given 28 days before the date on which the referendum will be held. The following information and documents will be made available:
- An information statement containing information on the referendum;
 - Specified documents including the draft neighbourhood development plan;
 - The examiner's report;
 - A summary of the representations submitted to the independent examiner;

- A statement setting out that the LPA is satisfied that the development plan meets the basic conditions;
- A statement that sets out general information as to town and country planning (including neighbourhood planning) and the referendum.

2.19 On the basis that the recommendations at the head of this report are adopted, a referendum poll will take place on 23 March 2017.

3.0 Implications/Consultations

3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/637/pdfs/ukxi_20120637_en.pdf

The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendum) Regulations 2012

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2012/9780111525050/pdfs/ukdsi_9780111525050_en.pdf

Contact Member: Councillor L Haysey – Leader of the Council
linda.haysey@eastherts.gov.uk

Contact Officer: Kevin Steptoe – Head of Planning and Building Control, Ext 1407
kevin.steptoe@eastherts.gov.uk

Report Author: Laura Pattison – Senior Planning Policy Officer
laura.pattison@eastherts.gov.uk

ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'A'

IMPLICATIONS/CONSULTATIONS

Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives	Priority 1 – Improve the health and wellbeing of our communities Priority 2 – Enhance the quality of people's lives Priority 3 – Enable a flourishing local economy
Consultation:	The Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan has undergone significant public consultation.
Legal:	It is a requirement of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 to publish the examiner's report and issue a decision statement.
Financial:	The Independent Examination cost £6,792.50. The costs of the Referendum will be funded from Government grant.
Human Resource:	Internal staff resource will be necessary to organise and run the Neighbourhood Plan Referendum.
Risk Management:	The Council may be at risk of judicial review if the Neighbourhood Plan does not proceed to Referendum.
Health and wellbeing – issues and impacts:	The link between planning and health has long been established. The built and natural environments are major determinants of health and wellbeing. The Neighbourhood Plan contains policies that support sustainable development, thus improving health and wellbeing opportunities.

This page is intentionally left blank

Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2031 – Referendum March 2017

Name	Organisation	Summary of Comments
Richard Butler	Bidwells on behalf of the St Albans Diocesan Board of Finance	<p>Comments as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy HD1; Object – the policy applies greater restrictions on development in Group 3 Villages than the policy relating to village development in the emerging District Plan. Consideration should be included into the policy for small scale appropriate development in settlements other than Buntingford and Cottered.
Richard Butler	Bidwells on behalf of the St Albans Diocesan Board of Finance	<p>Comments as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy HD1; Object – Promotion of a site outside the settlement boundary for development. Consideration should be included for future development beyond the plan period to boost the supply of housing and facilitate improvements to community infrastructure.
Neil Osbourn	DLP on behalf of Messrs, Wattsdown Ltd, and Bovis Homes	<p>Comments as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General; the East Herts Local Plan is not up-to-date and, as a consequence, there is no strategic basis for some of the neighbourhood plan policies. The public interest would be better served by delaying the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan until the East Herts District Plan is adopted.

Name	Organisation	Summary of Comments
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy HD1; Object – policy does not have regard to the NPPF as it imposes restrictions on development in the absence of an up-to-date objective assessment of housing need. • Policy HD1; policy is strategic in nature and goes beyond what may be considered appropriate in a neighbourhood plan. • Policy HD1; it is not within the gift of a neighbourhood plan to define a settlement boundary, where such boundaries are a factor of the strategic needs of the district as a whole. • Education, Business and Employment; the settlement boundary identified in the Neighbourhood Plan could restrict the ability of the Local Planning Authority to deliver economic growth opportunities in the town, and the ability to deliver a new first school site. • Landscape; specific reference made to a planning application on a site to the west of Buntingford where environmental screenings have not identified a significant impact on the landscape.
Neil Osbourn	DLP on behalf of Taylor Wimpey	<p>Comments as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General; preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan is premature in

Name	Organisation	Summary of Comments
		<p>advance of the adoption of the East Herts District Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General; it is not the role of a neighbourhood plan to determine how much development a town will need, but rather support the strategic policies set out in an up-to-date local plan. • Regard to NPPF; the Neighbourhood Plan fails to demonstrate that it would support strategic development needs in accordance with paragraph 16 of the NPPF. • General; the East Herts Local Plan is not up-to-date and, as a consequence, there is no strategic basis for some of the neighbourhood plan policies. The public interest would be better served by delaying the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan until the East Herts District Plan is adopted. • Policy HD1; Object – the Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to plan positively and provide opportunities for new housing. • Policy HD1; Policy is strategic in nature and could affect the ability of the local Planning authority to meet the strategic housing need.
David Barker	Evolution Town Planning on behalf of	Comments as follows:

Name	Organisation	Summary of Comments
	Pigeon Land Ltd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General; support the aims of the local Town and Parish Councils in producing the Neighbourhood Plan. • General; hope to see the Neighbourhood Plan successfully adopted and be an asset to the area. • Policy ES1; the policy should also state that developments which would provide benefits to the area should be permitted as this would provide some flexibility to allow development that would assist in the delivery of sustainable development in the area.
	Gladman	<p>Comments as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General; it is imperative to the Plan's ability to meet the basic conditions that it provides sufficient flexibility so that it is able to respond positively and react to changing circumstances in the wider area. • Policy HD1; policy will need updating as it restricts housing development in some settlements and prevents other settlements from being expanded. • Housing; consideration needs to be given to the need for

Name	Organisation	Summary of Comments
		<p>housing reserve sites.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing; housing target for Buntingford should not be seen as a cap on development but the minimum target that is expected to be delivered. • Policy ES2; this policy could act to prevent development of otherwise sustainable and deliverable housing sites. Development could be located within the 12m buffer and meet the required criteria through the use of appropriate design measures. • Policy HD1; Object – to the use of a settlement boundary if it would preclude the delivery of sustainable development proposals. The policy provides no flexibility. • Policy HD1; policy does not identify what type of development would be considered acceptable outside the revised settlement boundary. • Policy HD1 suggested alternative wording; <p><i>‘When considering development proposals, the Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan will take a positive approach to new development that reflects the presumption in</i></p>

Name	Organisation	Summary of Comments
		<p><i>favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework.</i></p> <p><i>Development that is adjacent to existing settlements in the Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan should be permitted provided that the adverse impacts do not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of development’.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural economy; an increase in rural housing availability will support rural economic growth. • Policy INFRA1; it should be noted that developers are only required to mitigate the adverse impacts of their development, and the need for financial contributions must be justified. • Policy INFRA6; developers are only required to mitigate the impact of their development and not solve existing problems. • Policy INFRA7 ; Object; neighbourhood plans should not apply any additional technical standards relating to the construction of new homes. • Policy T1; policy is not in conformity with existing Local Plan as parking standards are higher than the current parking standards sought.

Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2031 – Referendum March 2017

Name	Organisation	Summary of Comments
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy T2; there is no requirement in national policy or guidance that would require the measures contained in the Secured by Design scheme to be performed.
	HCC Property	<p>Comments as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy INFRA3 suggested alternative wording to supporting text: <i>‘Within the three-tier school system which covers the BCA, there are sufficient school places to meet current demand. However, there is increasing pressure on the demand for school places and this will become critically important to deal with as population within the BCA, particularly in Buntingford, increases.’</i>
Michael Stubbs	Historic England	<p>Comments as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision Statement; to include reference to ‘heritage assets’ . • Vision Statement suggested alternative wording: <i>‘Maintain a sense of place and local character in a high quality environment, protecting their cultural and historical heritage assets including their settings and ensuring that access, outlooks and breathing space are preserved’.</i>

Name	Organisation	Summary of Comments
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historic Environment; there should be a specific reference to the historic environment and heritage assets within the neighbourhood plan policies. • Environment and Sustainability Objectives; include an objective linked to historic environment/ heritage assets (both designated and non-designated). • Community Infrastructure Levy; it may be appropriate for the Plan to set out priorities for spending any CIL receipts and it is hoped that this would include enhancements as they relate to matters of public realm within the 4 conservation areas.
Seb Baker	Individual	<p>Comments as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy BE1; the expression ‘will not be supported’ cannot be used by a decision maker to refuse or limit an application in any way. The policy should state that such developments will be refused, with any exceptions stated. • Policies BE2 & BE5; the policy should not give blanket approval for the expansion of employment sites. Restrictions similar to those applicable to other new developments should be applied. • Policy BE5; supporting text presents an open door to any

Name	Organisation	Summary of Comments
		<p>industrial development in the Plan area, with policies BE1-BE3 not providing any constraint.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy BE4; the policy should include some size or area limits in terms of location. • Policy BE6; may be contrary to the new permitted development rights for change of use. • Policy ES3; Object – wind turbines should not be supported in locations that would result in significant adverse landscape or ecological impact. Solar farms should be resisted on areas of high quality agricultural land. Any assessment must show that there will be no adverse impacts of development. • Policy HD1; should include a reference to the clear visual separation between settlements. • Policy INFRA3; should not give unconstrained support for any school proposal in any location. Restrictions similar to those applicable to other new development should be applied. • Policy LR2; should include caveats on location and building height should be constrained.

Name	Organisation	Summary of Comments
Mick Cocker	Individual	Comments as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General; support expressed for the Neighbourhood Plan.
Pat Herz	Individual	Comments as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General; support expressed for the Neighbourhood Plan.
Jane Mean	Individual	Comments as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing; need cheaper housing for local people, particularly for the young and the old.
Tim White	Individual	Comments as follow: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure; the proposed relocation of the library would not support the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan as it will reduce linked trips to retail premises in the town.
	Vincent & Gorbing on behalf of Fairview New Homes	Comments as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General; support the emerging Neighbourhood Plan as an essential vehicle for properly managing the future of Buntingford and the surrounding villages.

Name	Organisation	Summary of Comments
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy BE1; policy must be subject to some flexibility. Suggest that the policy wording is amended to add : <i>‘unless it can be demonstrated by evidence of continuous marketing over a period of two years that the premises or land are not viable for employment purposes and there is no reasonable prospect of employment use’.</i> • Policy HD7; policy should be worded to indicate that new housing development should provide a mix of unit sizes. Sceptical that encouraging new bungalows will be effective. • Policy INFRA3; concern that the supporting text to the policy appears to consider that a wide array of infrastructure might be accommodated on the site south of Buntingford, at the same time as requiring employment land in general to be protected and retained. The site cannot deliver on all of these competing land use requirements. • Policy INFRA3; Object – to the suggestion in the supporting text that part of the employment land be used for a new first school. The site is not considered available for this use.

This page is intentionally left blank

Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2031

The Report by the Independent Examiner

Richard High BA MA MRTPI

8 November 2016

Contents

Summary	5
Introduction	7
Appointment of Independent Examiner	7
The Scope of the Examination	8
The Preparation of the Plan	10
Public Consultation	11
The Development Plan	12
The Basic Conditions Test	13
National Policies and Guidance	13
Sustainable Development	14
The Strategic Policies Contained in the Development Plan	14
Compatibility with European Union Obligations	15
Vision Statement and Aims	16
Neighbourhood Plan Policies	17
Business and Employment	18
Environment and Sustainability	22
Housing Development	27
Infrastructure	36
Leisure and Recreation	39
Transport	40
Summary and Referendum	43
Appendices	
1 Clarification of agreement of parishes to joint plan	45
2 Responses to queries raised regarding consultation with statutory Bodies on SEA and Draft Plan and an error in Policy BE5	49
3 Buntingford Town Boundary as shown in East Hertfordshire District Plan pre-submission draft	51

Summary

The decision of Buntingford Town Council to join forces with the surrounding parishes to prepare a neighbourhood plan is to be commended. It recognises the important relationship between the town and its rural hinterland and enables the benefits of a neighbourhood plan to be available to small villages for whom the preparation of a separate neighbourhood plan may not have been a realistic proposition.

I have given careful consideration to all the policies in the BCANP. Policy HD1 relating to the scale of residential development has required particular attention. Concerns have been expressed that the Plan is too restrictive in terms of new housing development, but recent planning decisions in the absence of both an up to date Local Plan and a 5-year supply of housing land mean that there is now a commitment to a substantial increase in the housing stock in Buntingford and there is understandable concern about the capacity of local infrastructure and facilities to absorb this scale of development. I have found it necessary to recommend some modifications to allow small scale development outside the proposed development boundaries having regard to the NPPF but have concluded that there is a justification for the proposed development boundary and that the scale of development for which there is permission means that the Plan will make a significant contribution to new housing development.

The Plan supports the development of more employment opportunities in the area and many of its policies are designed to ensure that existing services and facilities are maintained or enhanced. In many cases I have found it necessary to recommend fairly minor modifications to clarify the way the policy will be applied and I have recommended the deletion of Policy INFRA4, as it does not relate the development and use of land, and INFRA5 as it adds nothing to existing policies in the Local Plan and the NPPF.

I have concluded that, if the modifications that I have recommended are made:

The Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in accordance with Sections 38A and 38B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012;

having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State it would be appropriate to make the Plan;

The making of the Plan would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;

The making of the Plan would be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area;

The making of the Plan would not breach and would be otherwise compatible with European Union obligations and the European Convention on Human Rights.

I am therefore pleased to recommend that the Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan should proceed to a referendum subject to the modifications that I have recommended.

I am also required to consider whether or not the referendum area should extend beyond the Neighbourhood Plan Area. The Plan covers the whole of the Parish of Buntingford and the surrounding parishes of: Aspenden, Buckland and Chipping, Cottered, Hormead and Wyddial and I have seen nothing to suggest that the policies of the Plan will have “a substantial, direct and demonstrable impact beyond the neighbourhood area”. ¹ **I therefore conclude that there is no need to extend the referendum area.**

¹ PPG Reference ID: 41-059-20140306

Introduction

1. The Localism Act 2011 has provided local communities with the opportunity to have a stronger say in their future by preparing neighbourhood plans which contain policies relating to the development and use of land.
2. Buntingford Town Council is the qualifying body for the Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2031 (which I shall refer to as the BCANP or the Plan). The Plan area covers the whole of the parish of Buntingford and the surrounding parishes of Aspenden, Buckland and Chipping, Cottered, Hormead and Wyddial. It has been prepared by a Neighbourhood Planning Team (NPT) consisting of stakeholders from each of the parishes supported by a Neighbourhood Forum (NF) including a wider range of stakeholders.²
3. Buntingford is a small market town at the centre of an extensive rural area, beyond which are the larger towns of Royston, Baldock, Stevenage, Hertford, Ware and Bishop's Stortford. The Neighbourhood Plan area lies just outside the Metropolitan Green Belt.
4. If, following a recommendation from this examination, the Plan proceeds to a local referendum and receives the support of over 50% of those voting, it can be made and will then form part of the statutory development plan. As such it will be an important consideration in the determination of planning applications, which must be determined in accordance with development plan policies unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Appointment of the Independent Examiner

5. I have been appointed by East Hertfordshire Council (EHC) with the agreement of the Buntingford Town Council to carry out the independent examination of the BCANP. I have been appointed through the Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral Service (NPIERS).
6. I confirm that I am independent of both East Hertfordshire Council, Buntingford Town Council, the Parish Councils of Aspenden, Buckland and Chipping, Cottered and

²The term Neighbourhood Forum as used here does not refer to the use of the term in Schedule 9 to the Localism Act 2011, where it refers to a body which may be set up as the qualifying body for the preparation of a neighbourhood plan in an unparished area.

Hormead and the Parish Meeting of Wyddial. I have no interests in any land which is affected by the BCANP and no conflicting professional interest in the area.

7. I am a Chartered Town Planner with over 30 years' experience in local government, working in a wide range of planning related roles, including 15 years as a chief officer. Since 2006 I have been an independent planning and regeneration consultant. I have completed 14 neighbourhood plan examinations and three health checks. I therefore have the appropriate qualifications and experience to carry out this examination.

The Scope of the Examination

8. The nature of the independent examination is set out in Sections 8-10 of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

9. I must:

- a) decide whether the Plan complies with the provisions of Sections 38A and 38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

These requirements relate primarily, but not exclusively, to the process of preparing the Plan and I shall deal with these first.

- b) decide whether the Neighbourhood Development Plan meets the basic conditions contained in Schedule 4B paragraph 8(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

This element of the examination relates mainly to the contents of the Plan.

- c) make a recommendation as to whether the Plan should be submitted to a referendum, with or without modifications, and whether the area for the referendum should extend beyond the Plan area.

10. The Plan meets the basic conditions if:

- a) having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State it is appropriate to make the Plan;
 - b) the making of the Plan contributes to sustainable development;
 - c) the making of the Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area);
 - d) the making of the Plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations.

11. Paragraph 9 of Schedule 4B indicates that as a general rule the examination should be carried out on the basis of written representations unless a hearing is necessary to

allow adequate consideration of an issue or to allow a person a fair chance to put a case. In carrying out the examination I came to the conclusion that the examination could be completed without a hearing.

12. The documents which I have referred to in the examination are listed below.

- Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2031.
- Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan Basic Conditions Statement including a Screening Report containing assessments of the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment and an Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulations.
- Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Statement.
- Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan Supporting Evidence. This document contains a long list of references which have been used in the preparation of the neighbourhood plan. For each document there is a brief description and a weblink. The list is extensive and includes some key references that I have already included explicitly in this list and a large number of other more detailed references. I have looked at all of these and where appropriate referred to them in my report.
- The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 as amended in 2015 which are referred to as the NPR.
- The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (EAPPR).
- The National Planning Policy Framework which is referred to as the NPPF.
- National Planning Practice Guidance referred to as PPG.
- East Hertfordshire Local Plan Second Review 2007
- East Herts District Plan Pre-Submission Consultation Draft September 2016.

13. These documents include all of those that are required to be submitted with a neighbourhood plan under regulation 15 of the NPR and all those documents were submitted with the Plan.

14. I made an unaccompanied visit to the neighbourhood plan area on 26 September 2016 to familiarise myself with the area and help me to understand the implications of the Plan policies. I spent a day walking and driving around the area. I visited all the villages in the area and all of the specific locations referred to in the policies of the plan.

The Preparation of the Plan

15. An application for the designation of the parishes of Buntingford, Aspenden, Buckland and Chipping, Cottered, Hormead and Wyddial as a neighbourhood area was submitted by BTC to EHC on 3 February 2014. Section 61F (2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (which was inserted by Schedule 9 to the Localism Act 2011) makes provision for a parish council to act in relation to a neighbourhood area which includes all or part of another parish if the other parish council has given its consent.
16. The application included consent forms from each of the parish councils involved and the parish meeting of Wyddial to be involved in the process. The wording of the consent form signed by 5 of the parishes did not explicitly agree for BTC to act as the accountable body, or even to proceed with the preparation as it stated under the heading "Neighbourhood Plan" "Having considered the offer by Buntingford Town Council, we welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with the possibility of being included in a joint Neighbourhood Plan". In the case of Hormead Parish Council the wording was different: "Our Parish wishes to be included in the area for the preparation of the Buntingford Neighbourhood Plan. This does not bind the Parish to supporting the policies that emerge from the process but it does mean that our electors will be included in the referendum on the policies when that occurs".
17. I have no reason to question the willingness of the parishes to participate in the preparation of a plan for their combined area with Buntingford Town Council. However, as the letters issued at the time of the designation of the Neighbourhood Area, with the exception of that from Hormead Parish Council, fell short of clear consent in accordance with the legislation, I sought clarification on this point. My e mail to the local planning authority together with extracts from the minutes of the relevant meetings of the parishes are attached as Appendix 1 and I am satisfied that all the parishes gave their consent in accordance with the legislation.
18. EHC undertook consultation as required by regulation 6 of the NPR for a period in excess of 6 weeks ending on 27 January 2014 and the Council's Executive approved the designation of the Buntingford Community Area (BCA) as a neighbourhood area, at its meeting on 1 July 2014. The designation was subsequently published on the Council's website in accordance with regulation 7(1) of the NPR.
19. As required under Section 38B (1) (a) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 the Plan clearly states the period to which it relates, which is 2014-2031.

20. The Plan must not include any provision about development that is excluded development as defined in Section 61K, of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Excluded development includes “county matters” such as mineral extraction and waste disposal and major infrastructure projects. I am satisfied that the submitted plan contains no such provision.
21. I am also satisfied that the BCANP does not relate to more than one neighbourhood area.

Public Consultation

22. The process of public consultation on the preparation of the BCANP is set out in the Consultation Statement. Work on engaging the community started during 2013, prior to the submission of an application for the designation of the neighbourhood area with a survey on a report on housing development in Buntingford. In early 2014, while EHC was considering the application for designation of the area a household survey was prepared and distributed to all households in the BCA. The detailed response to this consultation is included in the evidence base.³ About 450 responses were received, equivalent to about 14% of households. A survey of businesses was undertaken in the second half of 2014 and during 2013 and 2014 the NF met regularly and sought to gather evidence and plan consultation. In the first half of 2015, while policies were being formulated, drafts were published online and there was consultation via all of the parish councils and parish meetings on the emerging policies.
23. Formal pre-submission consultation took place in accordance with regulation 14 of the NPR between 1 September 2015 and 12 October 2015. The Draft Plan was published online and hard copies were made available in Buntingford and all of the parishes. A flyer detailing the consultation arrangements was distributed to all households and businesses in the plan area. The Consultation Statement summarises the comments received and indicates the action taken in response to the comments that were made as required by regulation 15(2) of the NPR. The Consultation Statement does not make it clear that the relevant bodies were consulted in accordance with Regulation 14 (b) of the NPR and is therefore not fully in accordance with Regulation 15 (2)(b) of the NPR. I sought clarification on this point by e mail. My e mail and the response to it in e mails from EHC and BTC are attached as Appendix 2. On the basis of this I am

³ <http://www.buntingford-tc.gov.uk/uploads/questionnaire-final-analysis-19.pdf>

satisfied that consultation did take place in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations.

24. In order to ensure that the Consultation Statement complies with the requirements of the regulations:

I recommend that The Consultation Statement is amended to make it clear that the necessary consultation with statutory consultees took place and to explain how this was done.

The Development Plan

25. The statutory development plan is made up of:

- The Saved Policies of the East Hertfordshire Local Plan Second Review 2007.
- The Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan adopted in 2007.
- The Hertfordshire Waste Local Plan which comprises the Waste Core Strategy and Management Policies adopted in 2012 and the Waste Site Allocations Document adopted in 2014.

26. The Planning horizon for the East Hertfordshire Local Plan Second review was 2011. It therefore does not provide an up to date strategic context for the BCANP, particularly in terms of the amount and distribution of housing development. However, the Saved Policies of the Plan still form part of the Statutory Development Plan and, where they are strategic, the BCANP needs to be in general conformity with them.

27. The Local Plan is being reviewed and it is envisaged that it will replace the Local Plan which was adopted in 2007. The pre-submission version of this plan was agreed by EHC in September 2016. It is good practice for the BCANP to take account of the strategic context and policies of the emerging Local Plan in order to help ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan does not become out of date when the new Local Plan is adopted. It is clear that there has been close liaison between EHC and the NPT to ensure that the BCANP is aligned with the emerging Local Plan. However, there is no requirement for the policies of the BCANP to conform with the strategic policies of the emerging plan, as these may change before they are adopted.

28. The Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan adopted in 2007 set out policies for minerals development between 2002 and 2016. It is therefore out of date and is also being reviewed. This review is at a relatively early stage and the new plan is not expected to be adopted until 2018.

The Basic Conditions Test

29. The consideration of whether the Plan meets the basic conditions is the main focus of the independent examination process. It is therefore essential to be absolutely clear on the meaning of each of the basic conditions.

“having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, it is appropriate to make the plan”.

30. There are two important points to emphasise in relation to this. The first is that this requirement means that an examiner must consider this requirement in relation to the making of the plan; it thus applies to the plan as a whole rather than to individual policies. The second point is the use of the phrase *“having regard to”*. This means that the examiner must consider the national policy and advice but it does not mean that each policy should be in absolute conformity with it. It provides for an element of flexibility. PPG explains that *“having regard to national policy”* means that *“a neighbourhood plan must not constrain the delivery of important national policy objectives”*. The Plan as a whole is clearly the sum of its policies and it is therefore necessary to consider the extent to which each policy complies with national policy and guidance. However, in reaching my conclusion on this basic condition it is the relationship of the plan as a whole with national policies and guidance rather than individual policies which is the key consideration.
31. The Basic Conditions Statement submitted with the BCANP does not explicitly recognise the significance of these points. It simply relates the BCANP to the 12 Core Planning Principles of the NPPF, referring specifically to specific BCANP policies as it does so. This is a useful exercise and I have not identified any serious conflict between the BCANP and these core principles. However, the Basic Conditions Statement does not relate the policies of the BCANP to the more specific policies in the NPPF which are relevant to them. It would have been helpful to do this as these policies spell out in more detail the way in which the general principles should be applied and it has therefore been necessary for me to consider the BCANP policies in this way.
32. Also relevant to the basic conditions test is “guidance issued by the Secretary of State” as set out in PPG. The Basic Conditions Statement does not consider the relationship of the Plan to PPG but I have had frequent need to relate aspects of the Plan to it.

“The making of the plan contributes to sustainable development”

33. Sustainable development is the fundamental principle guiding the planning process⁴ and the assessment of this basic condition is therefore of prime importance. The NPPF spells out the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental and the interdependent nature of these. Again it is important to note that the assessment to be undertaken relates to the plan as a whole, but clearly the contribution of each policy needs to be considered to enable a conclusion to be reached and policies which fail to contribute to sustainable development are likely to require modification or deletion. As the NPPF points out⁵ local circumstances vary greatly and that influences the way in which contributions to sustainable development can be made.
34. The whole structure of the NPPF is based on elements of sustainable development and there is thus a substantial overlap between the first and second basic conditions as both are concerned with the relationship of neighbourhood plans to the NPPF. The Basic Conditions Statement relates the BCANP to these general headings, highlighting the policies which support each heading. This is helpful but it is also necessary to consider the relationship of policies to the more detailed interpretation of these broad headings in the NPPF. This is something that I shall address in considering individual policies.

“The making of the plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area”.

35. As with the previous two conditions the test applies to the plan as a whole, but this requires consideration of individual policies against relevant strategic policies in order to reach an overall conclusion. The test of *“general conformity”* is fundamentally that the neighbourhood plan policies should not undermine the strategic policies of the Local Plan. The test is spelt out more fully in PPG⁶. It does not preclude some variation from a strategic policy to reflect local circumstances providing the proposal upholds the general principle that underlies the strategic policy. In the case of the BCANP the absence of up to date strategic policies on many issues reduces the importance of this test and means that more reliance is placed on conformity with national policy and guidance.

⁴ NPPF para 6

⁵ NPPF paragraph 10

⁶ PPG Reference ID: 41-074-20140306

“The making of the Plan does not breach, or is otherwise compatible with EU obligations”

36. As this condition relates to the process of plan preparation I shall deal with it in detail at this stage.

a) Strategic Environmental Assessment

37. PPG indicates that *“where a neighbourhood plan is likely to have significant environmental effects it may require a strategic environmental assessment”*⁷, subsequently referred to as SEA. An SEA requires the preparation of an environmental report. In order to determine whether the plan would have a significant environmental effect, a screening assessment is necessary.
38. Regulation 15 of the NPR requires that the submission of a neighbourhood plan must include:
” (i) an environmental report prepared in accordance with paragraphs (2) and (3) of regulation 12 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans Regulations (EAPPR) or (ii) where it has been determined under regulation 9(i) of these Regulations that the proposal is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and accordingly does not require an environmental assessment), a statement of reasons for the determination”.
39. In the case of the BCANP, screening assessment of the need for an SEA was carried out by the NPT. The screening assessment followed the flowchart set out in the Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive⁸ and concluded that the BCANP is not likely to have significant environmental effects and that an SEA is therefore not necessary. Appendix 1 to the screening sets out the reasons for the answers to individual questions on the flow chart. In accordance with regulation 9 (2)(b) the consultation bodies were consulted on the screening assessment and there was no dissent from its conclusions. These responses were not included in the documentation provided to me but were provided to me by EHC.⁹ The conclusions of the assessment were accepted by EHC which made a determination in accordance with Regulation 9 of the EAPPR that an SEA was not necessary.

⁷ PPG Reference ID: 11-027-20150209

⁸ Fig 2 on Page 13 of A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2005.

⁹ These responses can be found at <http://democracy.eastherts.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=907>

40. I am satisfied that the screening assessment has been conducted in accordance with the regulations and that an SEA is not necessary.

b) Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulations

41. Regulation 102 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (CHSR) puts into effect the requirements of Article 6.3 of the EU Habitats Directive and requires that:

“(1) Where a land use plan -

(a) is likely to have a significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), and

(b) is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site,

the plan-making authority must before the plan is given effect, make an appropriate assessment of the implications of the site in view of that site’s conservation objectives.”

Amendments to these regulations were made in the Schedule 2 to the NPR which inserted Regulation 102A to the CHSR:

“A qualifying body which submits a proposal for a neighbourhood development plan must provide such information as the competent authority may reasonably require for the purposes of the assessment under regulation 102 or to enable them to determine whether that assessment is required.”

42. The SEA Screening Assessment confirmed that there are no European Sites or Offshore Marine Sites that would be significantly affected by the proposals in the BCANP and that an Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulations would therefore not be necessary. This view has been confirmed by the response of Natural England.

c) Human Rights

43. I have not found, or received any representations to suggest that the plan in any way contravenes the European Convention on Human Rights.

44. I am satisfied that the making of the plan would not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations.

Vision Statement and Aims

45. A Vision Statement for the BCANP has been developed based on the issues which were identified by residents, businesses and other stakeholders in the early stages of consultation.

“Value protect and promote the town and parishes of the Buntingford Community Area, by respecting their heritage, appreciating the rural nature of the community and being aspirational when planning their future”.

46. The vision is supported by a series of 12 thematic aims relating to issues including: business development, traffic, employment opportunities, green spaces, education, culture and heritage and village identity. I am satisfied that each of these aims is consistent with sustainable development and the requirement that neighbourhood plans should be positively prepared. However, there is a notable omission from the aims of the Plan as they do not include any reference to housing development. An important element of the social role of the planning system in achieving sustainable development is “providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations;”. A set of aims that makes no reference to the provision of housing presents a lack of balance in achieving sustainable development. I therefore recommend the inclusion of an additional aim to rectify this imbalance.

Recommendation

Insert an additional aim after the third aim on page 22: “Meet the need for new housing for the Buntingford Community Area including an appropriate contribution to the housing needs for East Hertfordshire District by providing a mix of housing that reflects identified need and respects and reinforces the character of its setting.”

Neighbourhood Plan Policies

47. The policies in the BCANP are grouped by theme and at the beginning of each section there is a presentation of the general reasoning for the policies and a set of thematic objectives.
48. I have considered each of the policies having regard to the basic conditions. I have also had regard to the views expressed in response to public consultation both in the early stages of the preparation of the Plan and, in particular, in the responses to the regulation 16 consultation. Although I have not referred specifically to all the representations and suggestions that have been made I have taken them all into account.

49. I am only empowered to recommend modifications where they are necessary to enable the Plan to meet the basic conditions or to correct errors.¹⁰ PPG requires that policies should be “*clear and unambiguous*” and “*drafted with sufficient clarity that a decision maker can apply it consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications*”¹¹ and some modifications have been recommended with this in mind.

Business and Employment within the BCA

50. The introduction to this section points to a recent reduction in local employment opportunities as a result of the closure of some large employers, notably the Sainsbury’s distribution depot on the southern side of Buntingford. It suggests a need to prevent a further loss of employment space, to make provision for new businesses, particularly smaller and micro-businesses and to strengthen the town centre of Buntingford. The 5 objectives reflect this analysis.

Policy BE1

51. This policy aims to prevent the change of use or redevelopment of land or buildings in employment use to non-employment uses. This policy flows clearly from the analysis which points to a relatively small amount of land currently in employment related uses and a recent decline and pointing to a clear need to maintain the supply of local employment opportunities in order to achieve sustainable development. There is however an element of tension between this policy and elements of the NPPF which suggest a more flexible approach to changes of use of employment land. Paragraph 22 suggests 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*”. Paragraph 51 suggests that local planning authorities “*should normally approve planning applications for change to residential use and any associated development from commercial buildings (currently in the B class uses) where there is an identified need for housing in that area, providing that there are not strong economic reasons why such development would be inappropriate*”. Recent changes to the General Permitted Development Order (GDPO) also include some such changes of use within the definition of permitted development.¹²

¹⁰ One of the representations makes several valid comments on the accuracy of the phrasing of the Consultation Statement in referring to the objectives but this does not fall within the scope of my examination.

¹¹ PPG Reference ID: 41-041-20140306

¹² Classes O and P of Part 3 of Schedule 2 to the General Permitted Development Order 2015 allow changes of use from offices (Class B1(a) and storage (Class B8) to residential uses in some circumstances.

52. These provisions in national policy mean that the proposed wording of Policy BE1 is too rigid to be consistent with the basic conditions. The policy is also worded more strongly than Saved Policy EDE2 of the Local Plan. The NPPF and changes to the GDPO postdate the Local Plan and show that national policy is now more supportive of changes of use of employment land than it was when the Local Plan was adopted.
53. It may well be appropriate to resist changes of use or redevelopment of employment land based on the relative shortage of employment land and the need for employment opportunities, but these considerations will need to be balanced against the strategic need for housing or other alternative uses or the extent to which there are realistic prospects of future employment use. I therefore recommend modifications to the policy to reflect these considerations to comply with the basic conditions.

Recommendation

Reword Policy BE1 to read “Proposals for the redevelopment or change of use of land or buildings in employment use to non-employment uses, other than those which are permitted development, will only be permitted when:

- a) marketing of the site over a period of a minimum of 12 months demonstrates that there is no realistic prospect of the use of the site for employment purposes or**
- b) the strategic need for the proposed use clearly exceeds the need for continued use for employment purposes.”**

Policies BE2 and BE5

54. I have considered these two policies together as there seems to be a large overlap between them but the relationship between them is not clear. All of the sites listed in Policy BE5 appear to be embraced in Policy BE2. I therefore recommend the merging of these two policies to avoid confusion.
55. Policy BE2 supports the upgrading or extension of existing employment sites where it does not conflict with other policies in the Plan and subject to several criteria. It is a positively worded policy and the criteria, with one exception, are consistent with sustainable development and meet the basic conditions. The policy implies that proposals must meet all the criteria; however, this is not clearly stated and for the sake of clarity it needs to be made explicit.
56. The sixth criterion requires developments to encourage the development of local businesses and meet their needs and aspirations. The intention of this criterion is not clear to me as there is no explanation of what constitutes a local business. It is also

not clear why, in terms of sustainable development, proposals which would accommodate businesses moving into the area would not be supported. While the encouragement of local businesses is appropriate, the current wording would preclude other businesses if proposals are expected to meet all the criteria. If proposals are not expected to meet all the criteria, proposals that could have adverse environmental consequences could be acceptable and that is clearly not the intention. I can see no justification for limiting the extension of employment land to local businesses and to do so would not be consistent with the third core planning principle in the NPPF to “respond positively to wider opportunities for growth”.

57. In merging the Policy with Policy BE5 it would be helpful to list the existing industrial estates. The list includes an error in that it does not include Buntingford Business Park which is shown on the map on P30 as No3, but refers both to 3. Buttermilk Hall Farm agricultural industry and 5. Buttermilk Farm Industrial Estate, which is a duplication as only the former is shown in the map on P31. The policy does not clearly allocate land for future employment development and the existing employment sites, while identified on the maps on pages 30 and 31, are not clearly defined. However, from my visit it appeared that there is significant scope for further development or intensification of use on or adjoining these sites.

58. Recommendation

Reword the first part of Policy BE2 to read:

“Proposals to upgrade, intensify or extend the following main industrial sites listed below and shown on the maps on pages 30 and 31

- 1 The Watermill Industrial Estate**
- 2 Park Farm Industrial Estate**
- 3 Buntingford Business Park**
- 4 Silkmead Farm, Hare Street (Great Horstead Parish)**
- 5 Buttermilk Farm Agricultural Industry**
- 6 Warren Nursery (Cottered Parish)**

and other smaller employment sites will be permitted where they do not conflict with other policies in this Plan and provided that all the following criteria are met so that proposals:...”

Then list the criteria but delete the 6th criterion.

Delete Policy BE5 but add the supporting text to that under Policy BE2 with appropriate editing.

Policy BE3

59. This policy aims to support development related to recreation and tourism, subject to 3 criteria. The first criterion requires that the development does not “contribute significantly to traffic volume”. A significant increase in traffic would not be a reason for refusing development unless it resulted in significant congestion or risks to road safety¹³. Subject to a modification to reflect this I am satisfied that this positive policy is consistent with the basic conditions.

Recommendation

Modify the first bullet point of Policy BE3 to read “They do not have a significantly harmful effect on congestion or road safety as defined by Hertfordshire County Council.”

Policy BE4

60. The policy identifies 8 specific types of business related development which will be supported providing they meet the criteria in Policies BE1 to BE3. These reflect the analysis that small scale business and self-employment are likely to form a significant part of employment related development in the BCA. The types of development listed are also those that are considered most likely to meet the criteria set out. However, the policy does not explicitly preclude other forms of business development and it would not be consistent with the presumption in favour of sustainable development to do so. For the sake of clarity and in the interests of sustainable development this needs to be made clear. Subject to this I am satisfied that it is consistent with the basic conditions.

Recommendation

In Policy BE4 after the 8th criterion insert “This does not preclude other forms of business development where they conform to policies BE1-BE3 and are otherwise consistent with sustainable development.”

Policies BE6 and BE7

61. I have considered these two policies together as they are closely related to each other. Policy BE6 resists the loss of A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, C1, D1 and D2 uses, whereas Policy B7 supports changes of use to these uses. The policies taken together are ambiguous and potentially contradictory as they are not explicit regarding changes of use within

¹³ NPPF paragraph 32 3rd bullet point “Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe.”

this list of uses. While many potential changes of use would be permitted development, others would not be and the current wording of the policy may preclude changes of use that are considered desirable. Thus, for example, a change of use from C1 to A1 could be regarded as contrary to policy BE6 as it would result in the loss of a hotel but consistent with Policy BE7 as it would be a change of use to a shop. I have sought clarification on this issue and understand that the policy is intended to support changes of use within the list of town centre uses. This is consistent with the policy for secondary shopping frontages in the emerging District Plan and in general conformity with the support in the NPPF for the encouragement of a range of uses in town centres.¹⁴ Some changes of use to uses not included in this list would also be permitted development.¹⁵ Modifications to reflect these points are necessary to meet the basic conditions.

62. The wording of Policy B7 is very open in that it relates to anywhere in the BCA. While it is limited by the requirement for conformity with other policies in the plan this may still allow some changes of use that would not be consistent with sustainable development. For example there may well be locations where a change of use to use class A5 (hot food takeaways) could be harmful to the living conditions of neighbouring residents and there is no general policy in the Plan which would prevent this. A modification to reflect this is necessary to meet the basic conditions.

Recommendation

Reword Policy BE6 to read:

“Development proposals that would involve the loss of one of the uses listed below in the settlements of the BCA, other than those which are permitted development, will not be permitted, unless they relate to a change of use to another use in this list, in order to retain local services and secure the vitality and sustainability of each settlement in the BCA.”

At the end of Policy B7 add “, where they would not be harmful to the living conditions of neighbouring residents and are otherwise consistent with sustainable development.

Environment and Sustainability

63. The three objectives under this heading aim to protect the countryside and landscape, biodiversity and open space in the BCA

¹⁴ NPPF paragraph 23

¹⁵ See paragraph 51 and footnote 12

Policy ES1

64. The policy aims to ensure that development is not harmful to the Rib Valley setting of the BCA. Buntingford lies in the Rib Valley and its built up area is substantially contained by the valley so that it is not intrusive in the countryside. The aim of the policy is consistent with the maintenance of local distinctiveness and the quality of the countryside. However, the first sentence of the supporting text goes further than the policy itself but is phrased as policy in stating that “the ridge heights of all developments should be limited so that they are lower than the height of the land forming the valley ridge”. This wording is not appropriate in supportive text and is too prescriptive to be transferred to the policy itself as it would preclude any development of any kind on the plateau landscape beyond the Rib Valley.

Recommendation

Reword the first paragraph of the supporting text to read “Development on the fringes of Buntingford which extends on to the higher ground surrounding the Rib Valley could have a harmful effect on the landscape of this area and parts of the Cherry Green Arable and Wyddial Plateaux.”

Policy ES2

65. Policy ES2 aims to protect and enhance the landscape, wildlife and biodiversity of the valleys of the rivers Rib, Beane and Quin by preventing development within 12m of the bank tops of these rivers. The justification for the policy is the ecological status of these valleys at present coupled with their potential to provide important corridors for biodiversity. The Beane and the Quin for the most part pass through open countryside and the application of this policy would present little difficulty. The Rib winds through the town of Buntingford and is, in some places, very close to existing development. A representation from Gladman suggests that the effect of this policy may be to prevent the delivery of otherwise sustainable housing sites, without referring to any specific sites. I accept that there may be exceptional instances, for instance small scale extensions to existing property, where any harm to the environmental value would be so small that the development could be justified. However, in relation to larger sites flanking the river, the maintenance of a corridor of 12m on either side of the river does not represent a major constraint, but, in the absence of a clear justification for the use of 12m as the limit, the policy needs to retain some flexibility to comply with the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The wording of the policy is somewhat ambiguous as “their” in the second line could relate to “development proposals” rather than the rivers. Subject to a modification to reflect these points I am

satisfied that the policy meets the basic conditions.

Recommendation:

Reword the first sentence of Policy ES2 to read “Development proposals that encroach within 12m of the bank tops of the Rivers Rib, Beane and Quin will not be supported, unless the benefits from the development clearly outweigh any harm to the contribution of the river courses to the landscape, wildlife and biodiversity of the BCA.”

Policy ES3

66. The policy supports developments which will provide renewable energy subject to an assessment based on six criteria relating environmental impact and transport. The policy needs to be worded to make it clear that it is the results of the assessment rather than simply the fact that it has been carried out that is important.
67. A representation rightly points out that PPG suggests that large scale solar energy farms should normally not be located on high quality agricultural land.¹⁶
68. Subject to modification to reflect these points the policy meets the basic conditions.

Recommendation:

In Policy ES3 replace the full stop after “waste” with a comma and continue “where an assessment demonstrates that the benefits of the proposal outweigh any harmful impact on:

(a) environmental”.

Add (g) High quality agricultural land”

Policy ES4

69. The policy aims to protect existing green spaces and would not support development proposals which would result in their loss unless they are replaced with acceptable and superior green space. As phrased the policy could apply to any non-developed land and this would not be appropriate. Although it is evident from the supporting text that it is intended to apply to public green space a modification to clarify this is necessary to meet the basic conditions. While an increased provision of green space may be desirable, it would only be justifiable to require it if such a need resulted from the development, as it would not be reasonable to expect a new development to rectify an existing deficiency. The mechanism for ensuring such provision is likely to be a planning obligation and Paragraph 204 of the NPPF sets out the requirements for

¹⁶ PPG Ref ID 5-013-20150327

planning obligations, one of which is that they should be: “fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.” A modification is necessary to reflect this and meet the basic conditions.

Recommendation

In Policy ES4 insert “public” after “existing” and modify the end of the policy to read “...will be supported only where replacement green spaces which are suitably located and equal or superior (in terms of size and quality) are made available”.

Policy ES5

70. Policy ES5 supports proposals that will expand the provision of open space and improve existing open space. The existing provision of natural green space in the BCA is relatively poor and improved provision would contribute to sustainable development. Like several other policies in the Plan its wording is very open ended and suggests that any green space anywhere will be supported. An amendment to ensure consistency with other objectives and policies is necessary. Subject to this the policy meets the basic conditions.

Recommendation

At the end of Policy ES5 add “where they are consistent with other policies in this plan”.

Policy ES6

71. The policy aims to protect the existing provision of allotments and welcomes any additional provision. It is consistent with the basic conditions subject to a similar amendment to that in Policy ES5.

Recommendation

At the end of Policy ES6 add “where they are consistent with other policies in this plan”.

Policy ES7

72. This policy requires that development proposals should be able to demonstrate a net gain in biodiversity and requires the use of a specific tool to assess this referred to as the Biodiversity Impact Assessment Calculator used by Warwickshire County Council which is claimed to be endorsed by Defra and Natural England. Although the principle of seeking net gains in biodiversity is consistent with the NPPF (Paragraph 118), I have been provided with no evidence to demonstrate the national status of the assessment technique recommended or to justify the requirement to use it. It is clear that it was

trialled by Natural England in 2013/2014 in Warwickshire but there is no subsequent information on its current status. I note that it is also referred to in the emerging District Plan but as this is at a relatively early stage little weight can be attached to it. In this context it would be an unreasonable requirement to insist on the use of a tool that relates to another county. A modification to address this is therefore necessary.

Recommendation

in Policy ES7 delete “...and employ the DEFRA and NE endorsed Biodiversity Impact Assessment Calculator (BIAC Warwickshire County Council v18 2014 or as amended)”. Amend the final sentence of the policy to read “Development must demonstrate a net gain in biodiversity in an ecological report consistent with BS 42020.”

Policy ES8

73. The policy aims to support proposals to improve or create links between existing wildlife areas. It is consistent with the basic conditions.

Policy ES9

74. This policy designates three areas as Local Green Space and Appendix 6 provides a detailed justification for each of them.

Hare Street Road (Millennium Site) This is an area planted to promote diversity of flora and fauna, with paths through it to allow public access. It is on the edge of Buntingford but adjacent to areas of new housing development for which it will be a valuable facility.

Monks Walk/ Baldock Road (to the rear of the Telephone Exchange)

This is a relatively small area of open space that includes mature trees and is rich in plant and bird life. It also serves as a play space in an otherwise built-up area.

Daws Lane Buckland Running Eastwards from the Church of St Andrews

This is a wide grass lane flanked by trees on either side that provides a tranquil walk into the countryside.

75. I visited all three of these spaces and they are each clearly special in their own way and meet the criteria for the designation of Local Green Space in paragraph 77 of the NPPF. However, the Policy as phrased is not consistent with the paragraph 78 of the NPPF which suggests that policy should be consistent with policy for Green Belts. Green Belt policy defines a wide range of categories of development which is “not inappropriate” and it is only development outside these categories which should only be allowed in “very special circumstances”. Local Green Spaces differ from Green

Belts greatly in terms of scale and it is therefore not appropriate to simply transplant Green Belt policy but to satisfy the basic conditions the Policy should recognise that some development that is consistent with the character and use of the Local Green Spaces may be appropriate.

Recommendation

Reword the last sentence of Policy ES9 to read: “Development that is inconsistent with the character and use of these Local Green Spaces will not be allowed except in very special circumstances.”

Housing Development Policies

76. The absence of an up to date Local Plan has meant that there is no clear strategic context for housing development in Buntingford. In particular there is no definitive statement of the scale of housing development that will be required. The emerging District Plan will set out the scale of housing envisaged between 2011 and 2033, but that has only just reached the pre-submission consultation stage and so limited weight can be attached to it. During the preparation of the BCANP, EHC has been unable to demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing land and thus development management decisions relating to housing development took place in the context of paragraph 14 of the NPPF which means *“where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, granting planning permission unless:*

-any adverse effects of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this framework taken as a whole; or
-specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.”

77. There was provision for 97 dwellings in Buntingford in the saved policies of the 2007 Local Plan and between 2011 and the submission of the BCANP permissions were granted for a further 1214 dwellings in Buntingford. Permission has since been granted for a further 56 dwellings in an appeal decision and a decision is still awaited on a proposal for 400 dwellings.¹⁷ In the other 5 parishes there were permissions for a further 20 dwellings, with applications for a further 6 dwellings awaiting decision.

Policy HD1

78. Policy HD1 sets out a general approach to new housing development which aims to prevent new housing development outside the settlement boundaries for Buntingford and Cottered defined in the Plan. No new allocations for housing development are

¹⁷ Application ref 3/14/2304/OP

made and, most of the area within the settlement boundary is either built up, subject to existing planning permissions or in use as open space.

79. The policy as worded is much more restrictive than national policy and saved policies HSG5 (Rural Exceptions Affordable Housing) and OSV3 (Category 3 Villages) with regard to development in rural areas as it would not permit any new houses in the countryside or the parishes of Aspenden, Buckland with Chipping, Hormead or Wyddial. It would therefore preclude the provision of affordable housing on rural exception sites as provided for in saved policy HSG5 of the East Hertfordshire Local Plan (Second Review) 2007 and the other categories of residential development that both the Saved Local Plan (Policy GBC3) and the NPPF provide for in the countryside (paragraph 55). Changes to Planning Practice Guidance in May 2016 also state that in rural areas *“all settlements can play a role in delivering sustainable development”* and *“blanket policies restricting housing development in some settlements and preventing other settlements from expanding should be avoided unless their use can be supported by robust evidence.”*¹⁸ There is no clear justification for the totally restrictive approach to new development in the villages other than Cottered and Buntingford.
80. The emerging District Plan places Great Hormead in the same category as Cottered as a Group 2 village with a development boundary and a rather more positive approach to development. However as that plan is at an early stage I have not taken it into account and have based my conclusions on the latest national guidance. I have suggested modifications to align Policy HD1 more closely to national policy and guidance.
81. Representations from DLP, on behalf of both Bovis Homes and Taylor Wimpey, and Gladman express concern that the use of the settlement boundary at Buntingford restricts development unjustifiably in the absence of an up to date Local Plan and leaves insufficient flexibility to respond to a change in the assessment of objectively assessed housing need. The objections relate specifically to the approach of the Plan to the scale of development and more specifically to the definition of the development boundary of Buntingford.
82. These representations refer to the judgement in Woodcock Holdings v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. They paraphrase conclusions reached in the judgement relating to the weight to be attached to a neighbourhood plan in the absence of both an up to date local plan and a 5-year supply of housing land. One of the representations refers to the conclusion in the Inspector’s Report relating to that

¹⁸ Planning Practice Guidance Reference ID 41-044-20160519

case that “a neighbourhood plan would not satisfy the basic condition to have regard to the NPPF if it set a numerical cap on new housing in absence of an objectively assessed housing need”. On the latter point the judgement itself in fact reached no definite conclusion except to say that this was an issue that the Secretary of State should have addressed in reaching his conclusions.¹⁹ The Ascot Sunninghill and Sunningdale Neighbourhood Plan examiner’s report on which this assertion is based suggested that it would be difficult to set a specific quantum of development in the absence of an up to date strategic context.²⁰ The representations also argue that Policy HD1 is strategic in nature and inappropriate in a neighbourhood plan as it “*may be considered to adversely affect the ability of the District Council to meet the strategic housing need or will serve to render the Buntingford Neighbourhood Plan as a nullity as soon as a Local Plan for East Hertfordshire is produced.*”

83. One of the essential requirements of a neighbourhood plan is that it should not promote less development than set out in the Local Plan. It is evident from Planning Practice Guidance that a neighbourhood plan can be prepared before an up to date Local Plan is in place. In the absence of an up to date plan “*the reasoning and evidence informing the Local Plan process is likely to be relevant to the consideration of the basic conditions against which a neighbourhood plan is tested.*”²¹ and “*policies relating to housing supply should take account of objectively assessed need.*”²²
84. The January 2014 Draft District Plan suggested that Buntingford should accommodate 493 dwellings in addition to the 97 already allocated in the Saved Policies of the 2007 Local Plan. The West Essex and East Hertfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2015 did not suggest that this was inappropriate. Since the publication of the January 2014 Draft Plan the planning permissions I have already referred to have been granted. Also the Pre-Submission East Hertfordshire District Plan was agreed for consultation by EHDC just as this examination was beginning. Policy BUNT1 Development in Buntingford provides for “*development within the town boundary as defined on the Policies Map, which will include:*”
- (a) a proportion of the overall windfall allowance for the District.”*

¹⁹ Woodcock Holdings v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government 2015 Paragraphs 81 and 84

²⁰ Ascot, Sunninghill and Sunningdale Neighbourhood Plan Examiner’s Report p15

²¹ PPG Reference ID 41 -009-20160211

²² PPG Reference ID 41-040-20160211

85. The justification for the draft policy states that *“In recognition of the amount of development that has been approved in the town since 2011, no further site allocations for residential development are proposed as part of the District Plan Strategy”*.
86. The BCANP is not tested against the policies of the emerging District Plan as these and the objective assessment of housing need on which it is based will be the subject of examination and the policies are clearly subject to change before they are adopted. However, at this stage it should be noted that there has been close working between EHC and the NPT on the preparation of the BCANP and the references to both the SHMA and the emerging District Plan demonstrate this. I have also seen no suggestion of any significant divergence between the strategic aims and policies of the emerging plan and the policies of the BCANP. I shall now address the issues of the scale of development and the definition of the development boundary for Buntingford in more detail.
87. At the time the Plan was prepared planning permissions provided for 1214 new dwellings in Buntingford and with the recent appeal decision that figure has risen to 1270. That represents a very substantial addition to the housing stock of Buntingford. While the conversion of that into possible population increase on page 40 of the Plan contains a wide range of forecasts it is evident that the population of Buntingford is likely to increase by substantially more than 50% over the plan period. That represents a substantial rate of development for any settlement. As development is underway on all the sites except the one recently permitted on appeal most of that increase is likely to take place in the early part of the plan period. It is true that decisions on individual applications have, to an extent, overtaken the plan making process, but the Plan takes this into account and it is clear that it makes provision for substantial housing growth in line with the emerging District Plan.
88. Although planning permissions have already been granted on the large available sites within the proposed development boundary, the BCANP does not set a numerical cap on the scale of development in Buntingford or the plan area. There is some flexibility for the provision of additional dwellings both through infill development or redevelopment within the proposed development boundary and through the modifications I recommend in relation to development outside the development boundaries of Buntingford and Cottered.

89. The Woodcock judgement reinforced²³ the findings in a previous judgement²⁴ that *“The body responsible; for a neighbourhood plan does not have the function of preparing strategic policies to meet the assessed development needs across a local plan area.”* Thus, the policies of a neighbourhood plan need not be determined by the availability or not of a 5-year supply of housing land at any one point in time, though they should take account of assessments of long term housing need. I do not accept the view that Policy HD1 is a strategic policy and therefore it cannot close off strategic options. It is a non-strategic policy based on informed assumptions about the strategic context in the absence of an up to date Local Plan. If the strategic policy eventually adopted conflicts with Policy HD1, it will override Policy HD1, but that does not negate the legitimacy of the policy if, at the time it is examined and made, it is consistent with the basic conditions. It is also quite possible that Policy HD1 will be consistent with the strategic policy that is adopted.
90. The determination of an individual planning application involves considerations that differ significantly from those in the preparation of a neighbourhood plan. The determination of a planning application takes place at a point in time whereas a planning policy is intended to be applied throughout the plan period or until it is necessary to review it. The conclusions reached in the Woodcock judgement relate primarily to the weight to be attached to an emerging neighbourhood plan in the determination of a planning application where there is not a 5-year supply of land; they do not relate to the way in which neighbourhood plan policies should be prepared.
91. It is true that if the local planning authority is unable to demonstrate a 5-year supply of housing land the policies of the Plan relating to the provision of housing may be regarded as out of date and thus decisions on individual applications would need to be taken based on paragraph 14 of the NPPF. In this context the neighbourhood plan would remain a material consideration and the weight to be attached to it would depend on the factors set out in the NPPF paragraph 216. Even if at the time it is drafted the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a 5-year supply of housing land it is quite possible that at a later date this requirement will be met and the weight attached to the neighbourhood plan would then be greater. Paragraph 198 of the NPPF states that *“Where a planning application conflicts with a neighbourhood plan that has been brought into force, planning permission should not normally be granted”*.²⁵ It is therefore an over-simplification to state as DLP do that “a

²³ Woodcock Holdings v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government 2015 paragraph 63

²⁴ Gladman Developments Ltd v Aylesbury Vale District Council 2014 paragraphs 73-78

²⁵ PPG Reference ID: 41-083-20160211

neighbourhood plan cannot outweigh the strategic need to demonstrate a five year supply against an Objective Assessment of Need”.

92. For all these reasons I do not accept that the Plan fails to make a substantial contribution to the supply of housing or to comply with the requirements of the NPPF in this regard. There is no clear strategic context but there is provision for a very substantial scale of development within the BCA
93. I now turn to the definition of the development boundary. The boundary proposed in the BCANP is very similar to that contained in the pre-submission draft of the emerging District Plan, which is attached at Appendix 3. There are three main differences. In the BCANP, the boundary west of the Pigeon Site extends to the A10 whereas in the emerging District Plan it is drawn somewhat more tightly reflecting the detail of the planning application which was permitted after the preparation of the Plan. This difference does not necessitate a modification of the development boundary proposed in the BCANP to comply with the basic conditions.
94. The emerging District Plan includes the site on which planning permission was recently granted for 56 dwellings (application ref 3/13/1399/OP) and as this will clearly become part of the built up area it clearly makes sense for it to be included within the development boundary. The emerging District Plan also includes the site of the Layston Primary School and to allow for the possibility of its expansion there is a strong case for its inclusion.
95. Although the proposed development boundary is drawn quite tightly round the area which will be developed when the housing development which has been permitted has been built. It is evident from the evidence base of the BCANP and reinforced by the emerging District Plan that there are strong arguments in terms of the containment of Buntingford within the Rib Valley for the boundary which has been chosen. The effect of new development on the landscape may not be consistent with sustainable development. This, coupled with the scale of development that can be accommodated within the boundary means that there is no requirement to remove or extend the boundary to satisfy the basic conditions, indeed any proposal to do so may invalidate the conclusions of the SEA screening assessment that the proposals of the Plan are not likely to have a significant environmental impact. For these reasons I am satisfied that there is a sound justification for the position of the development boundary subject to the minor changes to which I have referred.

96. While the development boundaries of Buntingford and Cottered offer limited potential for further housing they do not preclude some further housing development in the form of infilling or changes of use. However, it is clearly appropriate for the definition of the settlement boundary to reflect the recent appeal decision relating to application 3/13/1399/OP and to acknowledge the possible need to review the settlement boundaries if the finally approved District Plan suggests a need to accommodate more housing in Buntingford or Cottered.

Recommendations

Modify the BCANP Settlement Map (Buntingford) so that the settlement boundary includes the site of application ref 3/13/1399/OP approved on appeal and the full site of the Layston Primary School as shown on the proposed development boundary shown in the emerging District Plan and attached at Appendix 2.

Reword Policy HD1 to read:

“Within the settlement boundaries of Buntingford and Cottered proposals for new housing development will be permitted where it is consistent with Policies HD2 to HD7 and where any conflict with other policies of this plan is clearly outweighed by the benefits of the proposed development.

Outside the settlement boundaries of Buntingford and Cottered residential development consistent with policies HD2 to HD7 and other policies of this plan will be permitted in the form of:

- **small scale infill development within or immediately adjoining significant existing clusters of development;**
- **affordable housing on rural exception sites to meet an identified local need which cannot be met in any other way;**
- **development for which there is a demonstrable need for a location in the countryside.**

The need for this policy to be updated will be assessed when the emerging District Plan has been adopted and the strategic context in terms of the scale of new housing development has been determined.”

Policy HD2

97. This policy requires that new housing developments should be sensitive to the landscape and demonstrate how they relate to the distinctive features of the BCA. It also requires the submission of a Landscape Impact Assessment with all applications. I am satisfied that the policy is consistent with the basic conditions except that there

may be applications for small scale infill development within the development boundaries where it would be unduly onerous²⁶ to require a landscape assessment.

Recommendation

In Policy HD2 insert at the beginning of the last sentence “Where appropriate”.

Policy HD3

98. The policy supports the application of green energy principles where they do not have any harmful effects on the residential amenity, the street scene or the natural environment. The use of the word “any” could have a very restrictive effect on the application of renewable energy which would not be consistent with the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Almost any visible development could be considered to have some harmful effect but in many cases it may be acceptable or capable of mitigation. At the same time, it is also true that the cumulative effect of many small-scale developments may be harmful. Minor modifications to reflect these considerations are necessary to meet the basic conditions.

Recommendation

Modify the second half of Policy HD3 to read “...and do not have unacceptable adverse impacts individually or cumulatively on adjoining residents, the street scene or views from the surrounding countryside that cannot be effectively mitigated.”

Policy HD4

99. The policy aims to ensure that the layout and design of new housing respects the semi-rural character of the area and conforms to the standards of the Design Code set out in Appendix 4. It suggests that new housing should have “an open aspect” and I am not clear what this means. The standards in the Design Code relate to the separation between dwellings, the size of gardens and the outlook and natural light available to new dwellings. The justification for the standards is argued in Appendix 2 which points to the tighter urban character of some recent developments that, it is argued, are inconsistent with the character of the area. Supporting evidence is presented of the application of similar standards by several local authorities. However, the standards suggested are slightly more generous than most of the comparators and, in relation to garden space, less flexible in requiring a minimum garden depth of 10m.

²⁶ NPPF Paragraph 193

100. The NPPF supports the use of design codes to deliver high quality development, but suggests that they should avoid unnecessary prescription and aim to guide new development. The context of new development and its relationship to the development around it is an important consideration to be taken into account alongside the Design Code. The character of Buntingford varies between a fairly tight urban form around the centre, typical of market towns and a more dispersed pattern further out. The standards to be applied should have regard to this variation and to the distinctive form of development in the other villages. They should therefore be applied with an element of flexibility. For example, a dwelling with a wide frontage backing onto either the open countryside or a neighbouring dwelling with a deep garden may not need a garden that is 10m in depth. Also, in some circumstances the separation between the front elevations of buildings may need to be less than the 23m prescribed in the Design Code to reflect the existing pattern of development. For these reasons modifications to clarify the meaning of the policy and to provide for flexibility in the application of the Design Code is recommended.

Recommendation

Reword Policy HD4 to read:

“New housing design should respect the rural/ semi-rural character of the Buntingford Community Area and its immediate context having appropriate regard to the standards set out in Appendix 4 – Design Code.”

Policy HD5

101. Policy HD5 seeks to prevent where possible the loss of private gardens to residential development and to avoid harm to their ecological and landscape value. The NPPF encourages policies to prevent inappropriate development of gardens and I am satisfied that this policy complies with the basic conditions.

Policy HD6

102. The policy aims to ensure that development within Conservation Areas is sensitive to and will conserve or enhance their character and appearance. It requires development to accord with any up to date Conservation Area Appraisals. The policy reflects national policy and is consistent with the basic conditions.

Policy HD7

103. This policy requires new housing to reflect housing need identified in the most up to date Strategic Housing Market Assessment or other up to date evidence in terms of mix and tenure. It is consistent with the basic conditions.

Infrastructure Policies

104. Early consultation has identified the concern of residents that the scale of new development that will take place over the Plan period will place pressure on the health, education, transport and water/sewerage infrastructure of the area. The five infrastructure objectives aim to achieve increases in the capacity of local infrastructure and to seek financial contributions to it through development proposals.

Policy INFRA1

105. Policy INFRA1 relates to health facilities and is supportive of proposals for new facilities and to extend or conserve existing ones. As worded the policy would support any such proposal, but clearly proposals would need to be consistent with other policies in the Plan and a modification to this effect is necessary to this and other infrastructure policies to make the policy meaningful. It expects developers to work with local partners to ensure the delivery of adequate health facilities. A policy cannot require actions in this way but it can encourage them.
106. Concerns are expressed by Gladman that contributions should only be required to meet the needs generated by proposed development. This is a requirement of the statutory conditions for planning obligations as set out in paragraph 204 of the NPPF and it is implied in the last sentence of the proposed policy. To clarify that any financial contributions will be on this basis and thus meet the basic conditions a modification is recommended.

Recommendation

At the end of the first sentence of Policy INFRA1 insert “where they are consistent with other policies in this plan.” In the second sentence replace “expected” with “encouraged”. Amend the last sentence of the Policy INFRA1 to read: “This will be achieved through planning obligations to provide land or make financial contributions where the statutory requirements in paragraph 204 of the NPPF are met”.

Policy INFRA2

107. The policy supports the provision of improved communication technologies including fibre optic broadband and 4G mobile telephone coverage. It is consistent with the basic conditions subject to a similar modification to that recommended for INFRA1.

Recommendation

Amend the beginning of Policy INFRA2 to read “Proposals for the provision,

improvement and enhancement of advanced communication technologies within the BCA for education, training and business use will be supported where they are consistent with other policies in this Plan. These should include...”

Policy INFRA3

108. This is a similar policy offering general support for proposals to provide improved educational facilities. Again it is worded in an open ended way that does not constrain the location of any proposals.

Recommendation

In Policy INFRA3 after “...in the BCA” insert “which are consistent with other policies in this Plan”.

Policy INFRA4

109. The policy identifies priorities for road improvement and traffic management schemes. The policies in neighbourhood plans are intended to relate to the development and use of land. Traffic management does not fall within this definition and the priorities for highway improvements are a matter for the highways authority. No direct relationship between these schemes and proposed development is identified which could require contributions to these schemes to facilitate development.
110. The policy refers to the implementation of the Phoenix Project and lists a series of schemes from the report of Phil Jones Associates from April 2015 which would introduce shared space /surfacing and traffic calming measures at key junctions and along parts of the main roads into Buntingford and in the town centre. Some of these schemes would involve the creation of new public spaces and extensive landscaping. They represent a positive vision of place-making for Buntingford and for re-defining the relationship between motor vehicle traffic and pedestrians. However, in essence they are traffic management projects and their implementation is a matter for investment decisions of the County, District and Parish Councils rather than as part of development proposals.
111. I also have a concern that the very extensive proposals envisaged in the Phil Jones and Associates Report may not have been fully understood in the public consultation that has taken place. The document is not part of the Plan and I have only been able to access it as a weblink from the evidence base submitted with the Plan. I therefore

consider that it is unlikely that there is a wide understanding of what these proposals are.

112. For these reasons it is not appropriate to include the list of schemes in Policy INFRA4 as a planning policy. However, it is appropriate to include the aspiration of the community to see the implementation of these proposals in a way that is clearly distinguished from the policies that will become part of the development plan if the Plan is successful at referendum.

Recommendation

Delete Policy INFRA4 and include the list of schemes in the policy and the supporting text under the heading “Community Aspirations for investment in road improvements and traffic management” at the end of the transport section, clearly distinguishing the format of the list of schemes from that of the policies of the Plan.

Policy INFRA5

113. The policy is a general one outlining how contributions will be made to community infrastructure through planning obligations and it refers to the potential of the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy for the provision of community infrastructure. It recognises the importance of adherence to the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010. However, the policy does not contain any specific elements that relate to the BCA and it adds nothing to the Local Plan and NPPF provisions regarding planning obligations. In this sense it does not comply with the requirement in PPG for a policy to be “*distinct to reflect and respond to the unique characteristics and planning context of the specific neighbourhood area for which it has been prepared.*”²⁷

Recommendation

Delete Policy INFRA5

Policy INFRA6

114. Thames Water has made representations that developers should be required to ensure that adequate capacity is provided in wastewater infrastructure both on and off the site. The Policy reflects this requirement. While it is likely to be included in the emerging Local Plan this is not yet in place. I am satisfied that subject to minor modifications to clarify how the Policy is to be applied it is consistent with the basic conditions.

²⁷ PPG Reference ID: 41-041-20140306

Recommendations

Modify the first bullet point of Policy INFRA6 to read: “Where necessary developers will be required to commission or fund studies to....”

Modify the second bullet point to read: “Where such studies demonstrate that development would overload the existing wastewater infrastructure and no improvements are programmed by Thames Water, permission will be subject to a planning obligation requiring the provision of the necessary increase in capacity and its completion prior to the first occupation of the development.”

Policy INFRA7

115. PPG makes provision for Local Plans to require a standard of efficiency of 110 litres per person per day, which is tighter than the standard requirement of 125 litres per day, in areas where there is a clear justification.²⁸ While there is no direct reference to neighbourhood plans in this context, I can see no reason, particularly in the absence of an up to date Local Plan why such a policy should not be included in a Neighbourhood Plan. Policy INFRA7 aims to impose this tighter standard and refers to an Environment Agency document – “Water Stressed Areas 2013” in justification. This shows that the BCA is in an area of “serious water stress”. I am satisfied that this policy meets the basic conditions.

Leisure and Recreation Policies

116. The background information on leisure and recreation identifies the concern arising from consultation that leisure facilities should be maintained and expanded or improved to meet the needs of the growing population of the BCA and this is reflected in the objectives for this group of policies. The existing provision is also summarised.

Policies LR1 and LR3

117. These policies are considered together as they deal similarly with proposals which would result in the loss of leisure facilities and community facilities respectively and I have the same concern about both policies. The policies aim to prevent development proposals that result in the loss of existing facilities unless they are replaced by facilities of a similar size or the proposals provide alternative benefits in terms of increased access to leisure and recreation. The policies are more onerous than both

²⁸ Reference ID: 54 013 20150327

Saved Policies LRC1 and LRC11 of the 2007 Local Plan and paragraph 74 of the NPPF which would allow for the loss of such facilities where they have been demonstrated to be surplus to requirements. While the population of Buntingford is increasing and it may therefore be unlikely that a facility would be surplus to requirements, this possibility cannot be excluded and a modification is therefore necessary to meet the basic conditions.

Recommendation

In Policies LR1 and LR3 after “...unless” insert “there is clear evidence that there is no need for the facility or a suitable alternative or ...”

Policy LR2

118. The inclusion of new leisure and recreation facilities within development proposals is supported in principle in this proposal. As phrased that would mean proposals anywhere in the BCA and the policy needs to be qualified to make it clear that this does not override other policies in the Plan. The policy particularly encourages the provision of multi-use facilities. The final sentence expects developers to work with providers of such facilities and, as in Policy INFRA1 this does not comply with the basic conditions and “encouraged” would be more appropriate.

Recommendations

At the end of the first sentence of Policy LR2 insert “where they are consistent with other proposals in this Plan.”

In the last sentence of Policy LR2 replace “expected” with “encouraged”.

Transport Policies

119. The background to the transport policies emphasises the dependence of the BCA on use of the private car highlighting relatively poor bus services and the absence of any railway stations. It also points to the relatively limited provision of off street parking and the congestion that can be caused by on street parking.

Policy T1

120. The policy sets out minimum parking standards to be applied to new housing developments. There is also a requirement for provision for short term parking by service vehicles and some visitors in developments of more than 5 dwellings at a level of one space for 4 units. The standards proposed are more generous than those currently being applied by EHC in relation to dwellings of 3 or more bedrooms. The justification given for this is the high level of car ownership, the lack of alternative modes of transport and the harmful impact of on street parking in the BCA. While

these factors are not confined to Buntingford, the standards applied by EHC are not part of the development plan and the approach adopted in the BCANP is generally in accordance with Paragraph 39 of the NPPF.

121. However, there is no justification for the additional provision for service vehicles and no indication of what form it should take. The more generous standards for new dwellings would be expected to accommodate most visitor parking as the number of vehicles based at a dwelling is unlikely to equal the level of provision in most cases. Also, while I understand that tandem car parking can lead to a need for some additional manoeuvring, this is also true of parking in front of garages which are used as parking spaces. While it is clearly preferable to avoid it, it may not always be possible in the interests of sustainable development.
122. The overall wording of the policy saying that the standards “must be applied” is excessively rigid and there may be circumstances in which an element of flexibility would be justified by other material considerations to achieve sustainable development. I have therefore recommended the following modifications to reflect the concerns I have raised and to satisfy the basic conditions.

Recommendations

In the first line of Policy T1 delete “must be applied” and replace with “will be required unless there is a clear justification for the application of a lower standard to achieve sustainable development”

“delete the 5th bullet point.

In the 6th bullet point modify the final sentence to read “Tandem parking will only be permitted where there is no suitable alternative.”

Policy T2

123. The policy aims to ensure that off street parking is provided as part of each property rather than in shared parking areas. Where these are provided it sets out requirements in terms of security and accessibility. I am satisfied that the policy meets the basic conditions except that there is no clear justification for the figure of 25m as the distance of any shared space from the property it serves and this seems likely to be an unnecessary constraint on the design of residential layouts.

Recommendation

In the second bullet point of Policy T2 delete “no more than 25metres away, and”.

Policy T3

124. The policy seeks to protect existing rights of way from new development. The supporting text encourages early consultation on possible diversions. The policy is consistent with the basic conditions.

Policy T4

125. The policy aims to support new development which extends existing networks of footpaths and other rights of way to improve the connectivity within and between settlements. However, it is framed in terms of encouragement to developers rather than the way in which a planning application will be determined. In some circumstances it would be a reasonable requirement for a new development to include connections to existing rights of way and the provision of new ones, but decision makers on planning applications would have to restrict their consideration to provision that is reasonably required for planning permission to be granted. A modification to provide a clearer basis for decision making is therefore necessary.

Recommendation

Reword Policy T4 to read: “Proposals for new development will be required to take advantage of opportunities to make appropriate connections to existing footpaths, urban alleyways, cycle paths, rights of way and bridleways in the BCA to improve connectivity between and within settlements.”

Policy T5

126. Policy T5 resists new development that would result in a loss of public parking provision unless it is appropriately replaced. I am satisfied that the policy complies with the basic conditions.

Policy T6

127. Under this policy it is expected that new developments will be served by a regular bus service to Buntingford Town Centre and where there is no existing route new developments may be expected to provide funding for an improved service or any associated infrastructure. Required improvements will have regard to the Hertfordshire County Council bus strategy.
128. The provision of a good bus service is clearly a desirable element of sustainable development. However, given the very limited existing provision of bus services and the rural nature of much of the BCA it may not be a realistic requirement for any new

development to be served by a bus service in a rural area such as this. Also any contributions to improved bus services or infrastructure would need to have regard to the statutory requirements for planning obligations, in particular the need to be “fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development”. For relatively small developments the funding of such improvements may not be justifiable. It is of course possible that any of the Parish Councils could choose to use income received from the Community Infrastructure Levy for this purpose. To reflect these concerns the following modifications are recommended.

Recommendations

Reword the first part of Policy T6 to read: “Where possible new development within the BCA should be served by a regular bus service to Buntingford Town Centre. In the second sentence delete “fund” and insert “contribute to”.

Summary and Referendum

129. The decision of Buntingford Town Council to join forces with the surrounding parishes to prepare a neighbourhood plan is to be commended. It recognises the important relationship between the town and its rural hinterland and enables the benefits of a neighbourhood plan to be available to small villages for whom the preparation of a separate neighbourhood plan may not have been a realistic proposition.
130. I have given careful consideration to all the policies in the BCANP. Policy HD1 relating to the scale of residential development has required particular attention. Concerns have been expressed that the Plan is too restrictive in terms of new housing development, but recent planning decisions in the absence of both an up to date Local Plan and a 5-year supply of housing land mean that there is now a commitment to a substantial increase in the housing stock in Buntingford and there is understandable concern about the capacity of local infrastructure and facilities to absorb this scale of development. I have found it necessary to recommend some modifications to allow small scale development outside the proposed development boundaries having regard to the NPPF but have concluded that there is a justification for the proposed development boundary and that the scale of development for which there is permission means that the Plan will make a significant contribution to new housing development.
131. The Plan supports the development of more employment opportunities in the area and many of its policies are designed to ensure that existing services and facilities are maintained or enhanced. In many cases I have found it necessary to recommend fairly

minor modifications to clarify the way the policy will be applied and I have recommended the deletion of Policy INFRA4, as it does not relate the development and use of land, and INFRA5 as it adds nothing to existing policies in the Local Plan and the NPPF.

132. I have concluded that, if the modifications that I have recommended are made:

- The Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in accordance with Sections 38A and 38B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012;
- Having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State it would be appropriate to make the Plan;
- The making of the Plan would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- The making of the Plan would be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area;
- The making of the Plan would not breach and would be otherwise compatible with European Union obligations and the European Convention on Human Rights.

133. I am therefore pleased to recommend that the Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan should proceed to a referendum subject to the modifications that I have recommended.

134. I am also required to consider whether or not the referendum area should extend beyond the Neighbourhood Plan Area. The Plan covers the whole of the Parish of Buntingford and the surrounding parishes of: Aspenden, Buckland and Chipping, Cottered, Hormead and Wyddial and I have seen nothing to suggest that the policies of the Plan will have “a substantial, direct and demonstrable impact beyond the neighbourhood area”. ²⁹ **I therefore conclude that there is no need to extend the referendum area.**

²⁹ PPG Reference ID: 41-059-20140306

Appendix 1: Clarification of agreement of parishes to joint Neighbourhood Plan

Dear Laura

I should be grateful if you could clarify one procedural issue for me relating to the role of Buntingford TC as the responsible body. The legislation (Section 61 (2) of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act inserted into the act by Schedule 9 of the Localism Act 2011) makes provision for a parish council to act in relation to a neighbourhood area which contains all or part of another parish providing it has the consent of the other parish to do so. In this case the request for designation of the area included "consent forms" which in 5 out of 6 cases reads "Having considered the offer by Buntingford Town Council, we welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with the possibility of being included in a joint Neighbourhood Plan". This falls short of explicit consent to Buntingford TC to lead and is not even a firm decision to proceed with the preparation of a plan. The wording in the case of Hormead is different but still not explicit: "Our Parish wishes to be included in the area for the preparation of the Buntingford Neighbourhood Plan. This does not bind the Parish to supporting the policies that emerge from the process but it does mean that our electors will be included in the referendum on the policies when that occurs".

I have no reason to believe that there is any dissent from the way the preparation of the Plan has been managed, but feel it is important to avoid any unnecessary ambiguity. I should be grateful if you could write to all of the Parish Councils and the Wyddial Parish Meeting and ask them to confirm that the consent they have given was intended to give consent for Buntingford to act as the qualifying body in accordance with Section 61F (2) of the 1990 Act.

Regards

Richard

Extract from Minutes of Cottered Parish Council 12th November 2013

Neighbourhood Plan with Buntingford

The updated Buntingford Neighbourhood Plan reports had been circulated. Concern was expressed about the effect on the Cottered & Throcking parish. Noted that a new development of 180 houses plus sheltered housing and ancillary support had been submitted. This development was between the A10 Buntingford bypass and the old A10 and therefore within Cottered & Throcking parish boundaries.

Resolved to suspend standing orders and open the meeting to the public

After a wide-ranging discussion the consensus was that Cottered & Throcking would be better to join with Buntingford as agreed at the recent public meeting. 3 volunteers (with 3 backups) at least required from the parish to sit on the Buntingford Forum. Several names were suggested. Buntingford to be formally notified by 12 November (Chairman will do at the 12 November Forum meeting). JH-B will draft letter/notice requesting stakeholder volunteers to be put on the website and in the Gazette. Noted that eventually the neighbourhood plan will have to be approved by a referendum.

Resolved to resume standing orders

Resolved to formally join with Buntingford in the Neighbourhood Plan

Extract from minutes of extraordinary meeting of Buckland with Chipping Parish Council 2nd December 2013.

4 Neighbourhood Plan (NP)

Following as discussion it was resolved to agree to produce a Neighbourhood Plan. Following a further discussion it was resolved unanimously to agree to the request from Buntingford Town Council to join Buntingford neighbourhood Plan with six other parishes. **RESOLVED to join the Buntingford Neighbourhood Plan.**

From: Marty Kilby [<mailto:marty@martykilby.co.uk>]

Sent: 26 October 2016 11:43

To: Pattison Laura

Cc: Jill Jones (Buntingford TC)

Subject: RE: Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan - Parish Consent

Dear Laura Pattison,

I confirm that Aspenden Parish Council gave consent for Buntingford Town Council to act as the qualifying body in accordance with Section 61F (2) of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act.

We so informed BTC in March by email:

Not sure if the Aspenden Chairman has come back to you, but I am letting you know that Aspenden Councillors have seen Buntingford Community Neighbourhood Plan, and are content with the statements in the plan that relate to Aspenden Parish.

Kind regards

Marty Kilby

2

Extract from Minutes of Hormead Parish Council meeting on 19th September 2013

13.172 Neighbourhood Plan: This agenda item was moved so that members of the public present could participate.

- 1. Report and consider action following the public meeting, 18th September
- 2. Cluster proposal with adjacent parishes
- 3. Buntingford Town Council proposal for joint plan: update and consider action

Adjournment for public comments

At 9.20pm it was **RESOLVED that the meeting be suspended to allow public comments concerning the Council's decision.**

The Clerk provided a resume of Wednesday evening's public meeting, detailing the result of the vote taken by members of the public. The vote asked the Parish Council to agree to its decision. The Council therefore considered its response to the overwhelming majority who voted in favour of Hormead producing a Neighbourhood Plan, and the meeting's request to the Parish Council to agree to join with Buntingford in producing that Plan.

Following a discussion it was **RESOLVED by 3:1 to agree to produce a Neighbourhood Plan.** Cllr Kilby requested his objection be recorded.

Following further discussion it was **RESOLVED by 3:1 to agree to the request to join with Buntingford to produce the Neighbourhood Plan.** Cllr Kilby requested his objection be recorded.

James Bruxner, with some public show of approval, had requested at the conclusion of Wednesday's meeting that the Council form a committee under the chairmanship of Edward Fremantle.

The Clerk explained that the formation of a Working Party would be more appropriate than a committee. Committees are extensions of the Parish Council and therefore bound by the same statutory regulations. That could stifle, for example, the calling of meetings, informal discussions, and the involvement of as many members of the public as possible. Terms of Reference should be drawn up by the Parish Council to set out the Working Party's powers and how it would function.

James Bruxner repeated his proposal of the previous evening that Edward Fremantle, with his experience and expertise in the subject, chair the Working Party. He pointed out that this would relieve the PC of much of the burden of the complexities of the project whilst not having delegated decision-making powers. Rather he envisaged the WP bringing recommendations, via its Council members, to the Council for consideration. The Clerk said he would draw up Terms of Reference for agreement by the Parish Council at its next meeting on 17th October. The Council agreed this was the way forward. Cllr Ginn asked to be added to the list of volunteers in the Working Party.

The Parish Council Meeting resumed at 9.54pm.

13.177 Date of next Parish Council meeting:

Thursday 17 October 2013 at 8pm in the Meads Pavilion.

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 9.55 pm. She invited everyone to stay for tea and cake.

Signed by Jayne Berham Chairman Dated 17/10/2013

NOTE: These minutes were approved at the council meeting on 17 October 2013

extracted by Cllr RE Berham

MINUTES OF THE WYDDIAL PARISH MEETING

HELD ON 26th OCTOBER 2013

Jeff Jeffries. Christine Jeffries. Wendy York. T.Geraghty. Pat Sinnett.
A.Forsyth. P.Hill. S.Newport. G.Sturgeon. C.Thwaite. R.Faillettaz.
S.Nail.M.Powers. W.Diack. M.Donnor. J.Simpson. K.Heath.

Apologies for absence: C & J Carter B.York R.Hewson M.Simpson
J.Powers

Minutes of last meeting: These were read out by the chairman and agreed and signed. Matters arising were:

1. Help is needed in church yard, weeding etc., please get in touch with Roger Faillettaz if you able to help
2. There is a damp problem still in the church, J.Carter to be asked if anything is happening regarding this.
3. A general discussion took place regarding septic tanks and what can and can't be put down them. Pat Sinnett to give details out.
4. The ditch on the right hand side of Moles Lane needs clearing, it was not sure if this was the council's responsibility – JJ to contact the council.

Chairman's Role: Jeff explained what he thought the chairman's position was, he considered he was there to run the meeting and follow through any queries. It was stated that a constitution was in place although Jeff has not received a copy.

Everyone was asked to register their names and e mail addresses so that they can be kept up to date with any relevant events.

Buntingford and District plan: At the moment this does not include Wyddial. If we were included we could be kept up to date with any planning issues in the area. A vote was taken and agreed unanimously to be included. - JJ to inform the council, and to ask the council again for a definitive map of Wyddial.

Appendix 2 Responses to queries raised regarding consultation with statutory consultees on SEA and Draft Plan and an error in Policy BE5

I have modified the e mail I received to put my original queries in quotation marks for clarity.

Dear Richard

In response to your queries:

“The SEA screening assessment indicates that EHDC has sought opinions from Historic England, the Environment Agency and Natural England. (Section 3 P34 of the Basic Conditions Statement). The Consultation Statement refers to this and to the responses being received in Jan/Feb of 2016 (Bottom of Page 10). However, I have been unable to locate these consultations or the responses through the links in the Evidence Base. Can you point me to them? I have found responses to Draft Plan from Natural England and Historic England but these do not appear to be to consultation on the SEA Screening.”

The responses to the SEA screening assessment can be viewed at: <http://democracy.eastherts.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=907> (Buntingford SEA – ERPB).

“On a more general point the Consultation Statement(P11) refers to analyses of all consultation activities and details of all meetings held of the Neighbourhood Planning Team and Forum being available on the Town Council website. I’m sure I’m missing something obvious here but I haven’t been able to find this as the Neighbourhood Plan page seems only to link to the suite of submitted documents. I have just been able to find the link to questionnaires <http://www.buntingford-tc.gov.uk/surveys-and-questionnaires.html> “

I have emailed the Neighbourhood Plan team about the query relating to the consultation process and their website. I too am only able to view the suite of documents and the survey responses.

“There appears to be an error in Policy BE5 which includes two (differently worded) references to Buttermilk Farm but none to the Buntingford Business Park. It appears to me that to correspond to the maps No3 should be Buntingford Business Park and No5 should be modified to the wording used on the map and the existing No.3 in the text. Is this right?”

Yes, that’s correct.

Policies B6 and B7 raise questions about what is intended with regard to changes of use within the list in Policy BE6. Any change of use clearly involves the loss of one use and the gain of another and in many cases changes may be contrary to BE6 but in conformity with BE7. Is there any hierarchy within this list of uses that would allow changes of use in one direction but not in reverse? For instance, a change from A5 to A1 may be acceptable but from A1 to A5 may not be. I appreciate that permitted development rights would apply to some changes but not others.

I have emailed the Neighbourhood plan team to clarify the position.

Kind regards,

Laura Pattison

Senior Planning Policy Officer

E mail dated 24 October 2016 From Jill Jones – clerk of Buntingford Town Council to Laura Pattison of EHC copied to me.

Dear Laura,

With regard to your email to Graham Bonner on the 21st October, we would respond as follows:

The comments by the Examiner, Richard High with regard to historical agendas and minutes of meetings and responses to the Regulation 14 consultation. We have discovered that although these documents are on the web site they are difficult to access. We have now changed the front page of the Neighbourhood Plan section on the web site and added 2 links.

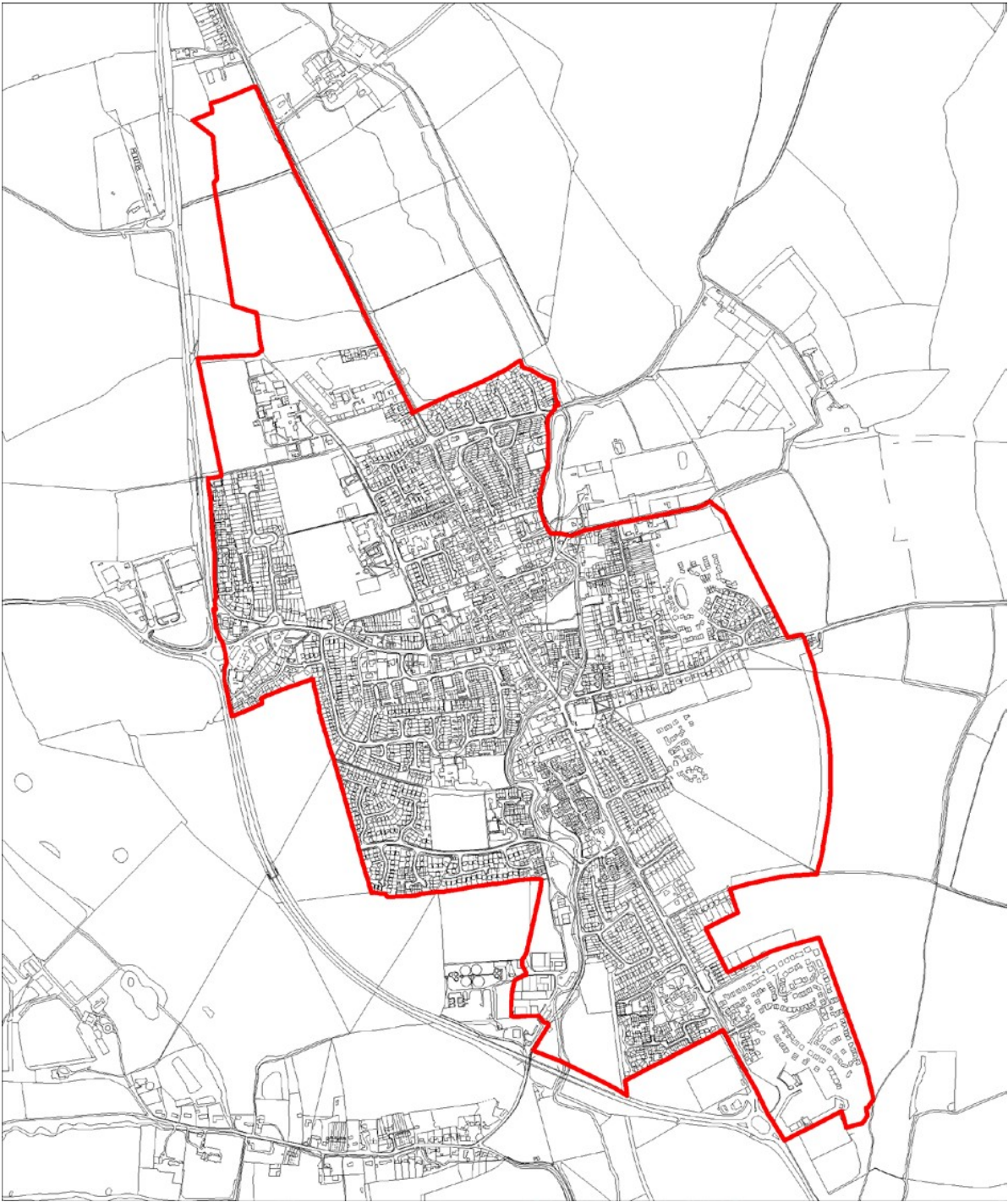
Link 1 "Neighbourhood Plan Forum Agendas and Minutes available for viewing here" and Link 2 "All responses from our Regulation 14 Consultation are available to view here". We hope this enables the Examiner to access these documents easily but if there are any further queries please let us know.

We have attached a list of email addresses of the people contacted for the Regulation 14 consultation along with a copy of the email.

With regards to the paragraph referring to Policies BE6 and BE7, for clarification - the Neighbourhood Plan in essence should support Change of Use of classes as detailed within Policy BE6 but Policy BE7 should not support loss of use as detailed with Policy BE6 from commercial to residential. We are aware that Change of Use can also be subject to Permitted Development Rights. We would welcome any suggestions to the modification of the wording of either of these policies to ensure that the intention of the Neighbourhood Plan is clear.

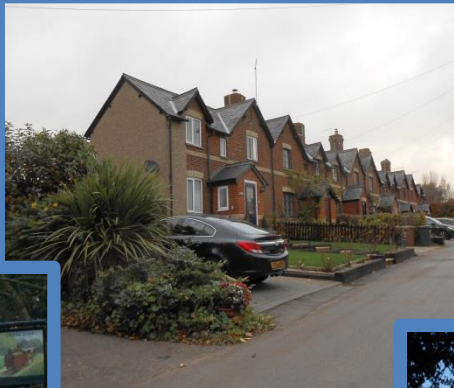
Jill Jones MILCM, Cert HE. Town Clerk
Buntingford Town Council, The Manor House, Buntingford, SG9 9AB.
01763 272222. www.buntingford-tc.gov.uk

Appendix 3 Buntingford Town Boundary as shown in East Hertfordshire District Plan Pre-Submission Draft



BUNTINGFORD COMMUNITY AREA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

2014 - 2031



Contents

	Page
Foreword	3
Introduction	5
What is the Neighbourhood Plan?	5
How the Neighbourhood Plan fits into the Planning System	5
The Buntingford Community Area Today	7
Aspenden	7
Buckland and Chipping	8
Buntingford	9
Cottered	11
Hormead	12
Wyddial	14
Issues that have influenced the development of the Neighbourhood Plan	15
The Vision Statement for the Neighbourhood Plan	22
Neighbourhood Plan Policies	24
Introduction	24
Business and Employment (BE)	25
Environment and Sustainability (ES)	33
Housing Development (HD)	39
Infrastructure (INFRA)	46
Leisure and Recreation (LR)	54
Transport (T)	57
Monitoring	64
The Evidence Base	64
Appendices	
Appendix 1 - Buntingford and the Landscape of the East Herts Plateau	65
Appendix 2 - Spatial Standards in Buntingford since 1960	73
Appendix 3 - Housing Numbers in the BCA since 2011	77
Appendix 4 - Design Code	84
Appendix 5 - Impact of insufficient parking spaces in the BCA	87
Appendix 6 - Environment & Sustainability - BCA Local Green Spaces	90

Foreword

The popularity and attraction of the Market Town of Buntingford and the surrounding Villages of Aspenden, Buckland & Chipping, Cottered, Hormead, Wyddial, (referred to hereafter as the **Buntingford Community Area (BCA)**) is principally based on the separate characters of the six parishes and their settlements. This includes their geographical location within and overlooking the Rib Valley, with the open landscape of arable fields and hedgerows which surround the settlements (see BCA Map of the Neighbourhood Plan area), and the presence of patches and strips of ancient woodland throughout the area. In addition the BCA has conservation areas and areas of special character, with a mixture of statutory and locally listed historical buildings, and those with special character.

Investment in the BCA, and changes in future years, will only be worthwhile if these make a positive difference to the lives of local people and the future of their community. The Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan (BCANP) started in September 2012 and the neighbourhood area was designated in 2014. The Town and Parish Councils came together because despite the differences between the size and nature of their parishes and the settlements within them, they have much in common in terms of their rural character and their interdependence when it comes to access to services and other infrastructure.

The six parish councils wanted the people of the Buntingford Community Area to have a say in all aspects of the future of the community, but more importantly wanted local people to influence what changes should occur. The purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan is to enable communities to be able to influence and shape the future of their communities. Once adopted, planning applications will be assessed using EHDC Local Plan policies (Currently the Local Plan Second Review 2007) as well as those in the Neighbourhood Plan (NP).

The BCANP sets out a vision for the area that reflects the views and suggestions of local people and organisations with an interest in their community. The Plan sets objectives on key identified themes such as environment & sustainability, transport, health, leisure & recreation, education, business & employment, housing and design. It builds on current and future planned activity and says what the Town and Parish Councils who have been involved in the preparation of the BCANP and their partners will work towards.

The Town and Parish Councils are committed to maintaining and strengthening contacts and groups of people which have developed as a result of the Neighbourhood Plan (NP). They believe that this joint working to implement a plan for the BCA will make its Town and surrounding villages an even better place to live, work and enjoy.

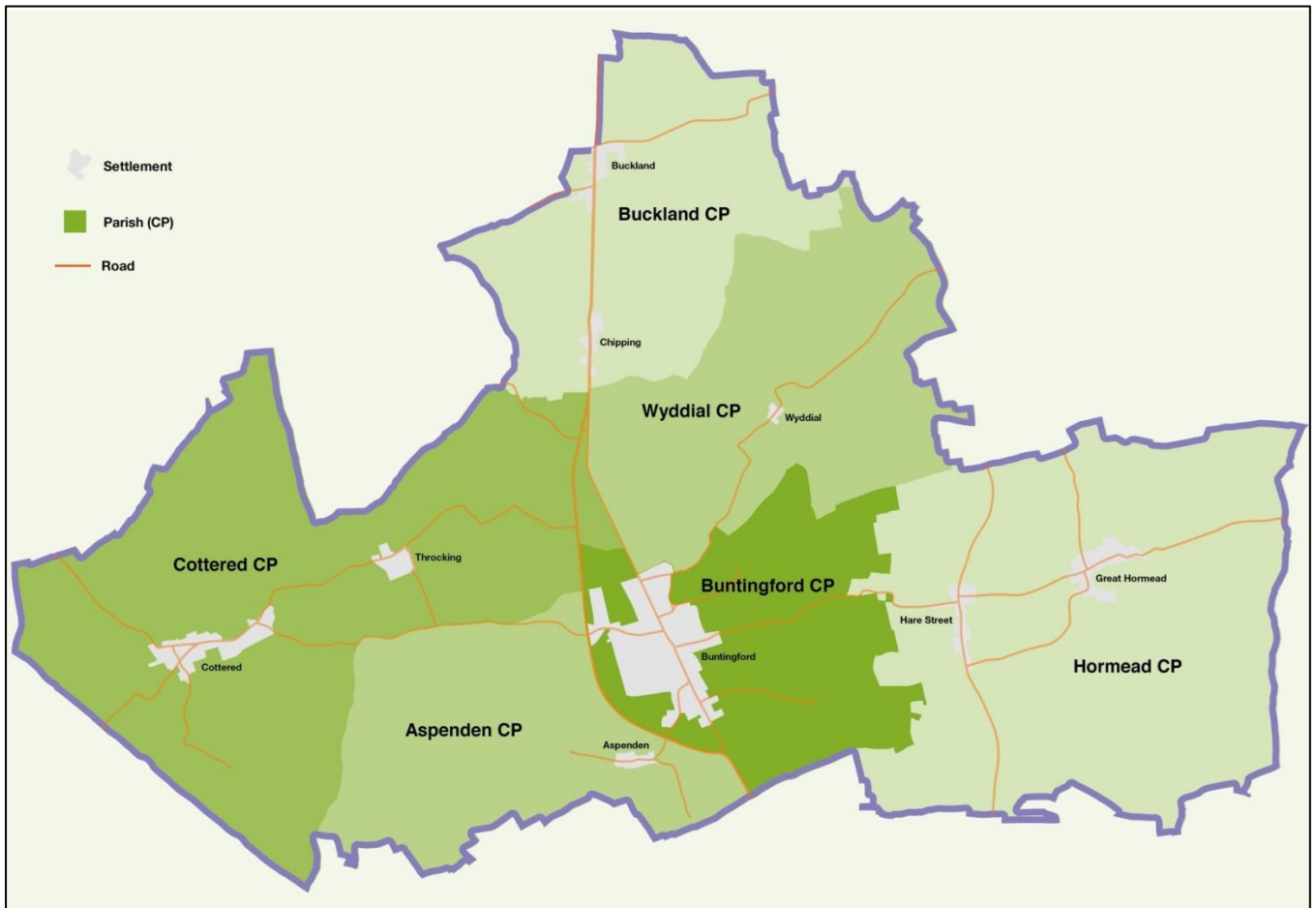
The Town and Parish Councils of the Buntingford Community Area wish to sincerely thank all those residents who filled in surveys, attended meetings and drops-ins and those who served on the Neighbourhood Plan Team and Steering Group and freely gave up their time, expertise and input into the process. They would also wish to thank those residents who

BUNTINGFORD COMMUNITY AREA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

attended the public meetings held and for the comments that they made on which this Plan is based.

Their contributions – set out in full in the Consultation Statement that is produced as a companion document to the Neighbourhood Plan – have been the guiding force behind its content.

BCA Map of the Neighbourhood Plan Area



Introduction

What is the Neighbourhood Plan?

Neighbourhood planning is a new tier of planning to enable communities to influence and shape the future of their communities. It is part of the Government's new approach to planning, which aims to give local people more say about future planning in their area. This is set out in the Localism Act which came into effect in April 2012. Although deciding where possible future development could go is an important part of any Neighbourhood Plan, it is about much more than this. A neighbourhood plan allows the plan area to be considered as a whole looking at a wider range of issues to ensure that the development of the area is sustainable into the future, including:

- How the open landscape and rural nature of the villages can be protected and preserved
- How travel around the villages should be improved
- How the retail and business areas could be developed
- How education will be provided for a growing community, both young and old
- How health and wellbeing facilities will meet the changing demand for their services
- What open spaces, play and community facilities are required
- How the area can contribute to meeting the need for housing and other development whilst protecting its character and existing environmental, social and economic assets.

Neighbourhood plans are unique in that they are voted on by the residents of the area. If the Neighbourhood Plan is successfully agreed at Referendum, it will form part of the East Herts District Council Development Framework. Subsequently, the policies set out in the NP will be used to assess planning applications located within the BCANP area alongside the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Local Plan / District Plan policies in force at the time of any application.

How the Neighbourhood Plan fits into the Planning System

The intention of the government is for local people to influence future planning in their villages / towns, and the Localism Act sets out some important guidance. One of these is that all Neighbourhood Plans must be developed in conformity with the NPPF and local planning policy. In the case of the Buntingford Community Area, local planning policies are set out in the East Hertfordshire District Council Local Plan Second Review 2007. The East

Herts District Plan is currently at draft stage. It was published for consultation in January 2014 and will eventually replace the 2007 Plan.

In addition to this requirement, Neighbourhood Plans must be in line with European Regulations on strategic environmental assessment and habitat regulations.

The Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan (BCANP) provides a vision for the future of the BCA and sets out clear policies and objectives to realise this vision. When finally made, the BCANP will be used by East Herts District Council to make decisions about proposals for development in the Buntingford Community Area. It will still consult on all planning applications within the BCA so that the views of local people and organisations on specific proposals can be gathered.

The BCANP has been developed in consultation with the people of the area and others with an interest in the area. A Consultation Statement which provides an overview of the consultation that has taken place and demonstrating that it accords with the requirements of the Localism Act accompanies this plan. This consultation has included meeting the requirements of Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The Plan has been amended where appropriate in response to consultation comments.

Producing the BCANP has taken place during a period of great uncertainty in relation to local plan policy making in East Hertfordshire District. The Neighbourhood Plan must, as far as possible, be in conformity with the local planning policies of East Hertfordshire District Council (EHDC), particularly in relation to strategic issues that affect the whole District. These strategic issues require the District to also take into the account the needs of the whole county in relation to transport and education via joint work with Hertfordshire County Council and accommodate their duty to cooperate with other local authorities and service providers on issues like housing development, transport and health provision.

As far as possible the BCANP has taken a flexible and positive approach to the emerging policies and their supporting evidence as the preparation of the District Plan proceeds and the Neighbourhood Plan team have discussed BCANP policies with EHDC as the Neighbourhood Plan has developed.

The Buntingford Community Area Today

The Buntingford Community Area is a rural area which looks to its Town parish, Buntingford, for most of its services and facilities. Each of the parishes has distinctive histories and spatial characteristics and the following portraits provide an outline of the spatial characteristics of each place and a summary of the nature of their respective populations.

Aspenden

Local Planning Policy

The village of Aspenden is a Category 3 village in the Local Plan Second Review 2007 (LP2007) and policy OSV3 applies. The Draft District Plan January 2014 has identified Aspenden as a Group 3 village and VILL3 is the relevant policy.

The Place and its People

Its name first appears in records in 1212 and it is the archetypal peaceful village, lying just south of Buntingford along a single track road that is in effect a cul-de-sac. This road leads to St Mary's Church.



Alongside the road through the village is a dried-up stream bed and the properties on that side are reached by crossing small foot bridges. There are houses of a wide variety of styles and periods, several from the 15th and 16th centuries. Some stand in their own grounds

and are hidden from view. There is some thatch and pargetting to be seen. At the entrance to the village is the well-kept village cricket ground, home to a flourishing club.



The village is the birthplace of Seth Ward (1617-89), a



mathematician, astronomer, bishop and one of the founding members of the Royal Society. In 1684 he erected and endowed the hospital nearby in Buntingford. Today the building serves as almshouses.

Aspenden Hall is a substantial country house in the classical style which dates to 1856. Its splendid external appearance



is protected as a listed building, being an important landscape feature.

ASPENDEN				
Population	Population	No. of Households	Under 15 years %	Over 65 years %
	242	96	20.4	16.9
Transport	No. of cars in parish	No. of households without a car %		
	194	8.3		
Employment	Persons economically active %	Persons Unemployed %	Persons working at home %	
	63.6	3.3	2.7	
<i>Source 2011 census Key Statistics Herts LIS</i>				

Buckland & Chipping

Local Planning Policy

The villages of Buckland & Chipping are Category 3 villages in the Local Plan Second Review 2007 (LP2007) and policy OSV3 applies. The Draft District Plan January 2014 has identified Buckland & Chipping as Group 3 villages and VILL3 is the relevant policy.

The Place and its People

The two villages of the parish straddle the A10 and are separated by one mile. Buckland, a corruption of Bookland from its reference in the ~~Domesday~~ **Domesday** Book, has the remains of a large moated area which contained a motte & bailey, a medieval Manor House and the current 13th Century St Andrews Church. The church is also used for village events, as is the Common Land behind it; there are the remains of a further motte & bailey to the north of the village.



Chipping was originally known as “Chipanne” – olde English for Market – and held a Charter Market until the 13th Century when it was transferred to Buntingford.

In 1851 some 215 men, women and children lived in Chipping and 170 in Buckland. The advent of the railways diminished the traffic on the roads and adversely affected the prosperity of the villages on Ermine Street. Even so in 1890 Buckland and Chipping supported 5 public houses, the Buckland Co-Operative Society, a shop, post office, a workman’s club and a library.



Today the Parish consists of approximately 274 residents, a church and 1 public house - The Countryman - which is the social centre of the Parish.

BUCKLAND & CHIPPING				
Population	Population	No. of Households	Under 15 years %	Over 65 years %
	274	110	18.9	16.8
Transport	No. of cars in parish	No. of households without a car %		
	206	10		
Employment	Persons economically active %	Persons Unemployed %	Persons working at home %	
	71.7	2.9	9.8	
<i>Source 2011 census Key Statistics Herts LIS</i>				

Buntingford

Local Planning Policy

Buntingford is currently the smallest town within East Herts District. It is a historic market town which lies in the shallow Rib river valley at the centre of a large rural area in the agricultural north-east corner of Hertfordshire.

As a result it has a specific place-based chapter dedicated to it in both the Local Plan Second Review 2007 and the emerging Draft District Plan of January 2014.

In both these documents there is an allocation of sites and target numbers of housing to be provided within the settlement area. Any other development has to be considered in accordance with policies related to development that is appropriate in the Green Belt and the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt.

The Place and its People

Although the busy London to Cambridge A10 now by-passes the town, it continues to be the main commercial centre of this overwhelmingly rural area of 140 square miles (about 36,260 hectares).

The north-south elongated shape of the town reflects its historical role as an important coaching stop on Ermine Street. The High Street remains a unique part of the former Roman road with some buildings dating back to the 15th and 16th centuries. The shopping facilities are still for the most part, concentrated on this straight and very attractive thoroughfare with a sizeable car park conveniently situated close by. It also hosts a very well used Public Library which caters for users of all ages from every part of the BCA and its central position encourages



BUNTINGFORD COMMUNITY AREA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

users to shop in the town.

There are three small supermarkets and a good number of high-quality independent retailers. The town's charter street market is held on a Monday, as it has been since the 14th century when Buntingford became the first town in England to hold a market free of the control of a Lord of the Manor, and as late as the early 20th century there was a high quality cattle market.



There are three levels of local government (County, District and Parish) in Hertfordshire. The town itself is unusual in that it is one of just three towns in Hertfordshire with a three-tier state education system.

For a town of its size, Buntingford has a large number of activities, clubs and voluntary organisations which support the local community. The details of these can be found on the Buntingford Town Council website, <http://www.buntingford-tc.gov.uk/findmynearest.html> .

There is a particularly active Civic Society which plays a prominent and practical role in funding projects through income generated from its popular magazine, the Buntingford Journal. The town's Chamber of Commerce is also very active and annually organises the Classic Car Show and Christmas Market. There is also a bi-annual Carnival.



The current national demand for more housing will create pressure on Buntingford which may become difficult to guide and control as the town has

no Green Belt. Future development will need to be located appropriately if the town's social, environmental and economic assets are to be sustained.

BUNTINGFORD				
Population	Population	No. of Households	Under 15 years %	Over 65 years %
	4948	1962	19.7	19.1
Transport	No. of cars in parish	No. of households without a car %		
	3223	10.6		
Employment	Persons economically active %	Persons Unemployed %	Persons working at home %	
	74.3	2.3	5.1	
<i>Source 2011 census Key Statistics Herts LIS</i>				

Cottered

Local Planning Policy

The village of Cottered is a Category 3 village in the Local Plan Second Review 2007 (LP2007) and policy OSV3 applies. The Draft District Plan January 2014 has identified Cottered as a Group 2 village and VILL2 is the relevant policy.

The Place and its People

The civil parish of Cottered consists of four main areas of settlement – Cottered, Throcking, Broadfield and Parkside. Although a rural area it fails all four of Natural England's standards for accessible natural green space (ANGS) and there is no accessible woodland. This is mitigated by 35 kilometres of public footpaths and bridleways. There is a well-appointed village hall.

Employment within the parish includes agriculture, road haulage, hospitality (one public house/restaurant and a conference/events centre), ~~various occupations on a small industrial estate~~ and people working from home, probably around 50 jobs in all. There is no shop, post office, school or playgroup in the parish.

Cottered Village is the largest area of settlement: a classic triangular village with a Norman



Church, village greens and many listed buildings dating from the 15th Century onwards, including the nationally renowned Japanese Gardens. There is a now mainly privately owned 1920s council estate with later additions, and four blocks of four 'affordable' flats. The village is traversed by the A507 (Baldock to Buntingford Road), a busy and dangerous road that is

unsuitable for the many heavy goods vehicles which use it. There is a three hourly bus service, the 386, from Bishops Stortford, to Hatfield, via Hitchin and Stevenage.



Throcking Village (2.25 kilometres from Cottered Village) was once a much larger settlement with a stately home and pleasure ground, (Throcking Hall) pulled down in the 18th Century, and cottages now shown as abandoned house platforms (National Heritage listed). There is a

BUNTINGFORD COMMUNITY AREA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

small estate of council houses, now largely privately owned, other private houses, farms and barn conversions and a medieval church and a conference and events centre. As with Broadfield, the roads leading to and from Throcking Village are narrow and, in places, single track for HGVs. There is one return bus *per week*: circular via Therfield and Buntingford.

Broadfield was once a much larger settlement. The archaeological remains of its church and other buildings are now below ground and Broadfield is now a linear settlement of mainly farm and farm conversions running from Throcking to the Rushden border: and partly in the parish of Rushden. It includes the stately home of Broadfield Hall. Much of its single roadway is privately maintained.

Parkside is a long way from the rest of the parish (3 kilometres from Throcking Village: 6 kilometres from Cottered Village, but 1 kilometre from Buntingford High Street) and consists of a small group of houses located between Ermine Street/Corneybury and the Buntingford by-pass. Parkside is a northern extension of Buntingford, but in the parish of Cottered. In the emerging district Plan this area is known as “Buntingford North”.

COTTERED				
Population	Population	No. of Households	Under 15 years %	Over 65 years %
	659	258	18.3	20.5
Transport	No. of cars in parish	No. of households without a car %		
	515	6.2		
Employment	Persons economically active %	Persons Unemployed %	Persons working at home %	
	70.5	2.1	9	
<i>Source 2011 census Key Statistics Herts LIS</i>				

Hormead

Local Planning Policy

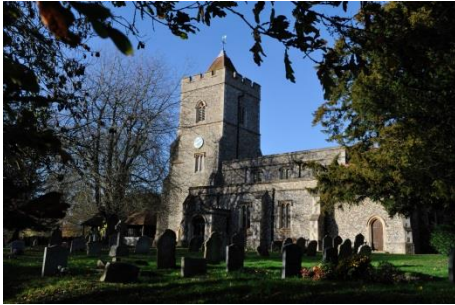
The villages of Hormead are Category 3 villages in the Local Plan Second Review 2007 (LP2007) and policy OSV3 applies. The Draft District Plan January 2014 has identified the villages of Hormead as Group 3 villages and VILL3 is the relevant policy.

The Place and its People

The parish boundaries are roughly in a square box shape, bounded on the north by the villages of Wyddial and Anstey, the east by Brent Pelham and Meesden, south east by Furneux Pelham, the south by Dassels, and on the west by Westmill and Buntingford Town. The parish consists of 3 hamlets, Hare Street, Little Hormead and Great Hormead, surrounded in the main on all sides by farming land. Hare Street village and Little Hormead

BUNTINGFORD COMMUNITY AREA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

are linear, (all buildings are along the roadside), while Great Hormead is mostly within a conservation area with some expansion away from the main road. Hare Street has 124 dwellings, soon to be 125, Little Hormead 33, and Great Hormead has 127. The latest development has paid for the rebuilding of the Village Hall.



There are two ancient churches, (one active), an outstanding school for 5-9 year olds as a feeder to Edwinstree in Buntingford or Ralph Sadleir in Puckeridge, a recreation field and the rebuilt Village Hall which is now available. In addition, there are 75 listed buildings, houses and barns, 26% of the entire housing stock. The parish is now slowly changing from a totally rural enclave to encompass new commuters from the north London areas.

The parish benefits from 35 footpaths for rambling, dog walking and horse riding, a Play area for children in the Meads field and pitches for local cricket matches. There was football here until 2012. The two pubs, the Beehive in Hare Street and the Three Tuns in Great Hormead, give relaxation with food and friendly welcomes. There are also two tea rooms and a farm shop, two garages and a dog rescue home in Hare Street.

There are no general shops in the parish. There is no Post Office, medical, dentistry or veterinary services: residents have to travel to Buntingford for these amenities. However, due to the lack of frequent and reliable public transport their journey is invariably made by car.



HORMEAD				
Population	Population	No. of Households	Under 15 years %	Over 65 years %
	743	281	22.6	15.9
Transport	No. of cars in parish	No. of households without a car %		
	580	4.3		
Employment	Persons economically active %	Persons Unemployed %	Persons working at home %	
	73.6	3.1	8%	
Source 2011 census Key Statistics Herts LIS				

Wyddial

Local Planning Policy

The village of Wyddial is a Category 3 village in the Local Plan Second Review 2007 (LP2007) and policy OSV3 applies. The Draft District Plan January 2014 has identified Wyddial as a Group 3 village and VILL3 is the relevant policy.

The Place and its People

Wyddial is a small village one and a half miles from Buntingford. It is very rural and surrounded by agricultural land. It includes Corneybury Park in the West of the Parish with



its great landscape value. The residents in the past were mainly agricultural workers, most of whom lived in tied cottages. With the change in farming from livestock to arable, the cottages were sold off and farm buildings converted into residential. There are no residents now working on the farms apart from the farmers themselves and contractors. As no other employment is available in the village residents need to commute

each day to work.

The village is reached by one narrow country lane that goes through from Buntingford to Cavegate and it has no public transport although a school bus calls twice a day. At a parish meeting the residents agreed to the classification of a Grade 3 village in the EHDC district plan which states no development with the exception of the conversion of existing buildings.

WYDDIAL				
Population	Population	No. of Households	Under 15 years %	Over 65 years %
	156	57	15.8	14.1
Transport	No. of cars in parish	No. of households without a car %		
	133	3.5		
Employment	Persons economically active %	Persons Unemployed %	Persons working at home %	
	77.2	4.9	13.8	
<i>Source 2011 census Key Statistics Herts LIS</i>				

Issues that have influenced the development of the Neighbourhood Plan

The people of the BCA have concerns about the impact of any development on their area today and the ability of people and businesses within the area to take advantage of the benefits that sustainable development can offer into the future as required by the National Planning Policy Framework.

Based on local discussions and consultation for the preparation of the plan these concerns can be summarised as:

- Protection of the heritage, biodiversity, community, leisure, business and natural assets of the BCA.
- Ensuring development is appropriate to meet local needs for:
 - Employment and leisure facilities as part of mixed use developments to make the most effective use of the land available
 - High quality design of all new development that adds to the existing rural nature of the quality of life for people and organisations in the BCA
 - Housing, in terms of overall numbers, type, design and mix
- Reduce the role of the settlements in the BCA as “dormitory” to enable them to be more sustainable in term of travel and more self-sufficient in terms of their local economies.
- Enhance and improve the infrastructure that supports the people and business of the BCA for education, health, transport and leisure to reap the benefits of any development and growth in population.

The detail of these concerns is provided below.

Business and Employment

The majority of retail outlets are in Buntingford, mainly along the High Street and Baldock Road. As well as a Post Office, bank and three small supermarkets, there are many specialist outlets that cover almost all retail requirements and are convenient and well used by residents who can walk, cycle or drive there.

Of the villages, only Hormead has retail outlets. However, Aspenden, Cottered, Buckland & Chipping and Hormead have at least one public house each. Some are only open at weekends. A proportion of the residents in the BCA use the local retail outlets for

convenience shopping only. Consequently most residents are regular visitors by car to Royston, Stevenage, Bishops Stortford, Baldock and Cheshunt (Brookfield Farm) where large supermarkets are situated. Probably Stevenage is the most popular destination for retail visits, especially non-food, leisure and entertainment including restaurants, cinema, night clubs, 10 pin bowling, theatre and large DIY outlets, most situated in the town centre or large retail parks.

There are a number of industrial estates in the BCA made up of relatively small units: Park Farm Industrial Estate, to the north of Buntingford off Ermine Street, Watermill Industrial Estate/ Firs Business Park is off Aspenden Road, Buntingford Business Park in Aspenden Parish and Silkmead in Hormead Parish. There are other enterprises such as those at Buttermilk Hall Farm in Aspenden Parish, which are emerging as recycling centres, builder's merchants and energy generation centres.

The BCA hosts some medium sized employers mainly in the farming and waste management sectors. Education provides the largest employment sector within the BCA.

Registered unemployment is low in the BCA and employment opportunities are mainly found in the major towns outside the BCA such as Stevenage, Royston, Cambridge, Bishops Stortford (Stansted Airport), Ware, Hertford and London, with consequent high levels of commuting by car to relevant destinations.

Good broadband links are seen as important to support home working, whilst facilitating the growth of enterprise and e-commerce. At present the broadband speed is not deemed adequate for businesses or 48% of residents.

There is a progressive Chamber of Commerce in Buntingford which is looking for ways to increase employment and self-employment in the BCA: promoting local trade and encouraging networking between businesses is considered to be important for the long term development of the local economy. Connections between local schools and businesses are seen as important by residents.

There is a concern that to be sustainable into the future the BCA has to be able to keep its existing employment space and provide for more if the benefits of population growth in terms of potential employment growth and new local economic development are to be achieved

Environment and Sustainability

The River Rib is environmentally very important to the communities of the BCA. From time to time the flow is restricted by extraction north of Buntingford Town and this needs to be closely monitored by the water supplier and the Environment Agency. The river flows through Buckland & Chipping, Buntingford and Aspenden and attracts a number of bird,

mammal, reptile, amphibious and insect species, whose habitat and feeding grounds would be badly affected if the river flow were to reduce any further.

Several patches of ancient and significant woodland have been identified around the villages of the BCA.

Because of their proximity to the dwellings, residents can observe a wide range of birdlife, often coming to feed in gardens. Similarly proximity to farm fields and meadows bring a significant variety of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects and flowers within easy access of the community.

Even the green spaces within Buntingford town itself can support a surprising variety of wildlife. Footpaths in this area are well used by walkers, cyclists and birdwatchers. Residents are concerned that future unrestricted development in and around Buntingford will impact on the local wildlife.

Housing Development

Buntingford town and the villages within the Community Area are very different in character. Each having its own groups of historical and socially significant buildings listed, either nationally or locally, mostly within their own conservation areas.

Buntingford, situated in the Rib valley, provides many of the amenities for the Community: most of these amenities are only just sufficient for current needs.

Post war development has mainly followed the valley setting, especially to the east, ensuring the eastern skyline still reflects the town's rural setting. Developments of the late 20th century (60's to 90's) namely Vicarage Road, Monks Walk, Downhall Ley, Fairfield, Snells Mead and Luynes Rise are generally well laid out and incorporate mature trees and some green spaces. Later developments give an impression of over-crowding.

The Causeway, a road from the River Rib past Layston School leading to Layston Church (St Bartholomew's), is of particular interest as it is lined both sides with mature trees. There is concern that any development adjacent to this roadway may impact on its natural beauty and will spoil the eastern skyline.

The villages within the BCA are mainly residential with property sited along or just off their main street. They are surrounded by significant areas of agricultural land and were originally based within the farming community. All are provided with open green spaces and mature trees but there are certain types of green space that are underprovided in the area.

East Hertfordshire District Council has fought to protect the village settlements of the BCA

through its current policies in the Local Plan Second Review 2007. These policies have been to ensure that development is appropriate to the area and to preserve green gaps of open farmland and woodland between town, villages and adjacent settlements, consistent with their rural location and character.

The BCA has a mix of housing types and densities consistent with their rural character and historical development: four parishes have core Conservation areas and all parishes have a number of listed buildings.

Within Buntingford developments between the 1960's to 1990's, following the building of Sainsbury's distribution depot, were considerable. In that time Vicarage Road, Monks Walk, Downhall Ley, Fairfield, Snells Mead, Freman Drive and Luynes Rise were built. At the same time amenities expanded to meet the growing population over that 40 year period. Overall these developments were well laid out and provided green spaces with reasonable building density.

One item not allowed for was the huge increase in the ownership of cars. The BCA now has one of the highest numbers of cars per household in East Herts and in many parts of the BCA parking is a problem.

Between the wars the biggest expansion of Buntingford was the area known as Newtown which was originally a council housing estate. Most of these dwellings are now privately owned.

The villages in the BCA have also seen a growth in new house building but not on the scale of that experienced in Buntingford.

East Herts Draft District Plan 2014 discourages any form of large scale development in the villages of the BCA. But the draft District Plan calls for Buntingford to take in the region of 500 houses from 2011 to 2032. The fact that this is only a draft, and the inability of East Herts District Council to demonstrate a 5 year Housing Land Supply consistent with the requirements of the NPPF, has left the District as a whole, especially Buntingford (which has no designated Green Belt), open to development which will affect the whole of the BCA.

Residents are very concerned that the community infrastructure and amenities in the BCA will be oversubscribed as a result of the growth of Buntingford in the coming years.

Infrastructure

There are good local schools in Buntingford and Hormead. Buntingford has two first schools, Millfield in Monks Walk and Layston in The Causeway. Hormead has its own first school in the village centre. Buntingford has a middle school, Edwinstree, and an upper school, Freman College, which has academy status. There are two doctor's surgeries in Buntingford serving the whole of the BCA: the Medical Centre in White Hart Close and the Orchard Surgery in Baldock Road. There is some capacity for new patients at the Orchard Surgery. Waiting time for appointments at the Medical Centre is 3 weeks. At present Orchard Surgery waiting time can be up to a week.

All types of infrastructure will need to be enhanced and increased if new families are to be accommodated.

Leisure and Recreation

Buntingford has a range of meeting facilities for hire including a Community Centre, URC hall and Benson Hall, Town Council chambers, bowls club and the football club at The Bury. Cottered and Hormead each have a village hall. The Seth Ward Community Centre in Buntingford is quite large and is used by many groups and associations.

There are three play areas in Buntingford and one each in Cottered, and Aspenden.

In Buntingford there are sports facilities or playing fields in Bowling Green Lane, two football pitches at the Seth Ward Community Centre, several football pitches and facilities at The Bury. The Hare Street Road playing field is a recreation area with a children's play area and has a wildlife area at its eastern end. Cottered and Aspenden have sports fields for football and cricket respectively.

There is an existing network of pavements, footpaths and bridleways linking all the settlements in the Community. Footpaths and bridleways are reasonably well signposted and give good access to farmlands. These are all used and well supported by both residents and visitors alike but there are some gaps in the network. Residents would like to see further foot and cycle access to the countryside.

Allotment provision has come under pressure from recent development, and there is a waiting list for allotments. There is one existing allotment site to the north of the town located to the rear of Woods Way. Replacement of lost allotments, originally located off of Hare Street Road (42 half sized), is to be provided as part of the Taylor Wimpey development, North of Hare Street Road. These will be located to the east of the development and will be accessible on foot from The Causeway or by car from the development.

Residents need to travel to Stevenage (12 miles), Harlow (18 miles) or Cambridge (20 miles) for hospital appointments.

The 2011 census showed that, across the various parishes of the BCA, between 14% and 20% of the community was aged over 65. Any increase in the elderly population will increase pressure on local services including:

- social and healthcare - greater likelihood of long term illness;
- public transport, such as it is - through decreased mobility;
- leisure facilities - people are living longer and have more spare time;
- changing housing needs - smaller properties, adaptations; and
- the need for on-site or nearby carers.

There is only one communal establishment in the BCA, Nevetts, off White Hart Close, providing nursing and residential care and there is a lack of future burial space in the main churchyards.

The Community has a Police house in Buntingford that is the hub for rural policing in East Herts which helps to ensure that visible and effective policing occurs across the BCA.

Transport

Connectivity, trade and interaction lie at the heart of vibrant communities. The centre of Buntingford is reasonably compact and most people in the town find it walkable, but in the wider BCA there are poor links and people are very reliant on their cars. There is limited employment within the BCA, therefore the majority travel outside the area, again mainly by car.

Rail

As the railway was closed down in the mid-1960s, under the Beeching Plan, there is no rail link serving the BCA. The nearest rail stations are at Ware, Hertford, Royston or Stevenage; between 8 and 14 miles distance.

Bus

The Community has poor bus services. Most routes are only available every two hours which makes connectivity and return journeys difficult. Children who live outside Buntingford travel to school by coaches hired by the local education authority. These serve the middle and senior schools in Bowling Green Lane in Buntingford.

Roads

The main A10 trunk road is close to, but bypasses Buntingford and the villages, with the exception of Buckland & Chipping. The road is single carriageway north to Cambridge and south for 2 miles when it is dual carriageway into the north London suburbs.

The A507, linking Buntingford to Cottered, Baldock, Stevenage and the A1 (M) to the west, is a tortuous, dangerous, single carriageway country road.

Most people employed outside the town use these two routes to travel to their workplace and both routes are very busy in the morning and evening rush hours.

The A120 can be accessed 5 miles to the south at Puckeridge via the A10, and links eastwards with Bishops Stortford, Stansted Airport and Braintree and the M11.

Twice daily Buntingford town traffic can be very busy, especially in and around the Causeway for Layston School and Monks Walk for Millfield Junior Schools. It is especially congested in Bowling Green Lane which serves Edwinstree Middle School and Freman College; twice a day, large numbers of students proceed along Bowling Green Lane and through the town. There have been several accidents and there is anecdotal evidence of frequent “near misses”. Residents’ concerns are that new developments will increase the danger from traffic and worsen the queuing, whilst road safety improvements are not implemented.

Traffic levels out of the rush hour in Buntingford, Aspenden, Wyddial and Hormead are generally ‘quiet’. However traffic on the A507 through Cottered, the A10 through Buckland & Chipping and the B1368 through Hare Street are busy all the time and there is concern amongst BCA residents that there will be an the inevitable growth of traffic if unchecked development goes ahead in Buntingford. This may bring more street lighting, more hard landscape and an urbanised feel to what is now a place that is rural in character.

Parking

There is one Pay and Display pay car park in Buntingford, operated by EHDC, and a number of free on-street spaces for stays of up to one hour, with good access to the shops. The Pay and Display car park has free parking for the first three hours. There are very few parking restrictions around the town and no parking restrictions of note within the rest of the BCA.

Vision Statement for the BCA Neighbourhood Plan

To address the concerns that have been raised about the future of the BCA, the following vision for the future has been developed from a set of aims that emerged from the consultation events that have been undertaken across the BCA.

The Vision and Aims have been used to inform the development of the more detailed objectives for the policies of the BCANP included in the policy sections.

“Value, protect and promote the town and parishes of the Buntingford Community Area, by respecting their heritage, appreciating the rural nature of the community and being aspirational when planning their future”.

Aims of the Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan

- *Retain a good range of different shops and businesses, provide an environment for enterprise to flourish and support better online connections to help businesses thrive.*
- *Seek to reduce traffic and parking impacts from development and encourage sustainable transport, especially bus services, cycle routes and footpaths.*
- *Support opportunities for increased employment both within Buntingford Town and the five other parishes and ensure adequate places for children to attend local schools.*
- ***Meet the need for new housing for the Buntingford Community Area including an appropriate contribution to the housing needs for East Hertfordshire District by providing a mix of housing that reflects identified need and respects and reinforces the character of its setting.***
- *Make the most of the BCA’s rural aspect by protecting views, providing good access, enhancing facilities and enhancing and maintaining biodiversity.*
- *Preserve, enhance and ensure the enjoyment for all, of the valued green spaces, water courses and environments.*
- *Foster and promote a thriving healthy community with plentiful opportunities for education, training and employment for people young and old.*
- *Continue to be an attractive, diverse, well ordered and vibrant community in which residents, visitors and businesses can thrive.*
- *Continue to be distinctive, vital and thriving communities where identity, heritage and aspirations for the future are valued, protected and promoted.*
- *Pre-empt the future effects of climate change by forward planning and finding ways to preserve the balance between natural assets and human development.*
- *Ensure that, as far as possible, the villages continue to be surrounded by productive green environments with agricultural land for livestock and food crops, with the*

addition of community allotments, in recognition of their benefits to health and wellbeing.

- *Maintain a sense of place and local character in a high quality environment, protecting their cultural and historical heritage, ensuring that access, outlooks and breathing space are preserved.*
- *The Buntingford Community Area must retain its distinctive heritage and identity. The villages within the BCA are very different and should remain so. They each have a heart and their individual identities should be recognised, preserved and promoted.*

Neighbourhood Plan Policies

Introduction

The policies of the Neighbourhood Plan are intended to be applied to the whole of the BCA.

Although all of the settlements in the BCA have their own specific features and characteristics, they have much in common - their rural nature, their scale, the reliance of the people within it on the main town of Buntingford for services and their desire to ensure that they are developed viably and sustainably in the future.

The Vision Statement for the BCANP has been drawn from local views on what the plan should aim for. They are applicable to the whole area and the policies are proposed to fulfil the Vision of the BCANP for the whole of the Buntingford Community Area.

Each policy has its own section. The sections are all structured in the same way:

- An introduction to the overall policy context in the BCA.
- A summary of the views of the BCA community on the policy issues
- The Policy and its justification.

Planning applications which accord with the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan and the Local Plan currently in force will be supported, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Development proposals may also be supported where relevant policies in the BCANP are out of date or silent unless:

- Other relevant policies in the Development Plans for EHDC indicate otherwise;
- Any adverse impacts of the proposal would significantly and demonstrably outweigh its benefits when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole;
- Specific policies in the NPPF or other material considerations indicate that development should be restricted.

The Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

The BCA will take a positive approach to their consideration of development. Buntingford Town Council (BTC) and the local planning authorities will seek to work with applicants and other stakeholders to encourage the formulation of development proposals that can be approved. (Conformity Reference: NPPF, para 14).

Where planning applications are to be considered against the policies of this plan then this principle will underpin the approach the BCA and local planning authorities will adopt in delivering sustainable development in the Community.

Business and Employment Policies (BE)

Introduction

The local economy of the BCA has changed considerably over the last half-century as demographic and employment base changes have taken place. Some of these changes are:

- Reduced numbers of shops and public houses
- Increased numbers of small businesses within the industrial estates
- Fewer larger employers such as the former Sainsbury Distribution depot
- An overall reduction of land in employment use

These changes have taken place alongside an increasing economically active population, but one which is ageing.

At the same time, as the population is set to grow, an opportunity exists for local businesses and entrepreneurs to expand existing businesses and create new ones.

Economic evidence has been collected by East Herts Council and others to help underpin the development of an objectively assessed housing need for West Essex and East Hertfordshire (Hardisty Jones Associates, September 2015). This suggests that employment growth in East Hertfordshire could range from 435 to 505 jobs per year.

If the BCA is to benefit directly from this growth in jobs in a way which contributes to sustainable development (reduced car travel, locally grown economic activity) then it will be necessary to ensure that space is available for businesses to locate and grow in the BCA.

Business and Employment - What People Have Said

Consultation on the content of the Neighbourhood Plan in the BCA showed considerable concern about the retention of existing employment floor space and increased provision to support the local economy among both residents and existing business. This was supported from two perspectives which involved the need to provide:

1. Local employment. If the BCA is to benefit from new housing development and not have unsustainable impacts from the use of the car for travel to work given the limited availability of public transport.
2. Business services. New services to residents in terms of shopping, leisure, visitor facilities and provide employment opportunities in new sectors like recycling, and land/farm based enterprises (e.g. garden centres, farm shops, horticulture).

Business and Employment within the BCA

Business

Apart from Education, employment in the BCA is now dominated by construction services and some agricultural services.

There have been some significant changes in employment availability locally as a result of the closure of some large employers.

There is limited employment space in the BCA with the exception of some estate-based provision in Buntingford Town and in parts of Hormead. Retail floor space is almost entirely focused on Buntingford High Street.

The 2014 Buntingford Employment Study, in relation to employment space provision, identified a loss of employment space over time in the East Herts District Council, Buntingford Ward (which covers a substantial part of the BCA) of almost 1,000 square metres from 2005 to 2013.

It also concluded that market changes in the types of space required for small businesses suggest that smaller units than those currently available should be the focus of new provision. The expected increase in population within the BCA will help some business sectors to increase their turnover and expand, particularly if broadband speeds and connectivity are improved.

This need for smaller business space provision is underlined by the proportions of those people who are economically active and work from home in the BCA which ranges across the parishes from 2.7% to over 13%. This indicates that there are large numbers of individuals who are self-employed or who are in micro-enterprises which employ small numbers, but may be able to grow and benefit from “clustering” with other similar enterprises if the right space is made available.

There is a need, and some potential, to diversify the range of industries or sectors within which employment can be provided. As a result of population growth, businesses have an opportunity to provide increased benefits to residents: shopping, leisure, visitor facilities and employment opportunities. This is particularly in the sectors appropriate to the predominantly rural nature of the BCA such as recycling and land based enterprises (such as farm shops, garden centres, horticulture).

Retail

Buntingford town centre acts as a main focus for many local retail services within the BCA. With the population increasing, it will be important to retain and enhance the existing services currently in the town centre, subject to Local Plan Second Review 2007 Policies STC4 and RTC4. As Buntingford Town Centre and most of the village settlements are mainly within Conservation Areas, this will to some extent protect these uses from permitted development changes introduced to allow retail conversion to residential use.

Outside of Buntingford, the rest of the BCA has limited retail facilities. There is some provision in Hormead Parish, particularly in Hare Street and in public houses throughout the BCA. However retail provision is limited and its protection from permitted development rights may be more difficult.

Skills in the BCA

The 2011 census shows that BCA residents of working age are largely employed and have a good level of skills. Over a third of those economically active in all the parishes in the BCA:

- Possess degree level qualifications
- Are employed in professional or managerial positions.

BUSINESS AND EMPLOYMENT POLICIES
OBJECTIVES
<p>To nurture, retain and grow locally based commerce.</p> <p>Support self-employment and its growth in the BCA.</p> <p>Conserve and protect existing employment land and space, particularly around the key activities of horticulture, tourism, convenience retailing and service provision for the community across the BCA e.g. health, nursery and other education services</p> <p>Create a welcoming and prosperous town centre in Buntingford.</p> <p>Increase provision of appropriate workspace, including shared workspace for small and micro businesses (2 – 5 employees) across the BCA.</p>

BE1: Proposals for the redevelopment or change of use of land or buildings in employment use to non-employment uses, other than those which are permitted development, will only be permitted when: ~~across the BCA will not be supported.~~

- (a) marketing of the site over a period of a minimum of 12 months demonstrates that there is no realistic prospect of the use of the site for employment purposes; or**
- (b) the strategic need for the proposed use clearly exceeds the need for continued use for employment purposes.**

Given losses in employment space to other uses since 2005, as detailed in the Buntingford Employment Study 2014, there will be a need to protect all existing employment space to ensure that the BCA has a sustainable local economy.

BE2: Proposals to upgrade, intensify or extend existing employment sites across the BCA will be encouraged and supported in principle, the following main industrial

sites listed below and shown on the maps on pages 30 and 31 where they do not conflict with other policies in this plan and provided that the proposals:

- 1 **The Watermill Industrial Estate**
- 2 **Park Farm Industrial Estate**
- 3 **Buntingford Business Park**
- 4 **Silkmead Farm, Hare Street (Great Hormead Parish)**
- 5 **Buttermilk Farm Agricultural Industry (Aspenden Parish)**
- 6 ~~Warren Nursery (Cottered Parish)~~

and other smaller employment sites will be permitted where they do not conflict with other policies in this Plan and provided that the proposals all the following criteria are met so that proposals:

- 1 **Do not involve the loss of dwellings**
- 2 **Contribute to the character and vitality of the local area**
- 3 **Are well integrated into and complement existing clusters of activity**
- 4 **Protect residential amenity**
- 5 **Do not adversely impact upon road safety**
- 6 ~~Encourage the development of local businesses and meet their needs and aspirations~~
- 7 **Enhance the development and provision of employment and self-employment**
- 8 **Do not adversely affect the attractiveness of the local countryside**

There will be opportunities to intensify the use of existing employment land across the BCA and increased provision will enable residents to have access to local jobs that are accessible by more sustainable transport modes and reduce the need for commuting to London and elsewhere.

The industrial/employment areas listed above are identified on the maps on pages 30 and 31 of this Plan. These industrial areas are well established and future development of industrial units should normally be designed to fit within these existing estates and parks. However, this does not preclude the development of new specifically allocated industrial areas in the BCA as long as these are planned to comply with policies **BE1, BE2 and BE3**.

BE3: Development proposals for recreational and tourism activities/facilities will be encouraged in the BCA provided that the proposals do not conflict with other policies in this plan and that:

- **They do not contribute significantly to traffic volume and have a significantly harmful effect on congestion or road safety as defined by the Transport Authority Hertfordshire County Council.**
- **Their siting, scale and design have strong regard to the local character along with the historic and natural assets of the surrounding area.**

- **Design and materials are in keeping with the local style and reinforce local distinctiveness and sense of place.**

Buntingford's location is an attractive one for visitors to enjoy its historical and natural assets. Recreation and tourism can generate employment uses. Although there will be opportunities for shared uses in existing facilities, development which supports these sectors will contribute to the diversification of the local economy. At the moment this is focused on construction and service sectors, particularly retailing and the public sector.

BE4: Subject to the same provisions as policy BE1 to BE3, the following developments and proposals will be supported in the BCA:

- 1 **Small scale B1 flexible serviced office accommodation**
- 2 **Larger multi-let floor space development**
- 3 **Live work units and shared desk space**
- 4 **The enhancement of the commercial viability of the Town centre**
- 5 **The change of use from residential to commercial premises in the High Street retail area with no loss of retail frontage on the ground floor**
- 6 **The enhancement of the night time economy with further appropriate eating and drinking facilities, including public houses in all Parishes**
- 7 **The enhancement of Buntingford's market and its commercial viability**
- 8 **The encouragement of businesses to form a "hub" or "cluster" in order that their business can reap the benefits of close proximity to each other.**

This does not preclude other forms of business development where they conform to policies BE1-BE3 and are otherwise consistent with sustainable development.

The current high levels of self-employment within the BCA and the trend for its increase nationally mean that smaller, sometimes shared office accommodation and desk-space is a popular choice for small and micro businesses rather than larger industrial units.

Multi-let floor spaces mean that existing employment premises can be more easily converted and let for use by smaller enterprises, so enabling easier progression for such companies to grow and accommodate their growth.

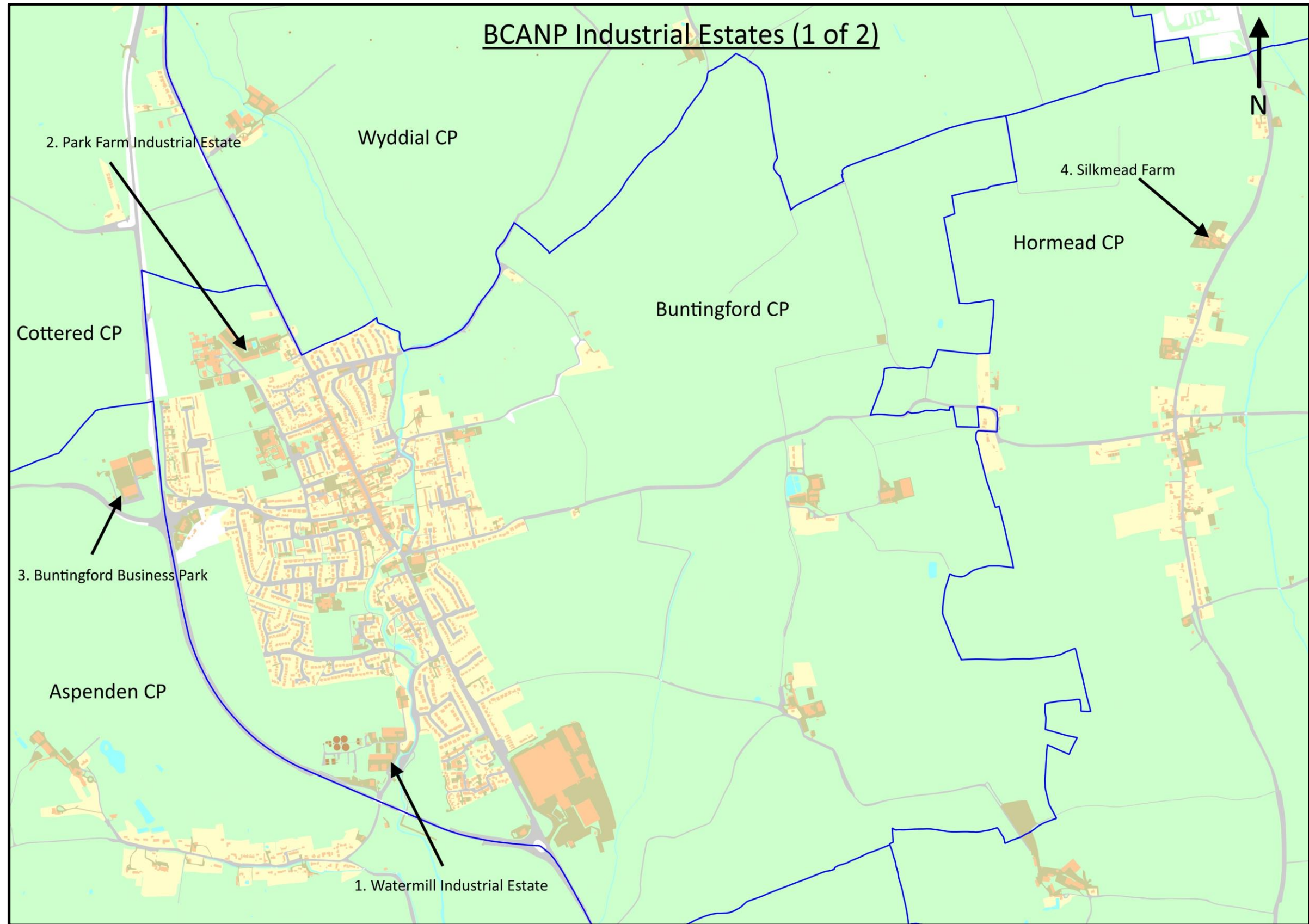
~~**BE5: The expansion, improvement and intensification of existing industrial estates for small units will be supported at the following sites:**~~

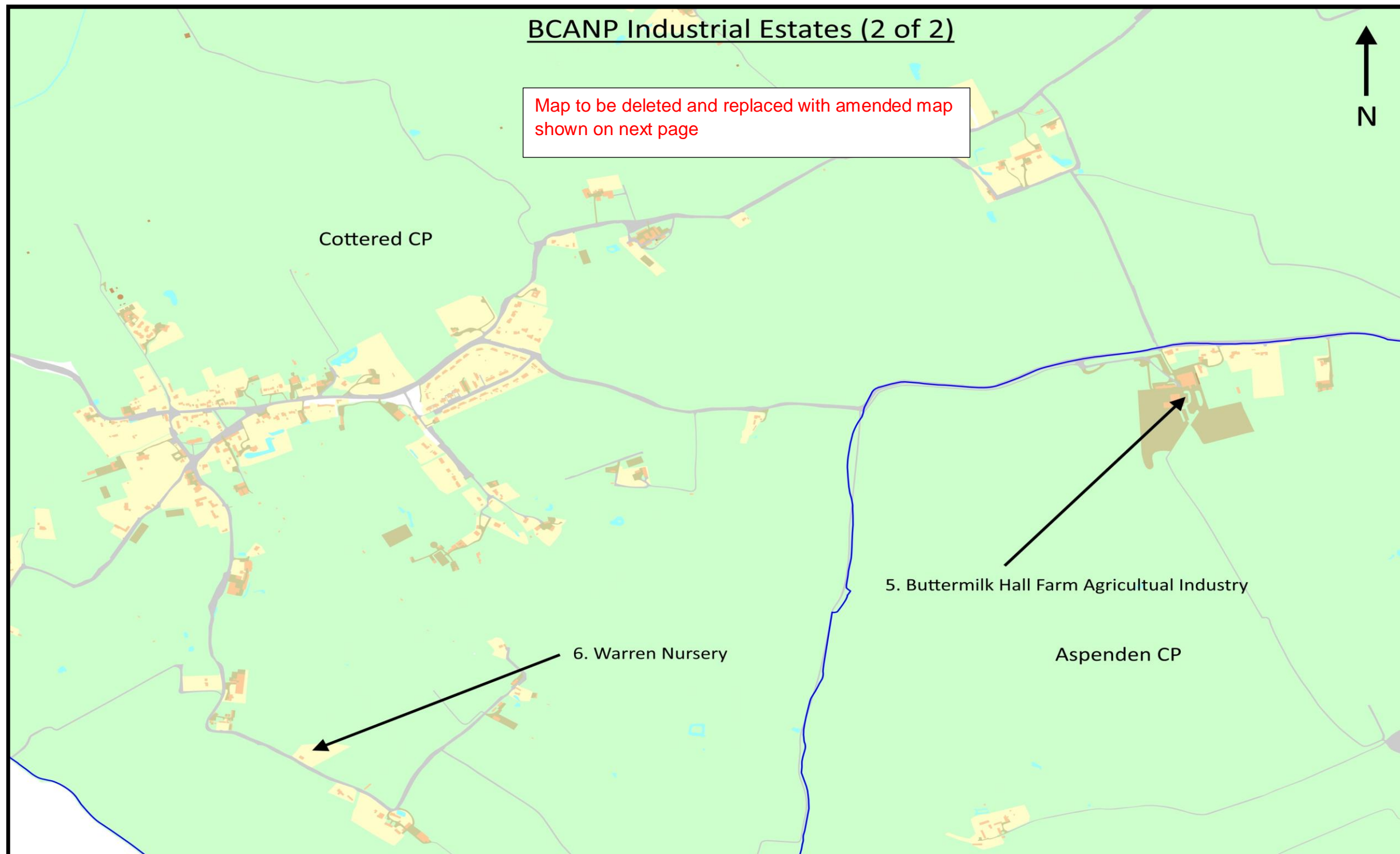
- ~~7 **The Watermill Industrial Estate**~~
- ~~8 **Park Farm Industrial Estate**~~
- ~~9 **Buttermilk Hall Farm agricultural industry (Aspenden Parish)**~~
- ~~10 **Silkmead Farm, Hare Street (Great Horstead Parish)**~~
- ~~11 **Buttermilk Farm Industrial Estate**~~
- ~~12 **Warren Nursery (Cottered Parish)**~~

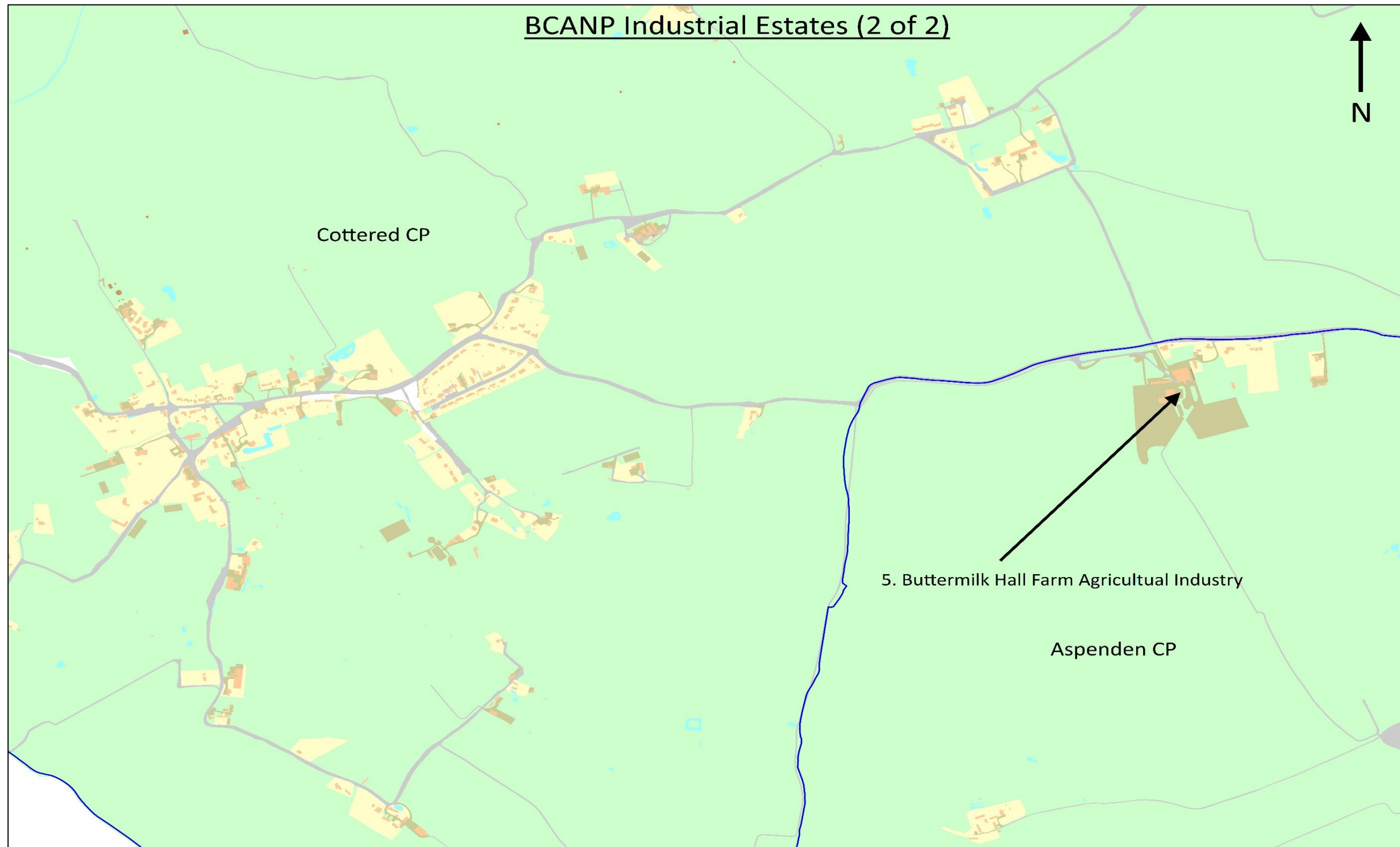
~~These industrial areas are well established and future development of industrial units should normally be designed to fit within these existing estates and parks. However, this~~

~~does not preclude the development of new specifically allocated industrial areas in the BCA as long as these are planned to comply with policies **BE1**, **BE2** and **BE3**.~~

~~The following maps identify the Industrial / Business sites as listed above.~~







BUNTINGFORD COMMUNITY AREA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

BE65: Development Proposals for the that would involve the loss of one of the uses listed below in the settlements of the BCA, other than those which are permitted development, will be resisted not be permitted, unless they relate to a change of use to another use in this list, in order to retain local services and secure the vitality and sustainability of each settlement in the BCA.

- A1 (shops)
- A2 (financial and professional services)
- A3 (restaurants and cafes)
- A4 (drinking establishments)
- A5 (hot food takeaways)
- C1 Hotels
- D1 Non-residential institutions
- D2 Assembly and leisure

Retail uses provide important services to residents, visitors and businesses, other Town Centre uses identified by the NPPF (para.23) are important contributors to the vitality of Town Centres such as at Buntingford and within other settlements of the BCA since they can increase footfall, social interaction and the range of services available.

Buntingford Town Centre acts as a main focus for many local retail services within the BCA. In order to maintain Buntingford Town and all the settlements of the BCA as sustainable and viable communities it will be important to retain, enhance and grow provision of these uses.

BE76: Within each settlement of the BCA, development or change of use to the uses listed in Policy BE65 will be supported in principle, where they do not conflict with other policies within this Plan and where they would not be harmful to the living conditions of neighbouring residents and are otherwise consistent with sustainable development.

Town / Village	Category	Number	% of Total
Aspenden	A4	1	100%
Buckland & Chipping	A4	1	50%
	C1	1	50%
Buntingford	A1	37	57%
	A2	7	11%
	A3	6	9%
	A4	5	8%
	A5	5	8%
	B1a	1	2%
	D1	4	6%
Cottered	A4	1	100%
Hormead	A1	1	20%
	A3	2	40%
	A4	2	40%

Wyddial	No retail	No retail	No retail
BACNP Survey 2016			

Although the main retail trade offered within the BCA is in Buntingford Town - particularly the High Street - there are retail facilities in Hornead Parish at Hare Street and there are public houses located throughout the BCA. Other settlements (Wyddial) however have no provision as shown in the table below:

Environment and Sustainability Policies (ES)

Introduction

The residents of the Buntingford Community Area (BCA) are fortunate to live in an area surrounded by a mix of attractive rural features: fields, small woods, rivers and streams, grassy recreational areas, and sports fields. The BCA as a whole is subject to a number of environmental risks. The River Rib running through Chipping, Buntingford and Aspenden is subject to abstraction and at times has very little flow. The increase in the population of BCA will put its green space and wildlife assets under pressure and may leave insufficient local and amenity green spaces for a larger population. Environment and Sustainability policies in this plan seek to ensure that all major new development will take these factors into account, manage environmental risk and make a contribution over time to the area's resilience to climate change.

Environment and Sustainability - What People Have Said

Protection of the BCA's rural countryside setting was a significant issue for local residents. In the household survey conducted to inform the Neighbourhood Plan, 60% of respondents wanted more parks and accessible open spaces (as one respondent said – "not just another field") both within Buntingford and in the rural parishes and many wanted improved facilities for young people within them. 87% also want to see more wildlife sites established. 80% felt there were sufficient footpaths and bridleways in the BCA, although concern was expressed about their maintenance and comments made about connectivity. 97% felt that the countryside in the BCA should be protected from further development. Consultation indicated a lack of support for some green energy generation methods due to their impact on views of the landscape, potential traffic generation and effects on local amenity, such as noise and odours.

Environment and Sustainability in the Buntingford Community Area

Open Spaces

East Herts Open Space standards use the national Policy Planning Guidance (PPG) note 17 typology for the quantity and quality of provision within the District. This covers the following eight types of green space:

- Parks and Public Gardens
- Natural and Semi-natural Green Space
- Outdoor Sports Facilities
- Amenity green space
- Provision for children and young people
- Allotments
- Cemeteries and churchyards
- Green Corridors

Standards for provision of Open Space are being reviewed as part of the District Plan making process, but it is currently assessed in relation to the Planning Obligations and Open Space, Sport and Recreation Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) of East Herts District Council.

There is policy support from a wide range of organisations for protection of the landscape of East Herts and protection of its green spaces.

The East Herts Draft District Plan January 2014 is silent on the extent of deficiency of provision across open space types across the District, although the 2005 PPG17 Audit and assessment of local needs for open space, sport and recreation (commissioned to support the 2007 Local Plan) identified Buntingford as an area deficient in garden and parks space. Based on the current population and future projected increases, the BCA is underprovided with some types of green space such as amenity green space and gardens. In addition, it is also under provided with accessible natural green space if the standards of Natural England are applied.

Sustainable Energy and Recycling

The BCA has a number of bio-digestion schemes and recycling sites. Some of these make a contribution to the reduction and re-use of waste materials.

Allotments

The only allotment provision in the BCA is in Buntingford which has seen some loss as a result of development, although these are to be replaced as part of new development. There are waiting lists for allotment space.

Wildlife and Biodiversity

The richness of the biodiversity within the BCA is due to the particular landscape assets in this part of East Hertfordshire: its plateaux, woodlands and rivers.

Flooding

The presence of important river valleys and chalk streams in the BCA means that though this provides access to water and associated wildlife it can bring with it the possibilities of flooding. Parts of the BCA are in flood risk areas ranging from low to high risk and residents have suffered the effects of flooding ([see EA Flood Zone Map](#)). Parts of Buntingford and Aspenden have flood defences and the emerging East Herts Draft District Plan January 2014 Policies WAT1 and WAT2 acknowledge this danger and require development proposals over a certain size to conduct Flood Risks Assessments.

Resident's concerns over recent flooding issues can be viewed on [Facebook – Flooded in Buntingford](#)

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

OBJECTIVES

To protect and conserve the countryside and landscape in the BCA.

To improve and conserve habitat and biodiversity in wildlife areas within the BCA.

To conserve and expand all categories of open space in the BCA.

ES1: Development proposals should be appropriate to and maintain the Rib Valley setting of the BCA.

~~In order to avoid negative effects on the landscape value of the area~~ **Development on the fringes of Buntingford which extends on to the higher ground** surrounding the Higher Rib Valley **could have a harmful effect on the landscape of this area** and parts of the Cherry Green Arable and Wyddial Plateaux, ~~the ridge heights of all developments should be limited so that they are lower than the height of the land forming the valley ridge.~~

Policy **HD2** provides guidance on the ridge heights of housing required to maintain the rural setting of the BCA within the Rib Valley and policy **HD4** refers to specific design guidance that maintains a rural feel to new housing within the BCA.

The landscape value of this area is clearly stated in the East Herts District Landscape Character Assessment SPD of 2007 and in East Herts Draft District Plan January 2014 supporting documents. In discussing the strategy for managing change, the Landscape Assessment suggests that EHDC should “promote a strategy for reducing the visual impact of development on the upper slopes of Buntingford including the Sainsbury’s warehouses”.

ES2: Development proposals that encroach within 12m of the bank tops of the Rivers Rib, Beane and Quin will not be supported, in order to maintain their unless the benefits from the development clearly outweigh any harm to the contribution of the river courses to the landscape, wildlife and biodiversity in of the BCA. Development that abuts the rivers will be expected to observe this minimum distance, to manage this zone as complimentary habitat and to take opportunities to restore the aquatic environment where it has been damaged.

The Environment Agency investigations as part of its work on the Thames River Basin Management plan showed that in 2015 the status of the River Rib was Moderate Ecological Status and that of the Beane and Quin were poor. The intention of this policy is to prevent further deterioration. These internationally important chalk streams provide important corridors for biodiversity and support flora and fauna important to the landscape of the area.

ES3: Green energy generation initiatives such as wind turbines, solar, anaerobic digestion, biomass, ground & air source heat pumps and hydro will be supported in order to make an important contribution to combatting climate change and the sustainable treatment of waste-, where an assessment demonstrates that the benefits of the proposal outweigh any harmful impact on: Support will be subject to the assessment of the impact upon:

- (a) environmental and historic assets;
- (b) visual amenity and landscape character;
- (c) local transport networks;
- (d) the amenity of neighbouring residents and sensitive uses;
- (e) air quality and human health;
- (f) the preservation of long-distance views from public rights of way;
- (g) high quality agricultural land.**

Such facilities make an important contribution to sustainable development and development proposals should try to accommodate them when possible and appropriate in a predominantly rural area like the BCA.

ES4: Development proposals that result in any loss of existing public green spaces across all types within the BCA will be supported only where acceptable and replacement green spaces which are suitably located and equal or superior (in terms of size and quality) green spaces are made available to replace any loss.

Policy LR1 of this plan protects the facilities that are used for active sport and recreation within the BCA, but the stock of existing green space (amenity space, parks and gardens) also need protection.

ES5: Development proposals to expand the provision of open space and improve the existing open space to serve the people of the BCA will be welcomed and encouraged where they are consistent with other policies in this Plan.

The BCA and surrounding parts of East Hertfordshire have the lowest provision of accessible natural green space in Hertfordshire according to the Natural England Standard (ANGSt). Amenity space will also be required where possible as part of new developments that is accessible to local residents and incorporates play and other facilities.

Examples of areas of natural green space that should be protected, conserved and improved are:

- All parks and public open spaces in the BCA;
- The considerable community tree stock in parks, fields, village greens, estate roads and hedgerows;

- The three Buntingford recreation fields off Luynes Rise, Bowling Green Lane and Hare Street Road; and
- The Aspenden, Cottered and Hornead playing fields and greens.

ES6: Existing allotments within the BCA will be conserved. Any proposal to increase allotment provision across the BCA will be welcomed and encouraged where they are consistent with other policies in this Plan.

Currently allotment provision in the BCA is limited to provision in Buntingford at Ermine Street and planned provision in Hare Street Road and there are waiting lists for these sites.

To enable existing and new residents in the BCA to reap the benefits to health of growing their own food, existing provision should be protected and opportunities found to increase provision.

ES7: Development will be expected to protect and enhance biodiversity in line with NPPF requirements and employ the DEFRA and NE endorsed Biodiversity Impact Assessment Calculator (BIAC Warwickshire County Council v18 2014 or as amended). Development must demonstrate a net positive score in ecological units. gain in biodiversity in an Ecological reports must be consistent with BS 42020.

In order that development truly achieves net gains in biodiversity it must be objectively assessed and quantified and the application of these standards will help ensure that development takes into account adverse impacts on biodiversity.

ES8: Proposals to extend, improve or create links between existing wildlife areas, open countryside, the built environment and other areas of natural green space within the BCA will be welcomed and encouraged. Integrated features for wildlife (e.g. ponds, hedgerows, bird/bat boxes) will be expected within the built environment in appropriate places.

Both Herts County Council and East Herts District Council are committed to nature conservation in the BCA. This is focused on ecologically regenerating the tributaries of the Upper Lea (Beane, Rib, Quin and their tributaries) that are the most important wildlife corridors. This work is supported by Target 11 of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Hedgerows also form important links between countryside and urban areas and policy **HD4** of this plan seeks to protect them wherever possible as part of housing development proposals.

ES9: The following sites are identified in Appendix 6 as Local Green Space (LGS).

- Hare Street Road (Millennium site)
- Monks Walk / Baldock Road (rear of the Telephone Exchange)
- Buckland & Chipping - Daws Lane

Development that is inconsistent with the character and use of these Local Green Spaces will not be allowed within LGS, other than except in very special circumstances.

Paragraph 77 of the NPPF states that a local green space may be designated where:

- The green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- The green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
- The green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

The proposed sites meet these criteria and would make an important addition to the stock of natural and semi natural open spaces in the BCA.

Appendix 6 - Environment and Sustainability – BCA Local Green Spaces, describes each of these sites in further detail.

Housing Development Policies (HD)

Introduction

The development of land within the Buntingford Community Area is a controversial topic. There is concern that new development, of housing in particular, will impact adversely on the countryside setting and nature of the area and all its settlements, unless carefully guided by detailed planning policy. Housing development policy needs to balance the need for development with the value that local residents and businesses place on the character of the area and the quality of life provided by it.

These policies are intended to apply to all of the BCA area. Our analysis of housing numbers and design standards inform planning of the BCA as a rural area. Although Buntingford, as the main focus for services and transport in the BCA, has been the focus of development interest, it is still a rural town and has much in common with the smaller settlements throughout the BCA in terms of its built form, rural character and setting.

Housing - What People Have Said

Consultation on development policy for the BCA showed that many people felt that development should not take place at all across the BCA because of lack of access to jobs and transport. They also felt that existing community infrastructure in relation to education for all age groups, transport connections, health facilities and basic facilities such as sewerage and water were already operating at capacity and any increase in provision would result in deterioration of the support and facilities available to all residents, particularly for an increasingly ageing population.

At the same time there was support for affordable housing provision, particularly for those who already live in the BCA, or have connections to it, and a recognition that housing demand means that development has to be accommodated.

Housing Development in the BCA

Landscape Setting

To consider some of the concerns expressed by residents of the BCA about the landscape impact of new housing development in some parts of the East Herts Plateau an assessment has been made of the possible impact of development on the valley setting of the BCA. (Appendix 1 – Buntingford and the Landscape of the East Herts Plateau).

This shows that it is now necessary that further development, particularly in terms of its height, should be prevented more strongly from obtruding into and affecting the views within this highly valued and predominantly rural northern area of East Hertfordshire.

Housing appropriate to a rural area

An assessment of the layout of some of the newer developments in the BCA (Appendix 2 – Spatial Standards in Buntingford since 1960) suggest that some of these new

developments, particularly since 1990, have not taken account of the existing built form of settlements within the BCA; their massing does not provide an open aspect appropriate to a rural/semi-rural area and they fall short of the standards set by the previously existing post-war developments at such places as Vicarage Road, Snells Mead and Monks Walk.

Housing and Population

An analysis of already approved housing development in the BCA shows approval for the construction of a total of approximately 1,234⁹⁰ new dwellings since 2011 over and above those planned for in the East Herts Local Plan Second Review 2007 to 2011. This will contribute significantly to the growth of the population. (Appendix 3 – Housing Numbers in the BCA since 2011). In addition there are a number of further developments which have been proposed but which have not yet received approval bringing the total potential number of new dwellings to 1,696 (1,793 if the 97 dwellings of the Local Plan Second Review 2007 are included) over and above that previously planned. A range of estimates based on assumptions about levels of occupancy for this higher number have identified that population increase in the BCA could be between 4,051 people, at one end of a potential range to 6,487 at the top end.

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

OBJECTIVES

To promote housing development that is appropriate to its location within the BCA.

To prevent the merging of towns and village settlements within the BCA.

To ensure that new housing does not impact adversely on the landscape of the BCA.

To meet the housing needs of the BCA.

To ensure that housing development and its concomitant increase in population is supported by investment in Community Infrastructure.

~~HD1: Housing development sites, in addition to those already approved prior to 31st March 2016, will be allowed only where they conform to the village and town settlement boundaries as set out on the BCANP Settlement Map (Buntingford) and the BCANP Settlement Map (Cottered). A clear separation must be maintained between the various settlements that make up the BCA.~~

Within the settlement boundaries of Buntingford and Cottered proposals for new housing development will be permitted where it is consistent with Policies HD2 to HD7 and where any conflict with other policies of this plan is clearly outweighed by the benefits of the proposed development. Outside the settlement boundaries of Buntingford and Cottered residential development consistent with policies HD2 to HD7 and other policies of this plan will be permitted in the form of:

- **small scale infill development within or immediately adjoining significant existing clusters of development;**
- **affordable housing on rural exception sites to meet an identified local need which cannot be met in any other way;**
- **development for which there is a demonstrable need for a location in the countryside.**

The need for this policy to be updated will be assessed when the emerging District Plan has been adopted and the strategic context in terms of the scale of new housing development has been determined.

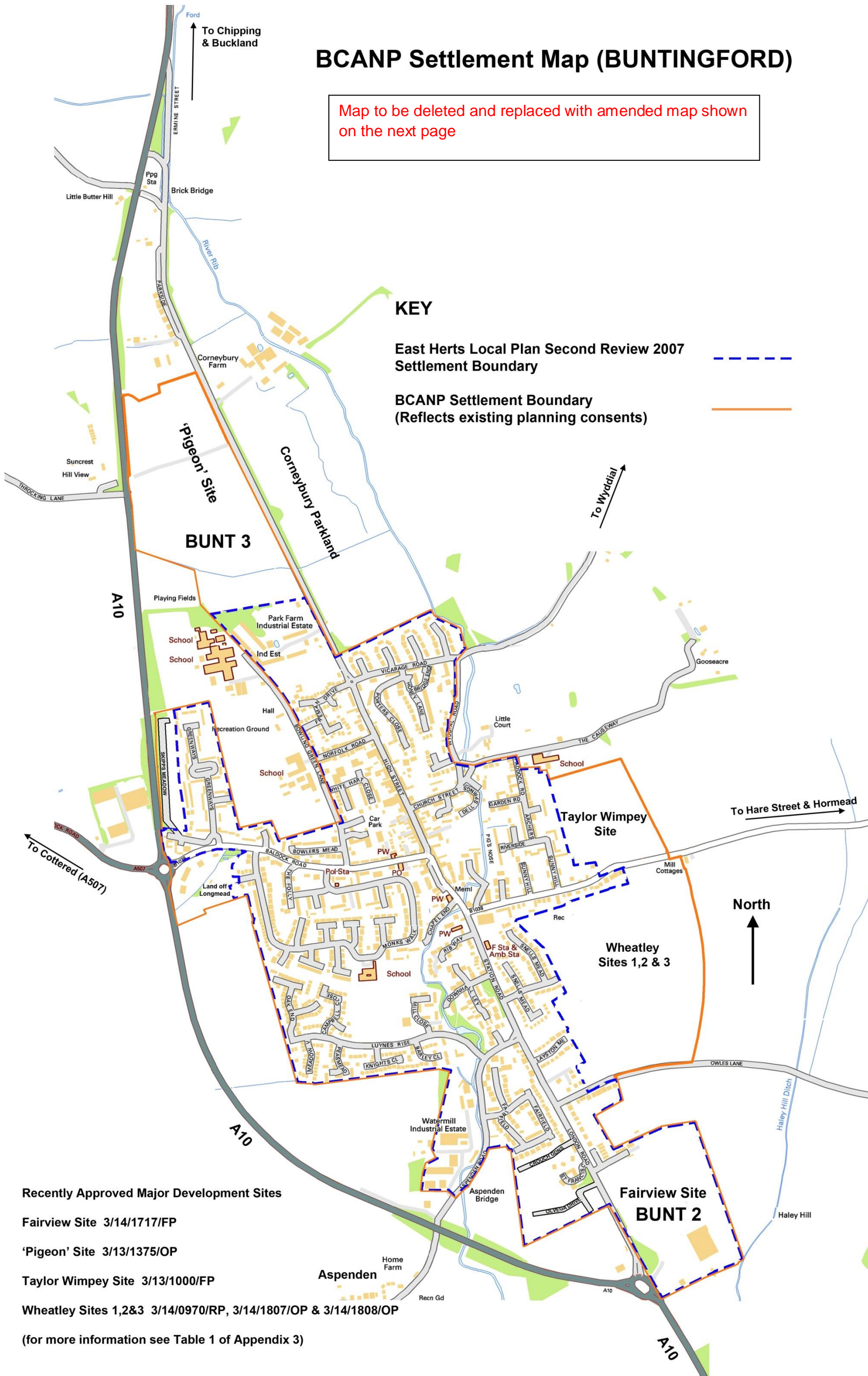
As shown in Appendix 3 – Housing Numbers in the BCA since 2011 - Table 1, proposals for housing development within the BCA have been made for 1,793 homes and approvals have already been given for 1,334⁸⁷. Of these 889 are built or already under construction (almost entirely since the start of 2011) and 442⁹⁸ are approved but not yet started. The status of the application for one dwelling is unknown. The Local Plan Second Review 2007 assumed that 97 dwellings would be built in Buntingford by 2011. This did not happen and most of these were built after 2011 and are included in the figure of 1,334⁸⁷ quoted above. Removing this figure leaves 1,234⁹⁰ as the number of dwellings already approved for Buntingford over and above those in the Local Plan Second Review 2007.

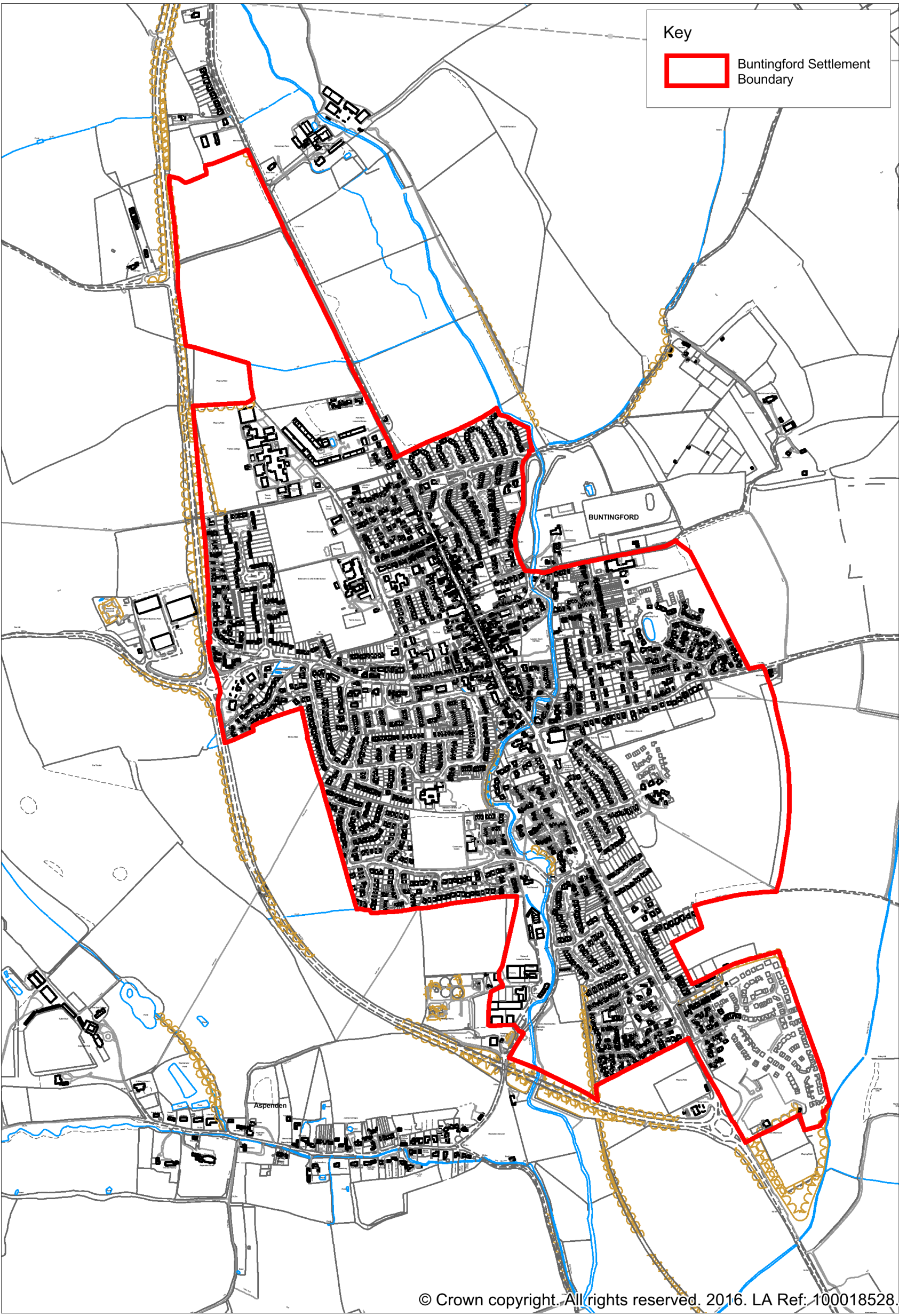
The draft District Plan January 2014 for the period 2011 to 2031, based on the East Herts housing need identified at that time, designated sites South of Buntingford (BUNT2) and North of Buntingford (BUNT3) and the Strategic Land Allocation Assessment (SLAA) sites within the Town as providing 493 dwellings in accordance with strategic policy for housing numbers within East Herts District as a whole. The West Essex and East Hertfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment - Report of Findings, Sept 2015 (Ref. 2 of Appendix 3), now adopted by East Herts Council, provides a basis for assessing the East Herts District's housing need that is very little changed from the basis used in drawing up the Draft District Plan January 2014. Thus it would appear that there is no reason to change this figure of 493.

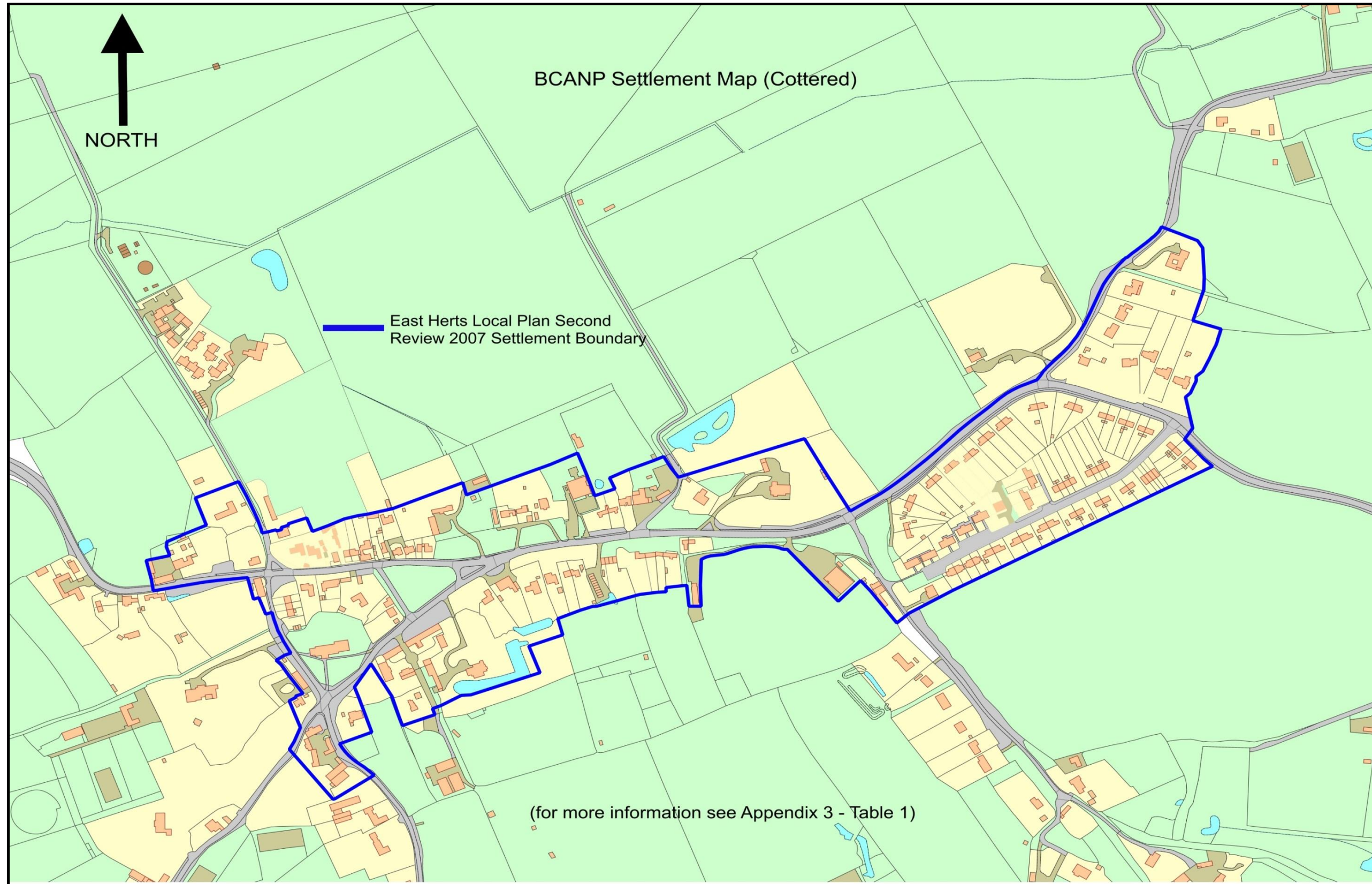
This figure of 493 compares with the 1,234 that have already been approved and which are on sites within the settlement boundary of the BCANP Settlement Map (Buntingford). This means that the allocation planned for 2011 to 2031 in the Draft District Plan 2014 has already been exceeded.

BCANP Settlement Map (BUNTINGFORD)

Map to be deleted and replaced with amended map shown on the next page







HD2: All new housing developments should be sensitive to the landscape and be of a height that does not impact adversely on views from the surrounding countryside. All development proposals should demonstrate how they conserve, enhance or strengthen the character and distinctive features of the BCA landscape. A **Where appropriate, a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment should be provided to ensure that impacts, mitigation and enhancement opportunities are appropriately addressed.**

Based on an analysis of the impact of new housing development in the BCA (Appendix 1), and in conformity with policy **ES1** of this plan to preserve and value the Rib Valley setting of the BCA, all new housing should be limited in height to a level that ensures that there will be no adverse impact on views from the surrounding countryside or on the character and appearance of the BCA.

HD3: Green energy principles in the provision of new housing will be encouraged and supported where they are appropriate to the site and do not have any **unacceptable adverse impacts individually or cumulatively on adjoining residents, the street scene or views from the surrounding countryside **that cannot be effectively mitigated**.**

‘Green Energy’ here refers to obtaining energy from solar panels, wind turbines and air or ground heat sources. The use of some green energy generation methods such as photovoltaic panels and wind turbines can have a cumulative visual impact on the landscape in an area such as the BCA given its valley setting. They can also impact on the visual amenity of adjoining residents.

HD4: New housing design should ~~provide an open aspect appropriate to a~~ **respect the rural/semi-rural character of the Buntingford Community Area and its immediate context area and conform, wherever possible, to the design code having appropriate regard to the standards set out in Appendix 4 – Design Code.**

This policy seeks to ensure that the quality of new housing development takes account of the rural nature of the BCA and developments that address this and provide for a variety of private garden spaces will be encouraged. All new houses should benefit from private garden or balcony space, for drying clothes, accommodating pets, children's play, quiet enjoyment, horticulture, encouraging wildlife, etc.

Appendix 4 - Design code, “space around New Dwellings and the provision of private amenity space” must be applied as far as possible. Appropriate screening with hedges, walls or fencing may be necessary to ensure that the garden space is not overlooked from surrounding houses or gardens. Private spaces must be designed so that residents have a reasonable amount of sun/daylight. Front garden perimeters, where practical, should be left undefined or be defined by the planting of green hedges.

HD5: Housing development in the BCA should minimise the loss of private gardens and avoid significant harm to their ecological or landscape value.

Gardens in the BCA contribute to its biodiversity. New developments in garden spaces will be allowed only where they are able to demonstrate that there is no loss or significant harm to the ecological or landscape value of existing private residential gardens and where the conditions set out in Appendix 4 – Design Code, are satisfied.

HD6: Housing development located in any of the Conservation Areas of the BCA should be sensitive in terms of the design, materials and layout. Good quality designs which enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Areas will be encouraged. Development proposals should accord with updated Conservation Area Appraisals as and when they are completed by EHDC.

Development within the Conservation Areas in the BCA (in Aspenden, Buntingford, Cottered and Great Horstead) will be allowed provided that they conserve or enhance the character and appearance of the area and where the amenities of nearby residents are not unduly affected. Buildings will need to be of an appropriate scale, massing and proportions so as to ensure that they are in keeping with the traditional buildings located within the conservation areas.

HD7: New housing development should reflect local housing need in terms of mix and tenure as identified in the most up to date SHMA and any additional up-to-date evidence.

There is a need to ensure that new housing satisfies the needs of the local population as well as supplying housing for others wishing to move into the area.

Development already approved prior to the publication of the East Hertfordshire Draft District Plan January 2014 more than meets the housing requirements (both market and affordable tenures) of the BCA and its immediate surrounds as provided for in the Draft District Plan January 2014.

New housing should reflect local requirements which are for a mix of sizes with a majority having 2 or 3 bedrooms and a small but significant number being bungalows.

Appendix 3 – Housing Numbers in the BCA since 2011, shows there has been a tendency for housing development approvals since 2011 to provide houses with a greater number of bedrooms than those recommended by previous local planning policy and those recommended in the latest 2015 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). It will be important to ensure that future proposals fulfil these policy requirements going forward in order to meet local needs of the BCA.

Infrastructure Policies (INFRA)

Introduction

The Buntingford Community area has a range of infrastructure that is available to support the existing population and businesses.

Roads, electricity, gas, sewerage, water, education, broadband provision and health facilities are all needed to support new development and existing activity in the BCA.

To meet the objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan to support new development and avoid negative impacts or improve the operation of current infrastructure, it will be necessary for new development proposals to consider carefully their impact on infrastructure provision.

Infrastructure – What People Have Said

The initial survey to all residents and businesses within the BCA showed concerns about infrastructure as the major factor influencing attitudes towards development of all types. In particular residents raised concerns about the existing capacity of water and sewerage systems and localised flooding. These were recurrent themes in all consultations that have taken place.

Residents wanted development to be phased to ensure that development did not put further pressure on existing infrastructure of *all* types but in particular, transport, health and education facilities. In addition residents and young people in the BCA raised the issue of transport access to enable them to take advantages of higher education provision outside the BCA.

Businesses consulted as part of producing the Neighbourhood Plan felt that increased population within the BCA would help them increase their turnover and expand, but that issues of transport, parking and advanced communications infrastructure would limit their ability to take full advantage of the benefits that development could bring. On education, concerns regarding school capacity and extending provision for pre-school education was also raised as an issue that needed to be addressed.

Infrastructure in the BCA

Health Facilities in the Buntingford Community Area

Health facilities in the BCA are focused in Buntingford Town. The wider BCA is very reliant on these facilities to serve their needs.

The BCA is served by two health facilities located in Buntingford. The Medical Centre has reached capacity in terms of patient numbers; the Orchard Surgery has some limited extra capacity. New medical facilities, such as a new surgery, will need to be provided as the population within the BCA grows.

The Buntingford Medical Centre has recently been combined with the Puckeridge Health Centre to become the Buntingford and Puckeridge Practice. The Medical Centre and the Orchard Surgery sites have rather small footprints to accommodate extensions of existing buildings. There has been a number of suggested locations for new health facilities based on studies to date (Buntingford Employment Study) that have the potential for a mix of uses.

Advanced Communication Technology in the Buntingford Community Area

In common with many rural areas the BCA has limited access to high speed broadband and good mobile phone reception, reflecting the lack of a fibre optic system and the distance from the villages in the BCA to the main exchange in Buntingford.

Education Provision in the Buntingford Community Area

A three-tier system covers the BCA:

- Freman College, Buntingford is a 13-18 (years 10 to 13 (or 14)) Upper School and has Academy status.
- Edwinstree School, Buntingford is a 9-13 (years 5 to 9) Middle School and Ralph Sadlier Middle School in Puckeridge also admits some children from the BCA.
- There are three 5-9 (years 1 to 4) First Schools in the BCA:
 - Hormead School
 - Layston School, Buntingford.
 - Millfield School, Buntingford.

Immediately outside the BCA are a number of other village-based First Schools.

HCC have already identified the need for a new First School.

Pre-school nursery provision is provided within Hormead, Layston and Millfield Schools alongside a number of independent nurseries and playgroups in the BCA.

Post-school education and training is becoming increasingly important, through colleges and training centres, all of which are currently distant from the BCA. The need for distance learning and virtual learning environments is therefore bound to increase.

Roads in the Buntingford Community Area

As detailed in the transport policy of this plan, the road network in the BCA (in common with many rural areas of the south east of England) is characterised by congestion, pinch points and poor access for smaller settlements within the BCA.

Substantial increases in road capacity are necessary if sustainable development, as required by the National Planning Policy Framework, is to be achieved. Improved integration with other transport modes to maximise optimal use of the road network and improvements to road networks is needed. Improvements to the road network in relation to speed and safety will improve the sustainability of the ways that people can get around, and businesses can operate, with minimal negative impacts on the environment.

Water and Sewerage

The BCA as a rural area has limited sewerage capacity. Wyddial and Little Hormead are not on public sewers. Thames Water has specifically raised concerns about the capacity of the system to deal with development north of Buntingford (BUNT3). The infrastructure feeding the treatment works will need significant improvements to cope with any increase in demand in the rest of the BCA.

Thames Water has specifically raised this in its responses to the consultations on the BCANP and the emerging EHDC District Plan and pointed out that it may be necessary to up-grade existing sewerage infrastructure which would need a lead in time of up to three years.

There is evidence from our consultation responses from residents of the BCA that the existing capacity for foul and surface water drainage systems is not sufficient to prevent some localised flooding. Local concern about this has resulted in the establishment of a civic group in September 2015 to monitor and report on flooding issues in Buntingford Town. Future development must ensure that Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) are designed and implemented so that surface water run-off quantity and speed do not increase the risk of localised surface water flooding.

INFRASTRUCTURE POLICIES

OBJECTIVES

To retain, conserve and extend existing local health facilities and increase provision.

To improve connectivity and speed in communication technologies across businesses, schools and other facilities.

To provide increased school, pre-school and nursery education places and further education as well as staff education and training for local businesses and organizations

To minimize traffic impacts on the Buntingford Community Area and its heritage assets and increase the number of journeys undertaken by walking, cycling and public transport

To seek improvements and financial contributions to community infrastructure as part of development proposals in the BCA.

INFRA1: Proposals for new health facilities or to extend and conserve existing ones in the BCA will be supported where they are consistent with other policies in this Plan. Developers will be expected encouraged to work with relevant partners to ensure that adequate health facilities are delivered. This will be achieved by financial contributions and / or through planning obligations to provide land or make financial contributions where the statutory requirements in paragraph 204 of the NPPF are met. in relation to the potential demand created from the development proposal.

Currently submitted proposals for new housing in the BCA since 2011, could potentially amount to a further 1696 homes. It has been estimated that this could potentially amount to an increase in population within the range of 4,051 to 6,487 depending on the assumptions used to estimate the number of people who may be accommodated in new development.

It is registered patients rather than population that is used by the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group to calculate the need for health facilities. However this potential increase in population is an indicator that new or extended facilities will be needed to meet the needs of new residents.

INFRA2: Proposals will be supported for the provision, improvement and enhancement of advanced communication technologies within the BCA area, for education, training, and business use will be supported where they are consistent with other policies in this Plan. These should include: , and should include complete and effective:

BUNTINGFORD COMMUNITY AREA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

- **Fibre optic broadband implementation.**
- **Full 4G mobile telephone coverage, and next generation telephonic data systems, as they become available.**

- **Radio and television broadcasting reception and coverage.**

Businesses located in the BCA need effective and reliable access to the internet and 4G, or later, coverage in order to grow their customer base and communicate effectively and at low cost with customers and suppliers.

Effective educational practice requires fast on-line access and high quality reception of radio and TV programme broadcasts: all new development should facilitate these wherever practicable, through cable, free to air and satellite reception systems.

INFRA3: Proposals for increased and improved educational and training facilities in the BCA which are consistent with other policies in this Plan will be supported to meet increased demand for:

- **Pre-School and other Nursery Education.**
- **School places in First, Middle and Upper Schools**
- **Apprenticeships and other work-based education and training within or through links with:**
 - **Colleges**
 - **Training Centres**
 - **Distance Learning**
 - **Virtual Learning Environments**

Within the three-tier school system which covers the BCA, there is currently just sufficient classroom and specialist room provision together with a well-developed admissions and transfer system across all tiers. However, these are becoming increasingly strained with the current school rolls and this will become critically important to deal with as population within the BCA, particularly in Buntingford, increases.

Pre-school educational provision within the BCA is also going to need enhancement.

The designated site south of Buntingford (BUNT2) should accommodate a mix of uses, such as a new First School or enhanced medical and health facilities or employment uses and housing. This would seem a sensible approach to the development of sites making them more sustainable. Various proposals are currently being put forward for such uses (see Herts County Council June 2015 Site Search for a 2 form entry school site in Buntingford).

Education and training, whether for apprentices or other staff, within commercial and industrial contexts will become increasingly important, through colleges and training centres, all of which are currently distant from the BCA. Further Education is only available distantly at Hertford

BUNTINGFORD COMMUNITY AREA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Regional College in Ware and Broxbourne, North Hertfordshire College in Stevenage and Hitchin and in Cambridge Regional College. Similarly, Higher Education at Anglia Ruskin,

Cambridge Universities and the University of Hertfordshire is equally distant. Training Centres are even further afield. Access to such Further/Higher

Education and Training facilities using effective transport and communication links needs to be enhanced. Any developments for such purposes within the BCA will need to be within Buntingford or sites in existing employment in the rural parishes in accordance with the 2007 Local Plan saved Policies GBC3, GBC9 and GBC10: for example, the multi-use or shared use of existing community facilities. The need to use distance learning and virtual learning environments is expected to increase, so requiring the enhanced technology referred to in policy **INFRA2**.

~~**INFRA4: Road improvement and traffic management schemes at the following locations will be encouraged and supported:**~~

- ~~• **A507 to Baldock – to improve safety, reduce speeds and improve access to Buttermilk Hall Farm and onward to the village of Cottered, the town of Baldock and also Stevenage via the B1037.**~~
- ~~• **The A10 south of the Buntingford South roundabout to the dual-carriageway to improve safety, reduce speeds and improve safe access to and from Westmill village.**~~
- ~~• **A10 into Buntingford to Station Road for speed reduction through signage and traffic calming**~~
- ~~• **Junction of B1368 and B1038 at Hare Street to reduce speeds and improve safety.**~~
- ~~• **Implementation of the Phoenix Project in Buntingford Town to provide shared space / surfacing and traffic calming measures affecting London Road, Aspenden Road, Baldock Road, Bowling Green Lane, Buntingford High Street, Ermine Street, Freman Drive, Greenways, Hare Street Road, Station Road, Market Hill and Vicarage Road.**~~
- ~~• **Retention and improvement of the existing two access points to and from the A10 via Ermine street and the new access to and from the A10 from the Buntingford North site (BUNT3).**~~

~~These improvements are intended to minimise the impacts associated with any new development and increases in the number of vehicles within the BCA that may accompany it. The locations for improvement have all been identified based on accident levels and consultation feedback about the need for improvements to access and easing of congestion and to progress initiatives like the Phoenix Project (See Phil Jones Associates April 2015~~

BUNTINGFORD COMMUNITY AREA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Buntingford Traffic and Street Design Strategy) which are being pursued by Buntingford Town Council in consultation with East Herts District Council and Hertfordshire County Council.

Development of the designated site Buntingford North (BUNT3) includes a new access to the A10. Retention and improvement of the existing two access points to and from the A10 via Ermine street is required in order to minimize heavy goods vehicle traffic passing through the development of Buntingford North (BUNT3) to access the area of the Park Farm industrial estate.

INFRA5: Contributions to community infrastructure, will be made through planning obligations in accordance with Policy IMP1 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review 2007 or a successor policy in the emerging East Herts District Plan where they comply with the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 and any subsequent amendments to them. Changes to provisions for the use of S106 agreements and their replacement with arrangements for a Community Infrastructure Levy provide opportunities to ensure that new development is supported by appropriate infrastructure.

The improvements suggested in relation to infrastructure provision in the BCA have been identified through consultation for the BCANP and responses to the drafts of the NP as they have been completed. These improvements would be supported by residents and businesses within the BCA and can be used to guide decision making about investment in these facilities by East Herts District Council and Hertfordshire County Council.

Thames Water in particular is concerned to ensure that adequate Wastewater Infrastructure to serve all new developments, in line with the requirements of Policy WAT5 of the emerging East Herts Draft District Plan January 2014, is provided. Thames Water have indicated that developers will be required to demonstrate that there is adequate infrastructure capacity both on and off the site to serve the development to ensure no adverse amenity impacts for existing or future users.

INFRA64: Developers will be required to demonstrate that there is adequate Wastewater Infrastructure both on and off the site to serve the development and ensure no adverse impacts for existing or future users.

- It may be necessary for **Where necessary**, developers **will be required to commission or** fund studies to ascertain whether the proposed development will lead to overloading of existing Wastewater Infrastructure.
- **Where there is a capacity constraint such studies demonstrate that development would overload the existing wastewater infrastructure** and no improvements are programmed by Thames Water, the **Local Planning Authority will require the developer to provide for appropriate improvements that must be completed prior to occupation of the development. permission will be subject to a planning**

obligation requiring the provision of the necessary increase in capacity and its completion prior to the first occupation of the development.

Any development proposals must ensure that adequate Wastewater Infrastructure capacity is available in tandem with the proposed development and required up-grades must be completed prior to the first occupation of that development. Developers will be required to work

with Thames Water to understand the impact of not only their site on the Wastewater Infrastructure but also the demands from other developments within the catchment.

INFRA75: All new developments must comply with the Governments Optional Housing Standards for water efficiency and achieve, as a maximum, water usage of no more than 110 litres per person per day and for non-residential development to achieve a BREEAM 'excellent' rating for water usage.

Dwellings in the BCA rely on their water from groundwater sources. Due to abstraction, groundwater levels in the Rib Valley drop quite significantly, especially in periods of little or no rain. [Environment Agency document – Water Stressed Areas – Final Classification July 2013](#) indicates that in the area that includes the BCA, served by Affinity Water (East), water supply is already at a serious stress level. Whilst it is accepted that new developments must have a SuDS system to store water “on site” and release it in a controlled manner, this water will no longer form part of the groundwater supply that feeds the aquifers.

Leisure and Recreation Policies (LR)

Introduction

Leisure and Recreation provision is unevenly distributed across the BCA with its smaller settlements having more limited access to all types of sports and play facilities.

Leisure and Recreation – What People Have Said

Consultation about the Neighbourhood plan on these facilities across the BCA identified a demand for more facilities, particularly as the population of the BCA grows. Many people regarded current facilities as in need of modernisation, particularly for community facilities, indoor and outside fitness equipment and more adventurous play facilities for children and young people.

Leisure and Recreation in the Buntingford Community Area

Leisure and recreation facilities in the Buntingford Community Area

The BCA is served at present by leisure and recreational facilities which are largely focussed upon active recreational pursuits such as sports and fixed equipment based play. Leisure and recreation provision covers both green spaces used for active recreation and sports and built facilities. In the BCA this includes:

- Aspenden, Cottered and Hormead Playing Fields and village greens which are well used.
- three recreation fields off Luynes Rise, Bowling Green Lane and Hare Street Road, Buntingford, which are well used for sport, recreational activities and by dog walkers.
- Several football clubs which use the pitches and facilities at the Bury. The Buntingford Cougars Football Club has a pitch at land adjacent to the Southern BP garage and also uses football pitches and facilities at the Seth Ward Community Centre.
- A small all-weather Multi Use Games Area in Bowling Green Lane, a small swimming pool adjacent to Freman College, managed by EHDC, and a bowls club in Wyddial Road.
- A sports hall located at Freman College which has limited public availability.
- A small privately run gym on the Park Farm industrial estate.

Proposals related to green spaces used for active recreation will be considered in accordance with policy **ES4** of this plan.

Community Facilities in the Buntingford Community Area

Buntingford Town and adjacent parishes benefit from a number of community facilities that provide opportunities for people to assemble, worship, participate in educational activities and personal or civic celebrations. These are different to those that are provided as part of leisure and recreation facilities provided by commercial companies or the District and County level government, since they often provide multi use spaces supported with kitchens, toilet facilities and so on. Additionally they are mainly owned or managed by parish councils, civic organizations and charities and run on a not for profit basis, making them more affordable to local residents and businesses.

In the BCA these kinds of community facilities include:

- Buntingford – Seth Ward Centre, Manor House, Benson Hall, United Reformed Church Hall and the Norfolk Road Playing Fields pavilion
- Cottered Village Hall
- Hormead Village Hall
- Churches and other places of worship in all the villages and parishes of the BCA

Some of these facilities are better used than others dependent on their size and the nature of their facilities.

Not all parishes within the BCA have a facility – Buckland & Chipping, Wyddial and Aspenden for example, so the current stock of other facilities are of particular value to the community and their retention will help to maintain social and community interaction across the BCA and allow citizen participation in local decision making and service provision for the benefit of new and existing residents and businesses.

LEISURE AND RECREATION POLICIES

OBJECTIVES

To provide accessible, well promoted and signposted leisure and recreational facilities for an increasing population and which caters for everyone.

To maintain, protect and expand leisure and recreation facilities in the BCA.

To work with EHDC and other providers to improve existing facilities and promote their existence to residents, workers and visitors.

To maintain, protect and expand community facilities across the BCA

LR1: Proposals that result in the loss of existing facilities and green spaces used for leisure and recreation will be resisted unless **there is clear evidence that there is no need for the facility or unless a suitable alternative or facilities of a similar size, quality and accessibility are re-provided or where proposals offer alternative benefits in terms of increased access to leisure and recreation activities.**

People within the BCA want to see existing facilities protected, improved and promoted to maximise their use and any loss of facilities could impact on the desirability of the BCA as a place to live and work for existing and new residents.

LR2: Development proposals within the BCA which include new leisure and recreation facilities will be supported in principle **where they are consistent with other proposals in this Plan. Where possible, facilities should be designed for multiple uses to ensure that facilities are viable and sustainable. Developers will be expected **encouraged** to work with providers of such facilities to develop proposals.**

Development within the BCA provides an opportunity for new leisure and recreational facilities to be provided on site or for contributions to be made **towards** their provision. ~~as allowed for by policy **INFRA5**.~~

LR3: Proposals that result in the loss of existing community facilities will be resisted unless **there is clear evidence that there is no need for the facility or unless a suitable alternative or facilities of a similar size and quality are re-provided where proposals offer alternative benefits to the community in terms of access to space to assemble, worship, participate in educational activities and personal or civic celebrations.**

New housing development rarely provides accommodation big enough for personal social events and provision of space provided mainly for education or employment is seldom made available for use by local residents and businesses.

Existing provision of community facilities within the BCA may become pressured as the population increases. It is currently well distributed across the BCA in terms of location and access so any loss may impact on availability of such facilities to residents and businesses.

Transport Policies (T)

Introduction

Getting around in the BCA can be a challenge. Access to Buntingford Town is primarily by car. This is in part due to the fact that Buntingford Town has, in the past, been planned as a place for people to live but commuting for employment. Buntingford Town Centre, although it serves all the adjacent parishes in the BCA, is regarded as a minor town centre in the Draft District Plan January 2014 and the other settlements and villages in the BCA have very little retail or other services. The other towns in the District, Bishops Stortford, Hertford, Sawbridgeworth and Ware, benefit from good transport links.

Good access to Buntingford for the villages in the BCA is therefore important as is travel around the BCA area, particularly transport to other facilities that cannot be accessed in Buntingford Town, for example hospitals. In the villages of the BCA public transport is either non-existent or often limited to one bus per week.

Unless improved it is likely that transport access via all modes will be a major constraint to the growth of the economy and population of the BCA in the future which, based on current development proposals since 2011 could increase by up to 6,487 people. Pressure to accommodate this growth presents a challenge to protecting the existing natural, economic and social assets of the BCA and balancing this with the development that can contribute to investment in transport improvements and service viability.

Transport - What People Have Said

Transport was a major issue identified in the survey of residents for the Neighbourhood Plan. Most felt that public transport, especially to villages in the BCA was inadequate and that road infrastructure needs to be improved to increase safety and improve access. Many residents who regularly commute to work in the surrounding towns of Hertford, Royston, Stevenage, Bishops Stortford and further afield to Cambridge and London use their cars for these journeys simply because the regularity, timings and reliability of the existing public transport offering does not meet their current needs. 76% of respondents to an initial survey, to inform the development of the Neighbourhood Plan, felt the current Public Transport services were inadequate. This indicates a level of demand for this sustainable mode of travel that is not currently addressed. The vast majority requested late running buses especially through the villages and a more regular 331 service from Royston via Buntingford to Hertford and an enhanced Sunday service. 72% felt the service to the villages was inadequate. There was specific demand for services to accommodate the needs of young people who wished to access education and leisure activities.

Most people felt there were sufficient footpaths and bridleways although concern was expressed about their maintenance and comments made about connectivity. There was also

concern expressed that some of the existing Rights of Way may be lost with the new developments on the edge of the town thus limiting accessibility to the open countryside.

Transport in the BCA

Railways

There is no railway station in the Buntingford Community Area. The nearest railway stations are all situated in larger towns at least 8 to 12 miles away, but they do access a range of main line and local services. The principal difficulty is reliance on the car to access a railway station. An analysis of times and distances by various modes of transport to the nearest railway stations shows that travelling to these transport hubs by means other than a car is generally not practical.

A light railway system has been mooted to connect Buntingford to nearby towns. This would be welcome but is unlikely to be deliverable before the end of the plan period.

Buses

Bus services within the BCA are infrequent, do not serve the whole of the area and are often provided only for school children in term time. The sporadic nature of the bus services that serve the BCA also restricts the ability of students to attend further education courses at all institutions in the surrounding towns unless they have access to private transport.

The parish councils within the BCA will continue to lobby HCC, EHDC and bus operators to improve coverage and frequency of bus services within the BCA, particularly as new development takes place. As an example, the 798 Cambridge to London via Buntingford, which was discontinued, was often over-subscribed with extra buses sometimes being necessary. A similar service could be re-introduced in the interests of sustainable transport provision as an alternative to the car.

Car and Road Infrastructure

Reliance on the car in the BCA is, as for the rest of Hertfordshire, above national averages which is likely to increase with any new housing provision unless public transport services can be improved.

As with most roads in the District the road network in the BCA was not designed for the volumes of traffic they currently accommodate.

The current road network across the BCA is characterised by congestion and the existence of a number of pinch points. The network presents challenges for local residents and businesses in relation to efficient access, speed, safety and increased congestion. Congestion increases pollution due to idling traffic and impedes accessibility within and between settlements in the BCA. Associated noise also reduces amenity for residents and visitors.

Accident and speeding incidents on the road network are a cause for concern amongst residents and businesses and there is a need to improve the network at certain locations to address these issues. ~~The locations identified in policy INFR4, are priorities for local residents to address these problems and HCC and EHDC are encouraged to bring schemes suggested for the BCA, forward for consideration.~~ Through work on the Neighbourhood Plan, the community have identified a number of road improvement and traffic management schemes in the BCA which would be encouraged and supported. These are.

- A507 to Baldock – to improve safety, reduce speeds and improve access to Buttermilk Hall Farm and onward to the village of Cottered, the town of Baldock and also Stevenage via the B1037.
- The A10 south of the Buntingford South roundabout to the dual-carriageway to improve safety, reduce speeds and improve safe access to and from Westmill village.
- A10 into Buntingford to Station Road for speed reduction through signage and traffic calming
- Junction of B1368 and B1038 at Hare Street to reduce speeds and improve safety.
- Implementation of the Phoenix Project in Buntingford Town to provide shared space / surfacing and traffic calming measures affecting London Road, Aspenden Road, Baldock Road, Bowling Green Lane, Buntingford High Street, Ermine Street, Freman Drive, Greenways, Hare Street Road, Station Road, Market Hill and Vicarage Road.
- Retention and improvement of the existing two access points to and from the A10 via Ermine street and the new access to and from the A10 from the Buntingford North site.

It is considered that the implementation of road improvement and traffic management schemes at these locations would minimise the impacts associated with any new development and an increase in the number of vehicles within the BCA that may accompany it. The locations for improvement have all been identified based on accident levels and consultation feedback about the need for improvements to access and easing of congestion and to progress initiatives like the Phoenix Project (See Phil Jones Associates April 2015 Buntingford Traffic and Street Design Strategy) which are being pursued by Buntingford Town Council in consultation with East Herts District Council and Hertfordshire County Council.

Development of the designated site north of Buntingford includes a new access to the A10. Retention and improvement of the existing two access points to and from the A10 via Ermine street is required in order to minimize heavy goods vehicle traffic passing through the development of Buntingford North to access the area of the Park Farm industrial estate.

BUNTINGFORD COMMUNITY AREA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Parking provision for cars additional to that dedicated for private use of residents (via dedicated garage and spaces) is extremely limited within the BCA, despite the lack of public transport infrastructure.

In Buntingford there is a total of 236 off-street parking spaces with 14 of these provided for dedicated use by those with disabilities or children. Most of these are in the town centre and are controlled in terms of time, mainly to make it easier to use the High Street's facilities.

In village settlements of the BCA off-street parking is limited to disabled bays and informal use of roadside verges or car parking associated with public houses or community facilities.

Any loss of these facilities will result in further pressure on parking spaces which are already oversubscribed and could have an adverse impact on the vitality of the town centre and the viability of the retail provision in Buntingford and other settlements within the BCA. In the village settlements in particular, if adequate off-street parking for any development is not provided, it is likely to directly impact on highways in terms of access and safety.

The way that parking is provided as part of new development is also an important contributor to the demand for and pressure on existing on-street parking. Provision of car parking in shared courts is not popular with residents and as a result it is suggested that car parking provision should as far as possible be located so that vehicles are visible and easily accessible. Potential developers could give more consideration to underground parking for residents as it is proven that this creates not only a more open environment within the development, but is also more secure.

Vehicle parking standards currently applied to new developments are underproviding parking spaces, as there is evidence of some police interventions in relation to conflicts between residents over parking spaces.

Walking and Cycling

The walking and cycling networks that include the urban alleys of Buntingford, footpaths (both formal Rights of Way and others) and cycle ways within the BCA make a significant contribution to the ability of residents and visitors to access facilities, enjoy the landscape and reap the health benefits of walking. There is a lack of connectivity of these networks across the BCA as a whole, particularly in Aspenden and there is a need to consider extensions to these networks as part of developments wherever possible.

TRANSPORT POLICIES
OBJECTIVES

BUNTINGFORD COMMUNITY AREA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

TRANSPORT POLICIES

OBJECTIVES

To minimize traffic impacts on the Buntingford Community Area and its heritage assets and increase the number of journeys undertaken by walking, cycling and public transport.

To work with HCC, EHDC, transport operators and national cycling and walking associations to improve provision of sustainable modes of transport within the BCA to improve health and minimise adverse impacts on the environment of reliance on car travel.

T1: The following minimum parking standards ~~must be applied to~~ will be required in new housing development unless there is a clear justification for the application of a lower standard to achieve sustainable development:

- 1 bed house/flat - 1.5 off-road car parking space (rounded down, i.e. 3 dwellings = rounded to 4)
- 2 bed house/flat - 2 off-road car parking spaces
- 3 bed house/flat - 3 off-road car parking spaces
- 4+ bed house/flat - 4 off-road car parking spaces
- ~~Provision for short-term parking generated by service vehicles, salesmen and some visitors will need to be incorporated into residential developments of over 5 units at a rate of one extra space per 4 units.~~
- A garage will be acceptable as a parking space provided that its internal dimensions are at least 3m wide x 6m long. Tandem parking will ~~not~~ **only** be supported **permitted** where there is no suitable alternative.

The table below shows the parking standards currently applied in the BCA.

Existing Parking standards for the BCA			
	Local Plan Second Review 2007 Standards (Maximum requirement)	EHDC Supplementary Planning Document Standards (Maximum requirement)	EHDC District Plan Appendix Standards (Standard expected but subject to site considerations)
One bed house/flat	1.25	1.25	1.5
Two bed house/flat	1.5	1.5	2
3 bed house/flat	2.25	2.25	2.5
4+ bed house/flat	3	3	3

These standards are not considered sufficient for the BCA if effects on the existing highway network in terms of potential obstruction and safe access into and out of potential new development sites are to be avoided. Previous standards set mainly maximum numbers for provision and make no provision for visitors, service vehicles and so on. In addition the effects of on-street parking that may result from new development unless standards are improved may impact on the rural nature of the BCA settlements and the ability of both residents and visitors to enjoy the natural environmental assets of the BCA.

Appendix 5 – Transport, illustrates the difficulties that highway transport networks in the settlements of the BCA have in accommodating on-street parking, if adequate off-street parking is not provided as part of new developments.

The requirements of the NPPF paragraph 39 in relation to parking standards in terms of access to public transport, accessibility of development and local car ownership levels are better met by the use of the proposed standards since they reflect the specific constraints of potential development sites and the rural character and nature of the settlements within the BCA.

The proposed standards are recommended in order to prevent cars from being parked on streets that cannot easily accommodate them and prevent the parking of vehicles on the roadways or footways within a new development which can both impede access and have an impact on the main road network within the BCA.

Hertfordshire County Council have identified 55 locations in the BCA which are traffic sensitive from a winter maintenance and gritting perspective, giving an indication of the types of local connecting roads which are unsuitable for parking in the BCA. Current standards do not adequately meet existing needs, causing local disputes and congestion caused by cars being parked inappropriately. In addition most of the road networks within the villages do not have any controls in terms of parking / loading, nor do they have roadside verges that can be used informally. Where they do they are already in use.

T2: The provision of car and cycle parking should as far as possible allow for:

- **Off street vehicle and cycle parking to be contiguous with, and part of, each property, rather than provided as part of a shared arrangement.**
- **Shared parking areas may be acceptable provided they are built to Secured by Design standards and each space is ~~no more than 25 metres away, and clearly visible from, the property it serves.~~**

Car parking can be provided in a number of ways to meet standards for numbers to be provided as part of any development. These additional policies are intended to ensure that

cars can be parked on new development sites and are designed in a way that ensures that people are more likely to use them and feel reassured that they will be secure as a result of “natural surveillance”.

T3: Existing rights of way will be protected from development that adversely impacts on accessibility within and between settlements within the BCA.

Early consultation by potential developers with local user groups and the local Town or Parish Council will be encouraged, in order to minimise the effect of any proposed change, diversion or removal of this form of amenity. The provision of new Rights of Way will be encouraged especially where there is a recognised need to improve connectivity within the BCA or access to the open countryside.

T4: ~~Developers will be encouraged to submit proposals that extend existing networks,~~ Proposals for new development will be required to take advantage of opportunities to make appropriate connections to existing footpaths, urban alleyways, cycle paths, rights of way and bridleways in the BCA to increase provision and improve connectivity between and within settlements.

Walking provides opportunities for recreation and leisure and contributes to good health and well-being for residents of the BCA and ensures that more sustainable methods of getting around are possible and can reduce reliance on car transport. Protection of existing rights of way and consideration of proposals to extend them is intended to ensure that these opportunities continue to be available for new and existing residents.

T5: Development proposals that result in a loss of public parking provision will not be supported unless it is replaced with a comparable provision within reasonable distance of its former location.

Current public parking provision is located to enable good use of the Buntingford Town Centre which is used by people from all over the BCA. Any loss of these facilities could impact upon the sustainability and viability of Buntingford Town Centre and good access to parking is essential to accommodate visitors from the villages.

T6: Where possible new development within the BCA should normally be served by a regular bus service to Buntingford Town centre. Where existing routes do not already serve the proposed development, new development may be expected to fund contribute to an expanded service and associated infrastructure such as all-weather bus stops with seating. Facilities provided under this policy shall have regard to the bus strategy published by Hertfordshire County Council from time to time.

BUNTINGFORD COMMUNITY AREA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The BCA Neighbourhood Plan Team will engage regularly with HCC, EHDC and service providers to work to improve the connectivity of the bus network with railway services in order

to encourage residents of the BCA, especially those who commute for work to surrounding towns, to use public transport in preference to the car.

Monitoring

This plan covers the period up to 2031. Development will take place during this time, both in the Buntingford Community Area and outside it. In addition, during the period this plan covers, the current saved policies of the Local Plan will be superseded by the new District Plan. During the compilation of this Neighbourhood Plan the six parishes of the BCA have had regard to the emerging District Plan as well as the Local Plan.

It is important that the effectiveness of the plan is monitored to ensure that the policies are being applied well and that they are achieving the objectives of the BCANP.

Most of the 6 parishes within the BCA receive and respond to planning applications in their area and the planning policy processes and consultations that EHDC undertakes.

We propose in the future that all six parishes will work together for the purposes of monitoring the application of the Neighbourhood Plan annually and will report the outcome of monitoring to the six parish councils at their meetings.

The Evidence Base

The BCANP has benefitted considerably from the plan making process currently being undertaken by East Hertfordshire District Council and the work it has done to collate evidence in support of policies that will apply to the whole of the District.

In addition to this District wide information, evidence has also been collated related specifically to the area covered by the BCA. This includes the collection of local views and data about the assets of the area to provide support for the BCANP policies.

All this evidence can be found in the BCANP Supporting Document which provides links to data, reference documents and consultation results that have been used to inform the development of the BNCNP and its policies.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Buntingford and the Landscape of the East Herts Plateau

This appendix provides views that show the nature of the Landscape around Buntingford and demonstrate that Buntingford, despite its significant expansion since 1960, is far from obtrusive within the local landscape of the north-east Herts plateau. It also shows that there is now a danger that further expansion, if not correctly located and appropriately limited in height, will obtrude into and spoil the views within this highly valued and predominantly rural northern area of East Hertfordshire.

Introduction

Buntingford is situated in the High Rib valley which is one of several running approximately north to south from the northern part of the area known as the East Herts Plateau (see fig.02 'Landscape Regions of Hertfordshire' in reference 1). Chapter 5 of the East Herts District Plan Supporting Document (reference 2) states in para 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 river Rib nestling in elevated plateaus."

Regarding the value of the landscape around Buntingford, Ref. 1 states community views as follows 'Although data is incomplete this area appears to be one of the most highly valued in the district and this is not limited to the nationally-noted village of Westmill. "Buntingford nestles well into the Rib Valley" '.

Paragraph 61 of the NPPF states that, "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." Thus one factor that should be taken into account in the preparation of the Housing Policies for the Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan is the impact that housing development in Buntingford will have on the natural environment of the BCA.

Reference 2 refers in paragraphs 5.3.36, 5.3.44, 5.3.48 and 5.3.52 to the desirability of conserving and respecting the valley setting of Buntingford; paragraph 5.3.40 refers to the desirability of enhancing local distinctiveness by ensuring that Buntingford is contained within its landscape context.

This appendix aims to illustrate, by reproducing a series of wide angle views, the extent to which Buntingford sits within the Rib Valley and has impinged very little on the highly valued local landscape - to the benefit of all. Apart from one view taken in December 2015, all views were taken from elevated positions around the town in early June 2015. The appendix also

BUNTINGFORD COMMUNITY AREA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

sets out to indicate what restrictions should be placed on new building so as to preserve the landscape setting of the Town and maintain this situation.

Views of Buntingford from the Surrounding Countryside

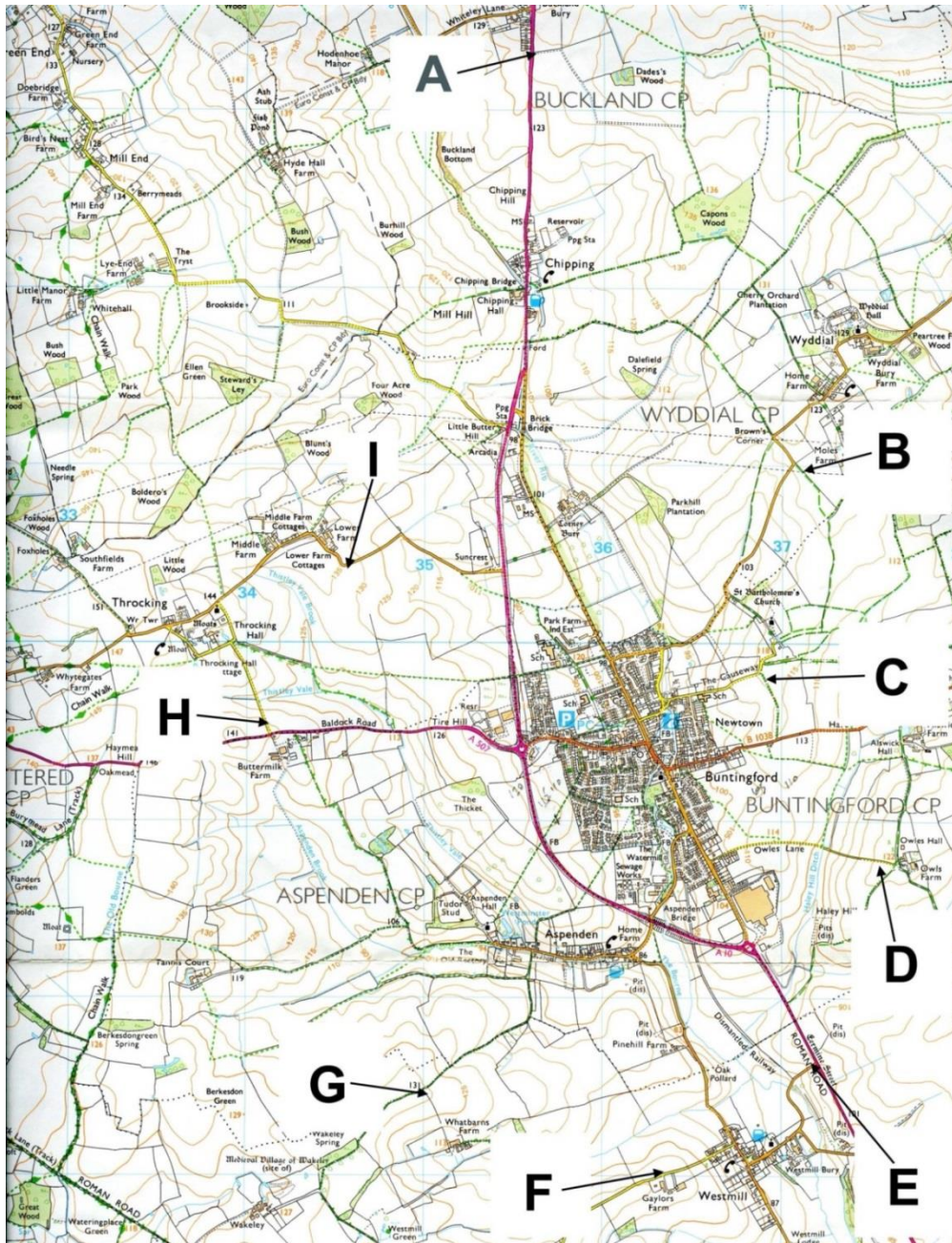


Fig.1. Places from which the following views were taken of the area across Buntingford (Viewpoints were at the tip of the arrowheads shown)

BUNTINGFORD COMMUNITY AREA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The following pages show the wide angle views from each of the points marked A to I. All wide angle views were taken with the same lens setting. These pictures indicate the largely hidden nature of Buntingford within the Rib Valley but they do indicate that some more recent Buntingford building has been allowed to begin to obtrude on the local landscape.

View south from point A (S. of Buckland Village)



At first sight, little of Buntingford can be seen from the A10 as it emerges from Buckland village but, as the two enlargements show, the roofing of the buildings at the Buntingford Business Park is quite noticeable, as too are the roofs of several houses on the higher slopes of the western side of Buntingford. This is even more the case in winter when the tree foliage is absent.

View South-West from Point B (West end of footpath W13, near Wyddial)

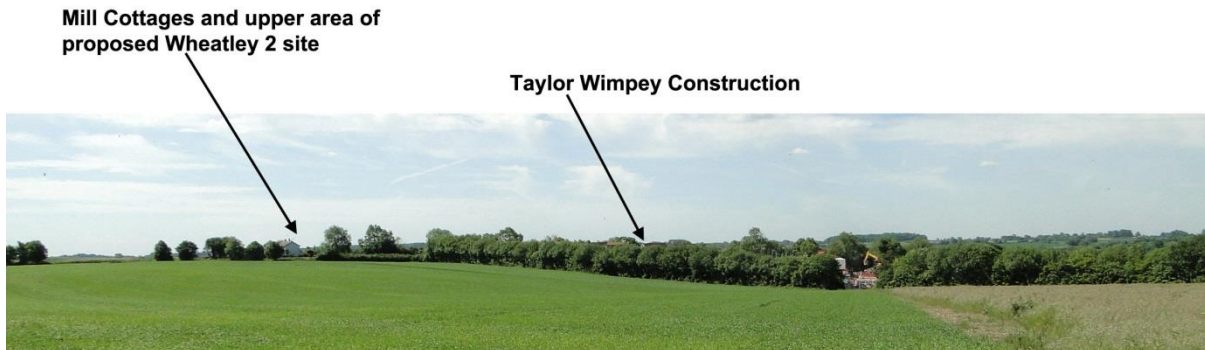


The only part of Buntingford that can be seen from point B is that highlighted, which

BUNTINGFORD COMMUNITY AREA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

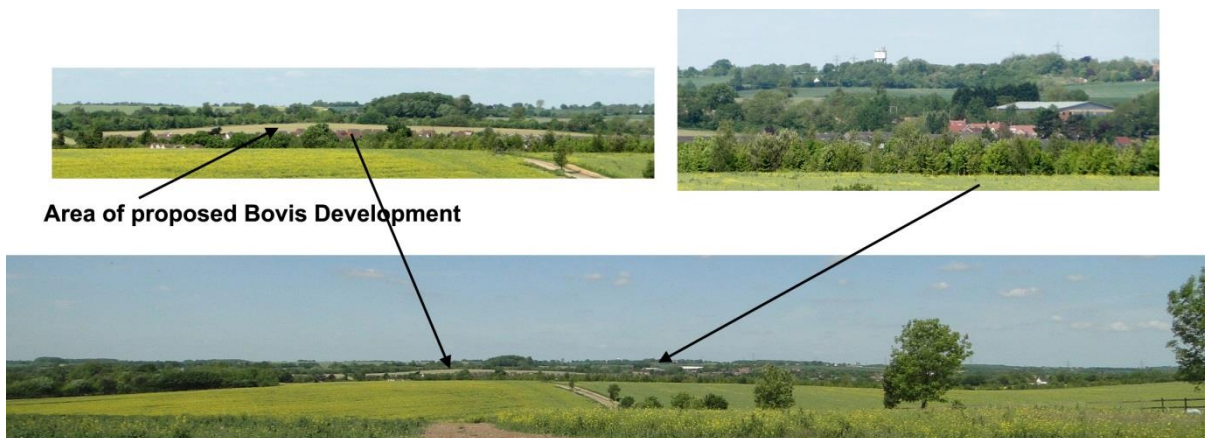
is the result of recent development along Skipp's Meadow on the rising land to the west of the Town.

View South-West from Point C (N end of Bridleway B13)



This view, taken in a south-westerly direction, shows the roofs of Taylor Wimpey houses under construction. It also indicates the position of Mill Cottages. Currently there is a proposal for housing construction by Wheatley Homes (Wheatley 2) up to a point fairly close to Mill Cottages and it is difficult to see how these will avoid impinging significantly on the view unless they are restricted in height to a single storey.

View West from Point D (West of Owles Farm)



Again, the main features of Buntingford to obtrude on the landscape are the buildings of Buntingford Business Park and the current developments at Longmead and Deacons Place.

This view also shows that building on the land currently being proposed for development by Bovis would show very significantly on the landscape as seen from the Wyddial Plateau.

BUNTINGFORD COMMUNITY AREA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

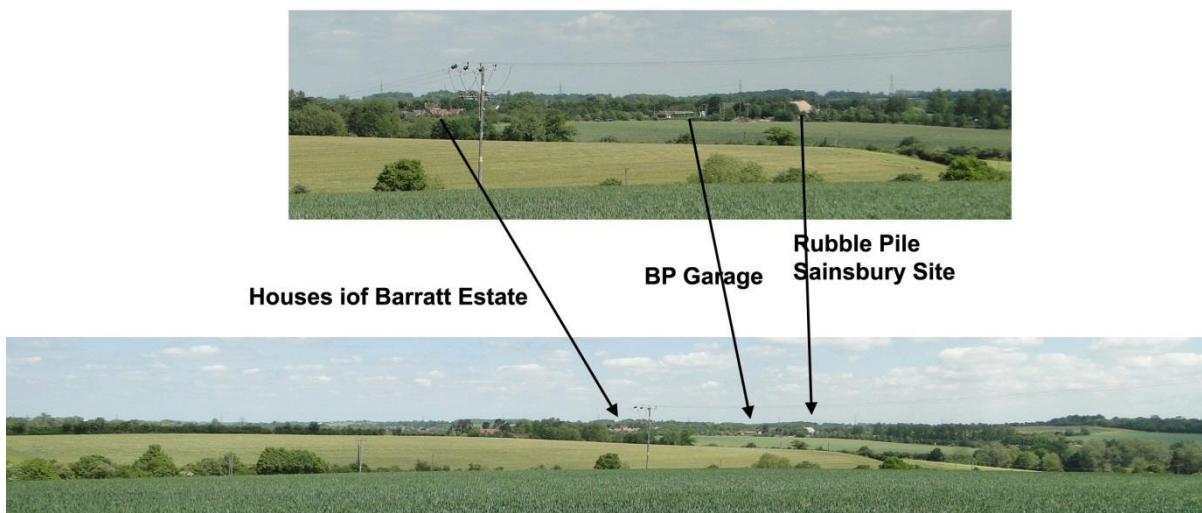
View North-North-West from Point E (Northern Westmill Turn off A10)



Since the demolition of the Sainsbury (Fairview) site on the south side of Buntingford, the view from the south has been much improved. Buntingford is little seen from the south until one is almost upon it. The construction of housing by Fairview will no doubt impinge to some extent on the landscape but this should be to a much lower extent than had recently been the case with the Sainsbury depot. The enlarged section shows the extent to which the BP petrol station is visible from the south.

This view also shows the impact that the proposed Bovis development will have if allowed to go forward.

View North from Point F (West of Westmill by Gaylors Farm)



BUNTINGFORD COMMUNITY AREA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The demolition of the Sainsbury site has removed what was at one time a great eyesore on the landscape. The construction of the Fairview Estate on that site is likely to be far less visible from this viewpoint than was the old Sainsbury site, as long as the tree screening of that site is maintained and enhanced. Some of the housing of the Barratt Estate and the BP Petrol Station to the South of the Town are clearly visible. These are examples that should be avoided.

View North-East from Point G (Whatbarns Farm Track off Wakeley Lane)



The view north-east from here shows a similar situation to that from point F, with the addition of a glimpse also of the roofs of the housing at the southern part of the Fairfield estate.

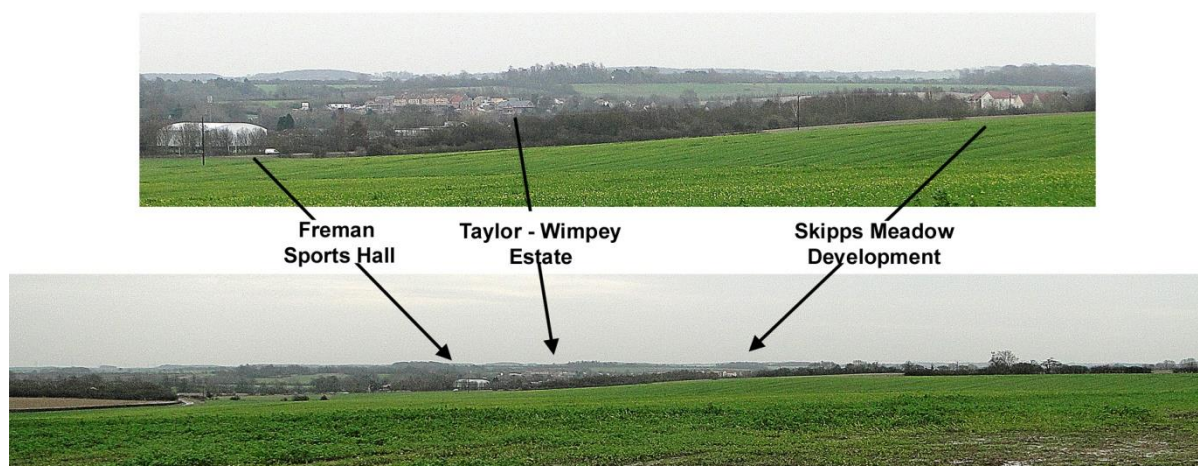
View East from Point H (Throcking turn off A507)



Buntingford has largely remained hidden from view when approaching from the west, as this shot taken from close to the A507 clearly shows. Nowadays, apart from the mobile 'phone communication tower, the only significant object seen is the roofing of the buildings at Buntingford Business Park. With expansion of the Business Park being proposed for the future, every effort should be made to ensure that building heights are restricted to a level that

will maintain this view.

View South-East from Point I (Throcking Lane)



This view, taken in December 2015, shows the significant impact that three recent planning decisions have had on visibility from the north-west.

Discussion

The results of this photographic exercise demonstrate that Buntingford largely continues to nestle within the local landscape of the North-East Hertfordshire Plateau. Nevertheless, they also show that great care should be taken in granting further permission for more development in and around the Town if this is to remain the case and if we are to ensure that the highly prized landscape remains the attractive area for all types of walkers and riders that it currently is.

The demolition of the Sainsbury site has seen the removal of what was the main single blot on the landscape. With careful planning, the current landscape views can be maintained. However, as many of the foregoing views show, the construction of taller houses on the valley slopes does begin to intrude on the landscape (see particularly the indication of the developments at Skipps Meadow, Longmead, the Barratt Estate, the Taylor Wimpey Estate and Buntingford Business Park).

The views from sites D and E in particular show the area between Buntingford and the A10 bypass that is being proposed by Bovis for further housing. It is quite clear from these views that such housing, which would be on land that rises to above 115 metres above sea level, would impinge significantly on the landscape to the detriment of the local area's natural beauty. Such development would be on land rising several metres higher in places than that on which the highest level of development at Longmead, which is clearly shown in the view from point C.

Conclusions

Reference 1 refers to the landscape around Buntingford as being one of the most highly valued in the district. Reference 2 refers to the desirability of conserving and respecting the valley setting of Buntingford and the NPPF says that planning decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural environment. Thus there does seem to be a degree of support for ensuring that the future development of Buntingford is carried out in such a way that the landscape views across the Town are not adversely affected. This requires that building on higher ground is limited in height and that any further housing is developed within the valley setting.

References

1. East Herts Landscape Character Assessment SPD available at <http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/index.jsp?articleid=24642>
2. East Herts District Plan Supporting Document Chapter 5 - Options Refinement, available at http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/media/pdf/m/g/ERPD_-_Chapter_5_-_first_part.pdf

Appendix 2 - Spatial Standards in Buntingford since 1960

From 1960 to 2011 Buntingford saw an almost four times increase in its population. This expansion has been achieved mainly by the construction of a series of medium sized estates and to a lesser extent by quite a significant level of infill building within the conservation area. Until recently, the estates were constructed in a manner that acknowledges the rural nature of the area within which Buntingford is sited: they provided an open aspect which reflects the open aspect of the surrounding countryside. However, since 2011, the LPA has allowed developers to construct estates that, whilst possibly appropriate to a large town or city environment, are out of keeping with the rest of Buntingford and which, by comparison with the local developments of the latter half of the twentieth century, bring a less rural feel to the Town. Examples are set out in the body of this note. The residents of Buntingford are normally accepting of the limited amenities and infrastructure that small town brings because these are offset by a pleasant and relatively open environment. To remove this latter advantage for new development in the Town is quite unreasonable. It is for this reason that this Neighbourhood Plan contains policy **HD4** relating to the separation between buildings and the provision of private amenity space.

Existing Spatial Standards

In the early 1960s, significant developments took place in the areas now known as Monks Walk, Vicarage road and Layston Meadow. Examples of these developments are shown in the photographs (figures 1 to 3) at the end of this appendix. Suffice it to say, the space between buildings and the provision of amenity space is well in excess of the levels proposed in The Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan as Policy **HD4** which includes design guidance on these issues. All photographs shown in this appendix were taken with the same wide angle lens setting in order to obtain valid comparisons. Figure 4 shows a typical view of Snells Mead which was constructed just a few years after the previously mentioned estates. A little later, the estate of Downhall Ley (figure 5) was built. Again, this provides space in excess of the standard proposed as part of policy **HD4**.

In the 1990s, Bovis constructed an estate to the west of the Town which, although providing significant public amenity space, showed (in some areas of the estate) the tendency towards a less open living environment - see figure 6. In fact, the separation between buildings in this photograph is very close to the standards proposed as part of policy **HD4**.

The need to have a set of local standards for building separation and private amenity space provision was brought to a head for local residents by the construction of the Barratt estate at Ólvega Drive / Crouch Gardens. Figures 7 and 8 show views of two different areas within that estate taken with the same camera on the same field of view setting as all the other figures in this note. Whilst this type of development might be appropriate to a large city that provides other facilities to compensate for less spacious communal living, it is not at all appropriate to a rural setting such as Buntingford. It is interesting to note that the number of houses fitted with

blinds to their living areas is here far higher than elsewhere in the Town. This would suggest that residents are accepting less daylight as a trade-off for more privacy.

Proposed Design Code

It is in order to avoid the prospect of more development such as that shown in figures 7 & 8, that policy **HD4** and its associated design code guidance (see Appendix 4 – Design Code) has been drawn up for inclusion in the BCANP. These standards recognise that the pressure to provide homes in an environment of limited land supply mitigate against providing more estates such as those built in Buntingford in the 1960s and 1970s but, at the same time, aim to provide new development which to some extent reflects the rural setting of Buntingford and which does not lead to over cramped living spaces in which to raise families. The proposed design code has been drawn up following an investigation into spatial standards being implemented in other parts of the country and which provide residents with a reasonable degree of space, privacy and daylight in and around their homes. The code has been developed to be consistent with the general standards of the built environment within the BCA.

Examples of the standards used elsewhere can be found at the following web addresses.

<http://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/PDFFiles/Planning/LPGN02.pdf>

<http://www.adur-worthing.gov.uk/media/media,98782,en.pdf>

www.wrexham.gov.uk/english/planning_portal/lpg_notes/lpg21.htm

<http://www.woking.gov.uk/planning/policy/ldf/outlookandprivacy/oapdpdf>

<http://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/content/doclib/634.pdf>

<https://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/IMCE/Advice/PlanningPolicy/Adopted%20SPADS%20SPG.pdf>

<http://tendring.addressscafe.com/App/DiscussIt/DocumentContent.aspx?sectionId=ac8123a1-b221-4999-9817-49d473f3ea61>

Examples of Post-1960 Developments in Buntingford



Fig. 1 Monks Walk



Fig. 2 Vicarage Road



Fig. 3 Layston Meadow



Fig. 4 Snells Mead



Fig. 5 Downhall Ley



Fig. 6 Oak End



Fig. 7 Ólvega Drive



Fig. 8 Crouch Gardens

Appendix 3 - Housing Numbers in the BCA since 2011

1. Introduction

This document has been prepared to address the issue of housing development within the BCA which formed such a strong part of local people's views in our original surveys and consultations for the Neighbourhood Plan.

It sets out to establish the level of housing development that has already been proposed for the Area and attempts to estimate the population increase that could result. The timescale of the Plan is 2011 to 2031 and this appendix sets out a list of housing developments (C2 and C3 classes) that have planning approval and those that are seeking planning approval for construction within this period. This information has informed the development of the neighbourhood plan policies. Some of the housing built in the early years of this timeframe were approved prior to 2011 and some of these were included in the East Herts Local Plan ~~Second Review~~ dated 2007 which covered the period up to 2011. Where this is the case, it is made clear in the following tables.

2. The Data

Table 1 at the end of this document lists the planning applications for housing development (Classes C2 and C3) within the BCA that have been received by EHDC and which have either been approved by them, approved on appeal, ~~are currently (November 2015) at appeal~~ or which are yet to be decided. The information is grouped by parish. The table lists only new housing (including barn conversions); it does not include extra dwelling spaces resulting from extensions, garage and loft conversions.

3. New Housing Figures and Population Increase Estimates

3.1 The Scenarios

The housing figures and estimates of corresponding population increase that are given below relate to three different scenarios as follows:

- **Scenario 1** Post March 2011 Housing for which planning approval has already been granted
- ~~Scenario 2~~ As scenario 2 plus the housing proposals which are currently at appeal
- **Scenario 3** As scenario 2 plus housing for which application has been made but no decision has yet been taken by EHDC

In comparing the data of Table 1 with the numbers in the Scenario Tables, it should be noted that Table 1 contains 97 dwellings that were 'allocated' in the East Herts Local Plan Second Review of 2007. The tables relating to the ~~three~~ **two** scenarios do not. Thus, for example, there is a difference of 97 in the total number of dwellings shown between Table 1 and the ~~three~~ **two** Scenario Tables and corresponding differences in the numbers of bedrooms and estimates of population increase over and above those anticipated by the Local Plan of 2007.

3.2 Basis for Estimating Population Increase

The estimates of population increase have been carried out using three different assumptions. The first is that the average number of people per dwelling will be 2.44. This figure is taken from the recent Buntingford Employment Study carried out for East Herts (Ref. 1). It is a somewhat lower figure than the average number of people per dwelling within the BCA shown by the 2011 census, which is 2.54. The second estimate is based on the assumption that there will be, on average, one person per bedroom created. This is regarded as a somewhat more realistic figure for estimation purposes as it does take into account dwelling size. The third level of estimate is derived from a methodology used by the Greater London Authority since it is the only standard we have been able to locate which includes a view of occupancy based on the number of bedrooms. This standard assumes that the number of occupants in each dwelling will be equal to one more than the number of bedrooms. This is called 'Max. Assumption' in the following tables. For a predominantly rural area such as the BCA, this is regarded as providing an upper limit to the likely population increase.

It should be pointed out at this stage that in order not to over-estimate population figures, all population figures quoted assume that the 60 bed care home and sheltered accommodation area will have only one person per bed. On the other hand, no allowance has been made for population increase resulting from extensions to existing properties or as a result of garage and loft conversions.

3.3 The Results of Analysis

An analysis of the data in Table 1 for each of the scenarios listed previously, leads to the results shown below. As no developments have yet been proposed for Aspenden, this parish is not included in these three tables.

Scenario 1. Post 2011 Housing Already Approved

Parish	No. of Dwellings	No. of Bedrooms	Est. No. of People @ 2.44 per Dwelling	Est. No. of People @ 1 per Bedroom	Est. No. of People Max. Assumption
Buckland & Chipping	1	3	2	3	4
Buntingford	1214 1270	3439 3631	2876 3013	3439 3631	4593 4841
Cottered	6	18	15	18	24
Hormead	10	33	24	33	43
Wyddial	3	7	7	7	10
BCA Total	1234 1290	3500 3692	2924 3061	3500 3692	4674 4922

BUNTINGFORD COMMUNITY AREA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Scenario 2. Post 2011 Housing Already Approved Plus that at Appeal

Parish	No. of Dwellings	No. of Bedrooms	Est. No. of People @ 2.44 per Dwelling	Est. No. of People @ 1 per Bedroom	Est. No. of People Max. Assumption
Buckland & Chipping	4	3	2	3	4
Buntingford	1270	3631	3013	3631	4841
Cottered	6	18	15	18	24
Hormead	10	33	24	33	43
Wyddial	3	7	7	7	10
BCA Total	1290	3692	3061	3692	4922

Scenario 3. Post 2011 Housing Already Approved plus that at Appeal and that Awaiting Decision

Parish	No. of Dwellings	No. of Bedrooms	Est. No. of People @ 2.44 per Dwelling	Est. No. of People @ 1 per Bedroom	Est. No. of People Max. Assumption
Buckland & Chipping	1	3	2	3	4
Buntingford	1670	4767	3988	4767	6377
Cottered	7	21	17	21	28
Hormead	15	53	37	53	68
Wyddial	3	7	7	7	10
BCA Total	1696	4851	4051	4851	6487

4. House Size Mix

An analysis of house sizes already approved within the BCA shows a distribution of house types as displayed in the first column of the table below. The recent SHMA assessment of housing needs for the area (Ref. 2) and the Draft East Herts District Plan of January 2014 proposed levels of mix that are shown in the second and third columns respectively.

House Type	Proportion of Approvals	2015 SHMA Recommended Mix	Draft Dist. Plan
		see Fig 76 p 101 of Ref.2	see Table 13.1, p149 of Ref.3
1 bed	7.78%	9.30%	17%
2 bed	25.18%	24.40%	27%
3 bed	38.19%	43.00%	40%
4 bed	23.53%	18.60%	13%
5 bed	5.31%	4.70%	3%

These figures indicate that there has been a tendency within the BCA as a whole to allow the development of housing with a larger number of bedrooms than the overall need for housing would justify. Therefore it is proposed that the planning process should attempt to redress this situation and it is for this reason that **Policy HD7** has been included in the BCA Neighbourhood Plan

5. Conclusions

The above tables for the three scenarios show that the recent housing increase within the BCA, and that which is proposed, is concentrated on Buntingford. The other parishes have not, so far, accommodated a significant increase in new households via new development.

In the case of Buntingford, where there were 1962 households in 2011, the level of growth indicated by ~~all three~~ **both** scenarios is large, being 63%, ~~66%~~ or 86% respectively in terms of households. In terms of population the percentage increases are likely to be even larger. This level of increase, without any growth or planned growth in community infrastructure (health, education, transport, etc.), and in terms of impact on the rural nature of the BCA and its environmental and social assets, is not likely to constitute sustainable development as required by the NPPF.

In addition, approvals for housing development over the last few years have tended to favour the construction of somewhat larger houses than the Strategic Housing Market Assessment requires and that local people, as expressed during the neighbourhood planning process, desire to meet local needs.

6. References

1. Buntingford Employment Study, page 24
http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/media/pdf/m/o/Buntingford_Employment_Study_-_Final_Report_140701.pdf
2. West Essex and East Hertfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment - Report of Findings, Sept 2015. [http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/media/pdf/2/4/SHMA_final_\(2015\).pdf](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/media/pdf/2/4/SHMA_final_(2015).pdf)
3. East Herts Draft District Plan, January 2014 Part 2, Chapter 13
<http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/media/pdf/5/e/Chapter13.pdf>
4. GLA 2010 London Housing Design Guide <https://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/housing-land/publications/london-housing-design-guide>

BUNTINGFORD COMMUNITY AREA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Table 1: New Housing in the BCA March 2011 to November 2015 (For Summary and Explanation of Notes see Next Page)

SITE	DATE OF PLANNING APPLICATION SUBMISSION	PLANNING APPLICATION REF NO	DATE OF PLANNING APPROVAL	STATUS AS AT Nov. 2015	START DATE	COMPLETION DATE	NO. OF DWELLINGS	NOTES	1 BED		2 BED		3 BED		4 BED		6 BED	TOTAL BEDROOMS	Pop. Est GLA basis
									Soc	Mkt	Soc	Mkt	Soc	Mkt	Soc	Mkt			
Aspenden																			
Nil																			
Buckland & Chipping																			
The Homestead	19-Jul-11	3/11/1294	13-Sep-11	Built			1							1				3	4
Buntingford																			
Station Yard Development	12-Oct-07	3/07/2155/FP	08-Aug-08	Built			11				3		8					30	41
	5-Aug-08	3/08/1424/FP	12-Feb-09																
	5-Aug-08	3/08/1425/FP	12-Feb-09																
Barratts	11-Jul-09	3/09/1061/FP	30-Nov-09	Built	2010	2012	149	see note 4			35	21	21	45	3	18	6	424	573
Vicarage Road	9-Apr-10	3/10/0657/FP	24-Jun-10	Built			1											4	5
Rear of 59, High Street	4-May-10	3/10/0815/FP	09-Jul-10	Under Construction			3						1					8	11
	9-May-13	3/13/0793/FP	23-Jul-13																
Layston Cottage, River Green	5-Nov-10	3/10/1969/FP	21-Dec-10	Built			2											6	8
Land off Longmead	17-Nov-10	3/10/2040/OP	18-Oct-11	Under Construction	mid 2014	end 2015	26				7		3				4	12	99
7 Bowlers Mead	7-Jan-11	3/11/0022/FP	03-Mar-11	Built			1				1							1	2
Woods Way	19-Apr-11	3/11/0039/FP	24-Mar-11	Built			11	see note 4					3					36	47
r/o 12, High Street	1-Apr-11	3/11/0568/FP	03-Jun-11	Built			1											1	5
Skipps Meadow	10-Jun-11	3/11/1033/RP	14-Sep-11	Built			50				12		8	10		17	3	161	211
Old Dairy Mews	28-Jun-11	3/11/1153/FP	17-Aug-11	Built			3									3		12	15
	11-Feb-13	3/13/0229/FP	11-Apr-13																
The Red House	7-Dec-11	3/11/2108/FP	18-Jan-12	Built			5											7	12
Railway PH development	19-Dec-11	3/11/2180/FP	09-Feb-12	Built			8											22	30
36 High Street	5-Jan-12	3/12/0020/FP	29-Feb-12	Built			1				1							1	2
Bridewell House	18-Apr-12	3/12/0674/FP	20-Jun-12	Built			1											4	5
Plashes Drive	20-Apr-11	3/12/0731/FP	18-Jun-12	Under Construction			1											1	6
	3-Dec-13	3/13/2135/FP	10-Apr-14																
34 High Street	6-Jun-12	3/12/0944/FP	30-Jul-12	Built			4											5	9
7-9, Hare Street Road	12-Jun-12	3/12/1029/FP	15-Aug-12	Built			1	see note 1										5	6
76, High Street	22-Jun-12	3/12/1047/FP	22-Aug-12	Built			2											2	4
Aspenden Bridge	31-Jul-13	3/13/1399/OP		At Appeal			56						17	11		17	6	192	248
Tylers Close	18-Jan-13	3/13/0074/FP	13-Nov-13	not started			1											3	4
Wheatley 1	29-May-14	3/14/0970/FP	10-Dec-14	Under Construction	Sep-15		105		13		16	15	13	22		26		284	389
Land at Park Farm	13-May-13	3/13/0813/OP	11-Apr-14	not started			13							6		7		46	59
The Red House	22-May-13	3/13/0881/FP	22-Jul-13	Built			3											6	9
Taylor Wimpey	10-Jun-13	3/13/1000/FP	11-Sep-13	Under Construction			160		18		16	3	27	27	3	50	16	510	670
	12-Dec-14	3/14/2222/MA																	
	6-Mar-15	3/15/0553/NMA																	
Howe Green	2-Jul-13	3/13/1180/RP	05-Sep-13	Built			3											3	18
Applewood, Ermine Street	8-Jul-13	3/13/1294/FP	07-Oct-13	Under Construction			6											23	29
	7-Nov-14	3/14/1227/FP	18-Sep-14															0	
Pigeon	5-Aug-13	3/13/1375/OP	05-Feb-14	not started			240	see note 5	23	60	26	16	23	40		37	15	579	759
Fairview/Sainsbury	31-Oct-13	3/13/1925/OP	18-Sep-14	Under Construction	15-Oct		316	see note 3	18		87			141		70		895	1211
	19-Sep-14	3/14/1171/FP																	
	6-Feb-15	3/15/0300/OUT																	
Wheatley 2	21-Mar-14	3/14/0528/OP		not started			100	see note 2										284	384
	7-Oct-14	3/14/1807/OP																	
Wheatley 3	21-Mar-14	3/14/0531/OP		not started			80	see note 2										227	307
	7-Oct-14	3/14/1808/OP																	
16 Porters Close	2-Jun-14	3/14/0986/FP	14-Aug-14	built			1											2	3
Land West of Buntingford	23-Dec-14	3/14/2304/OP		awaiting decision			400	see note 2										1136	1536
2 George House Cottages	26-Jan-15	3/15/0146/FP	27-Mar-15	Built			1											2	3
Deacons Place	24-Apr-15	3/15/0848/FUL	03-Jul-15	Under Construction			1											2	3
Cottered Parish																			
Stables at Throcking Hall	12-Sep-11	3/11/1605/FP	08-Nov-11	Built			1											4	5
Coles Green Farm	3-Oct-11	3/11/1756/FP	28-Nov-11	Built			1											3	4
Cottered Garage Site	13-Feb-12	3/12/0241/FP	27-Jun-12	Built			2											6	8
Maggie Farm	15-Jan-13	3/13/0029/CL	26-Feb-13	Built			1				1							1	2
Lordship Farm	18-Dec-14	3/14/0318/FP	10-Apr-14	Built			1											4	5
Cheynes House	3-Sep-15	3/15/1813/FUL		Unknown			1	Refused by EH. Appeal ?										3	4
Hormead																			
Westons, Gt. Hormead	7-Jan-09	3/09/0019/LB	02-Mar-09	Built			1											4	5
White House Lodge, Hare Street	10-Jun-13	3/13/1003/FP	14-Aug-13	Built			1				1							1	2
Bury Farm, Gt. Hormead	18-Jun-14	3/14/1112/FP	11-Aug-14	not started			7							3				26	33
Kenton House, Hare Street	9-Jan-15	3/15/0040/FP	22-Jul-15	not started			1											2	3
Steelcraft Works, Hare Street	14-Aug-15	3/15/1689/FUL		Decision Awaited			5											20	25
Wyddial																			
Wyddial Bury Farm	30-Dec-09	3/09/2108/FP	10-Sep-10	Built			1											2	3
Pear Tree Wood	10-Mar-14	3/14/0450/FP	02-May-14	Built			1											3	4
Wyddial Park	4-Jun-15	3/15/1183/FUL	19-Aug-15	Under Construction			1											2	3
TOTAL							1793											5126	6859

**Table 1: New Housing in the BCA (Cont.)
Summary and Notes**

Summary

Housing Built or Under Construction	270 889
Housing Under Construction	619
Decision Awaited/At Appeal	461 (405/56) 405
Approved but Not Yet Started	442
Other Approved	498
Status Unknown	1
TOTAL	1793

Notes

1. Replacement of 2 of 2 bed semis by 1 of 2 bed semi, 1 of 3 bed semi and 1 Of 4 bed detached.
2. These are Outline Planning Applications and there is no firm information on bedroom distribution. A mean figure of 2.84 bedrooms per dwelling has been assumed consistent with the Wheatley 1 development.
3. There is no definitive information on the breakdown between Market and Affordable Housing.
4. The East Herts Local Plan Second Review 2007 indicated that 97 dwellings would be created in Buntingford by 2011; 82 would be on the site that became the Barratt Estate, 8 on the site now known as Woods Way and the remainder on the Park Farm site.
5. Includes a 60 bed Care Home/Sheltered Accommodation

Appendix 4 - Design Code

This Design Code relates to Housing Policy **HD4** which is:

HD4: New housing design should ~~provide an open aspect appropriate to a~~ respect the rural/semi-rural character of the Buntingford Community Area and its immediate context ~~area and conform, wherever possible, to the design code~~ having appropriate regard to the standards set out in Appendix 4 – Design Code.

Housing Design Code

Space around New Dwellings and the Provision of Private Amenity Space

New dwellings should benefit from a satisfactory degree of privacy and daylight and the residents of existing dwellings should not be unduly affected by new development in this regard.

Distances between Dwellings

Minimum separation distances should be maintained between dwellings, and in particular, between the windows lighting habitable rooms. Habitable rooms include living rooms, bedrooms, studies and kitchens. They do not include halls, stair landings, passage ways and utility rooms.

For dwellings of one or two storeys constructed on flat ground:

- Where two habitable rooms face each other, such that direct overlooking is possible, the windows of the corresponding dwellings should be at least 23 metres apart.
- Where a window in a habitable room faces a blank wall, the height of which exceeds that of the top of that window, there should be a minimum distance of 13 metres between them. In the case in which the only habitable room that faces a blank wall is a kitchen, this 13 metre spacing can be relaxed so long as suitable screening is in place between the kitchen window and the blank wall and this screening is at a distance of at least 2 metres from the kitchen window.

Where the ground level varies between the dwellings the above separation distances should be increased by 1 metre for each ½ metre difference in height. Developers will be required to indicate on their plans the finished floor levels of their buildings in relation to a fixed datum and, where there are windows on adjacent existing properties, the levels of these properties.

For dwellings of three or more storeys, the above separation distances should be increased by 3 metres for each additional storey on flat ground and 3 metres for each additional storey plus 1 metre for each ½ metre difference in ground level on sloping

ground.

On sites where dwellings are angled so that they do not directly face each other and the angle between the facing windows of habitable rooms is more than 60 degrees, the above separation distances may be reduced by 5 metres. (The angle between directly facing windows is 0 degrees)

The above distances between buildings apply whether or not they are separated by a road or footpath.

Private Amenity Space

All new dwellings should benefit from private amenity space - effectively a back garden or balcony area - that is not overlooked by adjacent or opposite living rooms or adjacent outdoor seating areas. These private amenity spaces should receive a reasonable amount of sunlight and should not be closely bounded by high walls or buildings. They should be directly accessible from the road on which the dwelling is sited.

Private amenity space shall be provided for new dwellings in accordance with the following minimum standards:

- For houses each dwelling should have a minimum garden depth of 10 metres
- 3 or more bedroomed house - 100 square metres garden area
- 2 bedroomed house - 75 square metres garden area
- One bedroomed house - 50 square metres garden area
- Ground floor flat, apartment or maisonette - 50 square metres garden area
- Non ground floor flat, apartment or maisonette - 10 square metres balcony area per bedroom

Natural Light and Outlook

New housing development should provide a suitable outlook and level of natural light for both new and neighbouring dwellings. This means that dwellings should have sufficient daylight to allow the comfortable use of habitable rooms, kitchens and patio areas in gardens immediately adjoining the building. "Daylight" is defined here as the amount of ambient light received from all directions. Residents should enjoy an outlook of good quality from these rooms and spaces without adjacent buildings being overbearing. Direct sunlight also makes a home more pleasant to live in. All dwellings should receive some direct sunlight in at least one habitable room in all months of the year. This is sometimes difficult, such as with single aspect flats which face north. In these cases, consideration may be given to mitigating measures such as increasing the amount of daylight which can enter the rooms, for example through larger windows. In order to achieve adequate

natural light and reduce the possibility of adjacent buildings becoming overbearing, no

building facing the windows of a neighbouring building should subtend an angle of more than 25 degrees from the horizontal from a point 2 metres above the floor level (the normal height of windows) of the affected building. This will automatically take into account changes in ground level.

Appendix 5 – Impact of insufficient parking spaces in the BCA

The following series of photographs show some examples of on-street parking.

Photographs 1, 2 and 3 show the impact of on-street parking on some roads in Buntingford, all of which were built when the railway was the main mode of transport to and from the Town. With the closure of the railway in the mid-1960s, car usage increased, exacerbated by the gradual deterioration of public transport serving the Town throughout the 1970s and '80s. With the gradual increase in car ownership during this period and later, the need for off-road parking became critical, whereas the space to accommodate this was limited as these houses are predominantly terraced with no garages.

Photograph 4 (Aspenden) is typical of the impact of on-road parking in the smaller villages as the roads were originally farm tracks prior to motorised transport and the need for metalling.

Photographs 5 and 6 are of Cottered and Hare Street respectively. Cottered lies on the very busy A507 and does become congested when just one car is parked on the road. Hare Street also suffers from some congestion in similar circumstances.

Photograph 7, the A10 which runs through Buckland & Chipping, 8, the road through Throcking, 9, the road through Wyddial and 10 shows a section of the B1038 through Hormead.

Photographs 11 and 12 show the impact of on street parking when new developments do not have sufficient off road parking.



Archers and Paddock Road



Baldock Road

BUNTINGFORD COMMUNITY AREA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN



Monks Walk



Aspenden



Cottered



Hare Street



Chipping



Throcking



Wyddial



Hormead



Crouch Gardens



Olvega Drive

Appendix 6 - Environment and Sustainability – BCA Local Green Spaces

Millennium Wildlife Site Hare Street Road

Home to a variety of fauna and flora, the Millennium Wildlife Site was created in 2005 by Countryside Management Services (CMS), on behalf of Buntingford Town Council (BTC), to better support a rich variety of birdlife and other wild animals. The space, covering approximately half a hectare, was made at the top of Hare Street Road playing field from an area that was previously allotments and had been left to grow wild for many years. According to CMS the 'conservation grassland' is a valuable part of the site and in combination with the scrub supports a wide variety of wildflowers, plants and animals. This is reflected in the wildlife interpretation boards on site and every effort must be made to keep and conserve this habitat. CMS also planted several fruit trees in a cleared area to provide food for wild animals and the large variety of bird life in the area. New pathways were created to increase public accessibility while retaining large areas for flora and fauna. The area has been regularly maintained, with a minimalist approach, to ensure continued public access. The area is surrounded by mature trees of oak, acer, field maple, sycamore and beech. Various trees also screen the area from the playing field. This wildlife area should be designated Local Green Space to recognise and protect its important value for animals and birds and its use by local people.

This is designated as Local Green Space because of its significant wildlife value and its importance to local people.



Monks Walk/ Baldock Road (to the rear of Telephone Exchange)

This open space was left after the Monks Walk estate was built in 1968. It was originally part of the old field boundary and has a variety of mature tree species growing in it including Horse Chestnut, Beech, Lime, Sycamore, Elder and Yew. Ground plants include a variety of grass, wildflowers and ivy. Due to bi-annual strimming much of the old varieties of ground cover have been lost and small animals driven out. It is home to a large variety of birds including woodpeckers, wrens, rooks, collared doves, magpies and jackdaws as well as all the usual garden birds. Bats have been seen on summer evenings and the large beeches provide roosting places for owls in the winter, It provides one of the few green 'islands' in an otherwise built up area and helps bring the countryside's wildlife into the town. There is a pathway through the area mainly used by dog walkers. Children living on the estate can often be seen playing in this area, building dens and climbing trees. With appropriate management it would create favourable conditions for more wildlife and diverse flora. This 'green island' should be designated Local Green Space to recognise and protect its important value for animals and birds and its use by local residents.

This is designated as Local Green Space because of its significant contribution to biodiversity within an otherwise urbanised area.



Daws Lane Buckland. Running Eastwards from the Church of St Andrew's

This site is an attractive and much loved historic grassy footpath running through a long wooded glade. It provides a narrow oasis and refuge for wildlife surrounded by large open cultivated fields. There are many species of flowers, trees and wildlife, particularly bird species breeding in the immediate vicinity.

This is designated as a Local Green Space because of its significant role as a local walk used by local people because of the richness of its wildlife.

