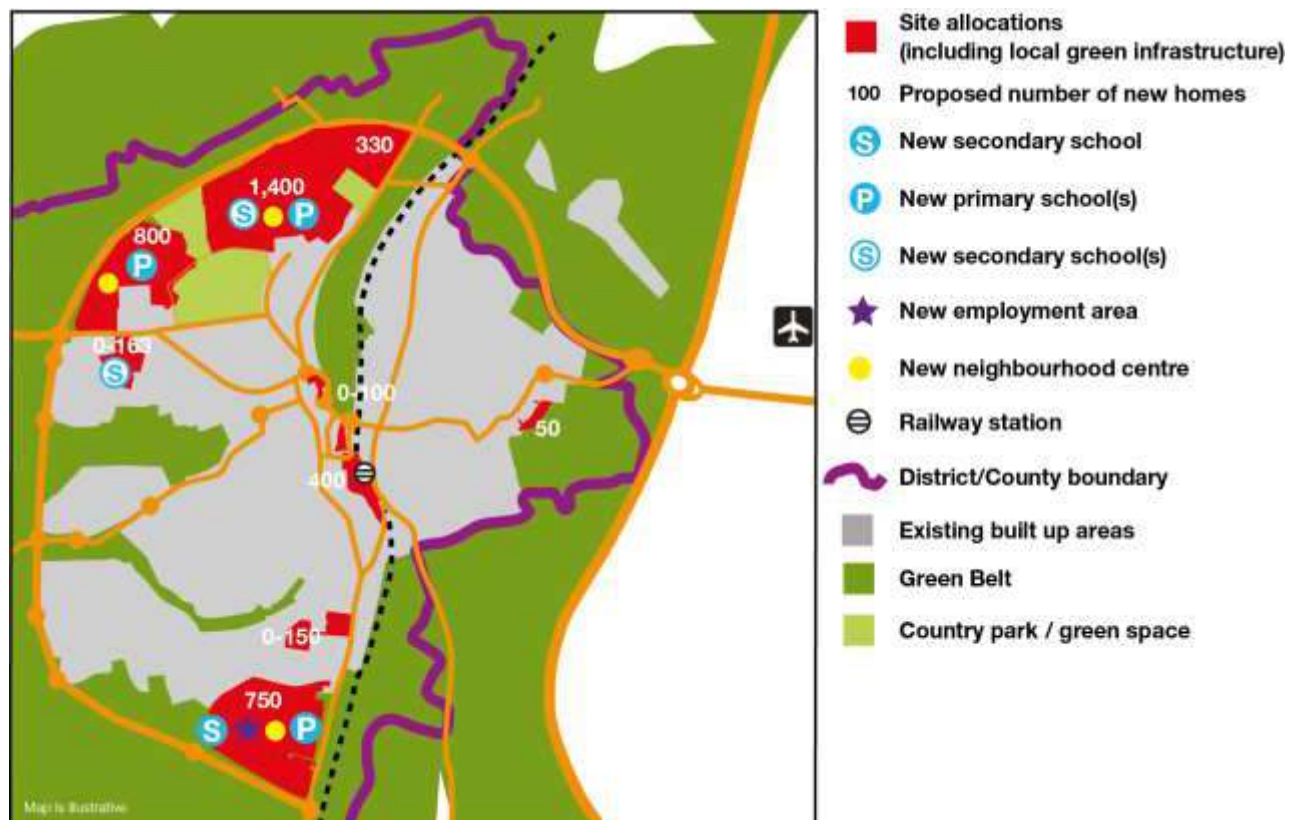


## Bishop's Stortford Settlement Appraisal

### 1. History

- 1.1 The Preferred Options District Plan proposed development of between 3,697 and 4,447 homes in Bishop's Stortford plus an element of windfall. On the basis of the assessments contained in the Supporting Document, and the rest of the evidence base that was available at that time, the Preferred Options District Plan proposed five sites for allocation: The Goods Yard (200 homes); East of Manor Links (150 homes); Hadham Road Reserve Secondary School (0 to 250 homes); Bishop's Stortford South (750-1,000 homes); and Bishop's Stortford North (2,350 or 2,600 homes). In addition, an element of windfall development was attributed to Bishop's Stortford, along with potential sites brought forward as sites in the Strategic Land Availability Assessment.

**Figure 1: Key Diagram for Bishop's Stortford**



- 1.2 The [Supporting Document](#) to the Preferred Options District Plan records the various assessment stages that were undertaken as part of the process to inform the Preferred Options version of the Draft District Plan. It therefore provides an essential background to this current Settlement Appraisal. Chapter 4 of the Supporting Document explains the process of shortlisting or 'sieving' options applied to 'Areas of Search' and their initial findings. Chapter 5 details a further appraisal stage based on option refinement.
- 1.3 Chapter 6 draws together the findings of Chapters 4 and 5 for Bishop's Stortford and provides conclusions to issues considered at previous stages.

- 1.4 This document continues the narrative beyond Chapters 4 to 6 of the Supporting Document by detailing information and evidence which has emerged since the Preferred Options consultation.

## **2 Consultation Responses – town-wide**

- 2.1 The Preferred Options consultation elicited a significant response from members of the local community. While these representations covered a variety of topics, the main town-wide issues which were frequently raised through comments received included:
- Bishop's Stortford receiving too much growth;
  - development on Green Belt land considered to be inappropriate;
  - highway infrastructure being unable to cope with the level of development proposed;
  - lack of social infrastructure to support development, including insufficient school places and healthcare services; and
  - additional development causing harm to the character of the town.
- 2.2 Several land owners and site promoters made representations specific to their sites and further consideration of these locations is covered at appropriate points throughout the remainder of this document.
- 2.3 A full summary of the issues that were raised in respect of Bishop's Stortford and the Officer proposed responses to them were considered by Members at the District Planning Executive Panel meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2016. These can be viewed via the following link:  
<http://democracy.eastherts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?MId=3028&x=1&>

## **3. Technical Assessments**

[Bishop's Stortford Town Centre Planning Framework \(Allies and Morrison, 2016 emerging\)](#)

- 3.1 The Council recently commissioned Planning consultants Allies and Morrison to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the town centre of Bishop's Stortford, which considers the role of the town in retail terms, looks at current pressures including issues such as parking and traffic and considers opportunities to strengthen the town to ensure that it continues to operate successfully in the future, and manage issues such as parking and traffic. The Framework includes an in-depth urban design assessment which takes account of the historic evolution of the town, its historic and current character, its riverside environment and landscape. Issues such as pedestrian and vehicle movements, the diversity of different land uses and how the road, rail and bus network operates within this historic environment is also considered.

- 3.2 The Bishop's Stortford Town Centre Planning Framework will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document and will be used to inform planning applications and masterplans moving forward. Where relevant, the Framework has been used to inform the appraisal of site allocations, namely Old River Lane, The Goods Yard and the Mill Site. General principles arising from the Framework have also been used to inform considerations of the town as a whole, particularly on matters such as traffic and public transport.

[The Economic Role and Potential of Hertfordshire's Smaller Towns: Bishop's Stortford – Draft \(Report to Hertfordshire LEP and East Herts Council, SQW, August 2016\)](#)

- 3.3 The Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, working with East Herts Council, commissioned SQW to prepare a study on the role of market towns within Hertfordshire. Large parts of Hertfordshire are rural and/or within the Green Belt, and in the case of some districts such as North Herts and East Herts, urban centres comprise only of market towns, and as such are the focus for growth. However, the role and potential of smaller towns in Hertfordshire is not fully understood and there is therefore no clear vision as to what roles they should have in the future.
- 3.4 The study focusses initially on Bishop's Stortford as a case study. It considers the characteristics of the town's economy today, the opportunities/challenges which are likely to shape its future, and in the light of both, the types of intervention that might potentially unlock further appropriate forms of economic growth. However, the purpose of the study was not to complete a definitive study of the town, but to draw out some headlines in order to shape future thinking at the level of both the LEP and the District Council.
- 3.5 The study indicates, in line with other economic studies of the town, that Bishop's Stortford's location brings with it both economic opportunities and challenges. The study discusses the influences of Stansted Airport, London, Cambridge and Harlow. Given these influences, the "economic masterplan" for the town should concentrate on being able to meet growing interest in bio-science industries. Being well located between these four economic centres, new employment land proposed for the town should maximise these opportunities. A variety of new employment floorspace will therefore be needed such as a new business park on the outer edge of the town, which could cater for larger businesses, and within the town centre in locations such as Old River Lane and the Goods Yard sites for smaller businesses.

[Transport Modelling \(2016 and ongoing\)](#)

- 3.6 Recent traffic modelling work undertaken by Essex County Council for the Strategic Housing Market Area (SHMA) has identified that there are issues with Junction 8 of the M11. Several junctions within the town also suffer from congestion, particularly at peak times. The Council is working with Essex County Council to bring forward improvements to Junction 8. A Memorandum of Understanding is being prepared with Essex County Council and the Housing Market Area authorities to identify and secure sources of funding for these improvements. Two options are currently being considered. The first is an option of improvement on the roundabout that will provide extra capacity until approximately 2022. The intervening period will be used to develop the second option which will comprise a strategy of junction improvements to accommodate the cumulative impacts arising from growth within

Uttlesford and planned future growth at Stansted Airport.

- 3.7 Essex County Council is currently proposing a new Junction 7a to serve the northern part of Harlow and to relieve congestion at Junction 7. Traffic modelling undertaken for the proposed new Junction 7a indicates that the new junction will divert some vehicles from Junction 8 to the new junction, thus alleviating some congestion in the vicinity of Bishop's Stortford. The modelling also indicates that fewer vehicles will use the A120 and the A1184.
- 3.8 There is an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) within the town centre, focused on the Hockerill Road junction, which was first designated in 2005. In addition to the general volume of traffic running through this key interchange, the orientation and height of buildings prevent the dispersal of pollutants. Regular monitoring indicates that heavy goods vehicles are the main source of Nitrogen Dioxide pollution. Hertfordshire County Council has considered a number of options, which include signage to divert traffic via the bypass and the prevention of right-hand turns. Signage can only go so far and the no-turn option was not taken forward on the grounds of highway safety concerns.
- 3.9 Junction-specific transport modelling has been undertaken to inform applications in the town (Bishop's Stortford North and The Goods Yard). The emerging Allies and Morrison work considers further options to alleviate traffic flows through the Hockerill junction. These include testing the possibility of options such as 'switching-off' the gyratory system to reduce vehicles circulating the town, the provision of a through-route at the Goods Yard and creation of parking opportunities elsewhere in the town that also prevent the unnecessary circulatory movement of vehicles looking for parking.

#### [Education Advice \(Hertfordshire County Council, 2016\)](#)

- 3.10 The Council has been working closely with Hertfordshire County Council to ensure that the additional needs arising from the growth planned in the District Plan can be accommodated in school capacity terms. The Plan provides opportunities to create new schools and expand existing schools, through the development of new sites, where such opportunities may not otherwise arise. For Bishop's Stortford, the County Council has advised that there is a need for a two form entry primary school over and above what is anticipated being delivered through the District Plan. There is also a need for six additional forms of entry at secondary school level in the town, and the County Council is currently exploring options with existing schools and through the Plan-making process to identify how this demand can be accommodated.

#### [Strategic Flood Risk Assessment \(JBA Consulting, 2016\)](#)

- 3.11 A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment was prepared in 2008 to inform the early stages of the Plan-making process. Since that time a number of significant changes have taken place resulting in the SFRA becoming out of date. A new Assessment has therefore been undertaken looking at the whole of the district. It identifies the areas across the District that are at risk of flooding from different sources, including river, surface water, groundwater, sewer and reservoir flooding. Of particular importance for Plan making, and the planning application process, is the identification of the functional floodplain (Flood Zone 3b).

- 3.12 Where sites are identified as being within Flood Zone 2 or 3, a more detailed Level 2 Flood Risk Assessment is required. In Bishop's Stortford, there are three proposed site allocations that have land within these flood zones and therefore require a detailed assessment:
- The Goods Yard
  - Bishop's Stortford South
  - Old River Lane
- 3.13 In addition, the Mill Site lies within Flood Zone 2 and 3, but as the Plan does not allocate the site for residential purposes within the Plan-period a Level 2 Flood Risk Assessment is not required to support the District Plan. Should the site become available for development, a detailed assessment will be required, informed by an understanding of the form of development proposed.
- 3.14 Where a Level 2 SFRA has been undertaken, a summary of the assessment is included in the relevant site appraisal.

[Economic Evidence to Support the Development of the Objectively Assessed Housing Need for West Essex and East Herts \(Hardisty Jones Associates, 2015\)](#)

- 3.15 The Council previously commissioned a Town Wide Employment Study for Bishop's Stortford (Wessex Economics, 2013), which has been used to inform this Settlement Appraisal. This report and the Employment Forecast and Strategic Economic Development Advice (DTZ, 2012) indicates that the Council should plan to meet the East of England Forecasting Model forecast of around 9,700 jobs across the District up to 2031. Based on a range of average floorspace ratios, this would result in the need for between 11 to 13 hectares of new employment land.
- 3.16 More recent technical work undertaken to inform the Strategic Housing Market Area Assessment provides up to date evidence and reinforces the 2013 advice. A growth of between 435 and 525 jobs per year is anticipated in East Herts. Therefore the Council should ensure that there is sufficient land available to accommodate these jobs and that there is a sufficient workforce available to fill these jobs.
- 3.17 While the Plan identifies land for new employment uses in Buntingford, Hertford and Ware, Bishop's Stortford is a key town within the M11 corridor, the housing market area and the Functional Economic Market Area. Its proximity to Stansted Airport means the town benefits from business links and job opportunities. Many airport workers reside in the town permanently and temporarily during stop-overs. The town also benefits from direct access to the M11 and a rail link into London to the south and Cambridge to the north. Of all the District's towns, Bishop's Stortford is considered to be the town most capable of delivering new employment areas and consequently more jobs.
- 3.18 The District Plan has a role in identifying sufficient land for employment generating uses. Several urban employment areas have been lost over recent years, often citing constrained sites, lack of parking, poor visibility and a high cost of refurbishment required to meet building standards. The evidence indicates that there is a demand for new high quality employment space in Bishop's Stortford.



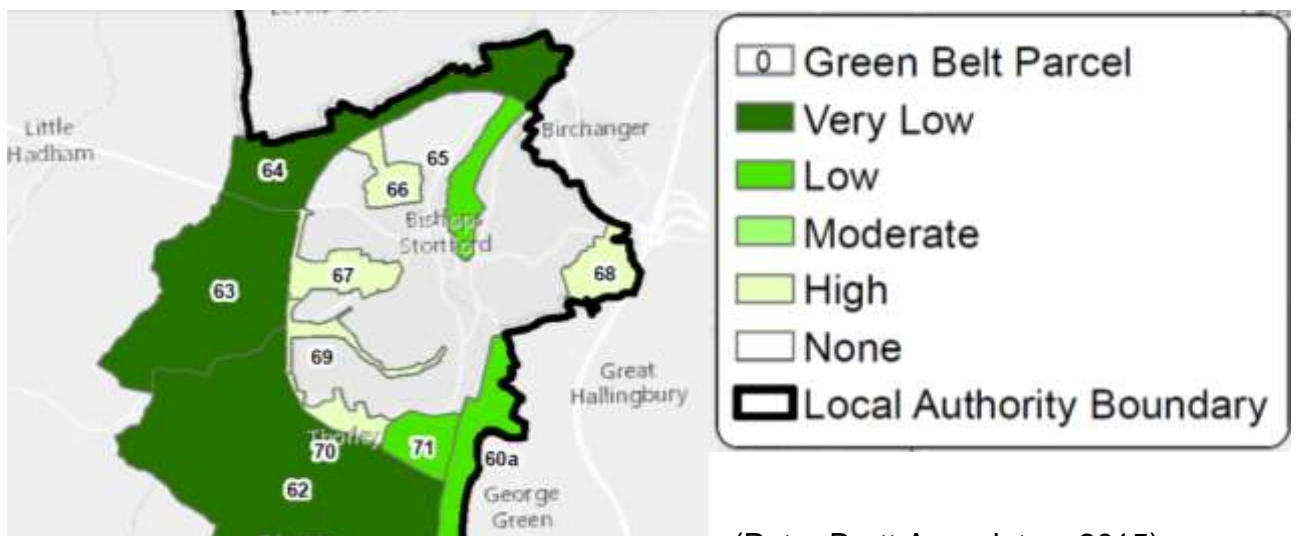
Town centre sites are the preferred location for B1 offices, where access to town centre services and railway access to London are the main requirements. However, there is also demand for edge of town locations where sites can be more visible from the strategic road network, and can provide more generous space for buildings and parking.

- 3.19 East Herts Council Officers are currently exploring the potential expansion of Goodliffe Park off Stansted Road on land within Uttlesford District. However, East Herts Council has no control over this option. The Plan proposes the provision of B1 offices on the three town centre sites (Old River Lane, the Mill Site and the Goods Yard). While it is acknowledged that land to the south of the town is the least preferred location for employment land in the Bishop's Stortford Town Wide Employment Study, this site is one of the few locations in Bishop's Stortford remaining where a new employment site could be accommodated. A location on the A1184 would be accessible and could also provide opportunities for more constrained businesses in the town to relocate and expand. It is therefore proposed that a site of between 4 to 5 hectares should be allocated for a business park to be delivered through the development at Bishop's Stortford South. Should other options become available and there is no proven demand for this site, the land could revert to residential use towards the end of the Plan period.

#### [Green Belt Review \(Peter Brett Associates, 2015\)](#)

- 3.20 The 2015 Green Belt Review assessed 11 parcels within and around Bishop's Stortford. The three green wedges in Bishop's Stortford, Southern Country Park and the golf course were identified as having a low contribution to Green Belt purposes and as such were considered to have high suitability for development. All other parcels assessed in the Green Belt Review around Bishop's Stortford were considered to have a high contribution to the Green Belt purposes and therefore a low suitability as an area of search for development.
- 3.21 While the map below illustrates the overall findings for the whole settlement, the findings of the Review in relation to specific proposed site allocation areas are covered in greater detail in the relevant sections below.

**Figure 2: Green Belt Review 2015 Overall Conclusions**



(Peter Brett Associates, 2015)

#### [Delivery Study / Strategic Sites Delivery Study, 2015](#)

- 3.21 The Delivery Study is a technical document which assesses the financial viability and deliverability of the proposals contained in the Preferred Options District Plan. As Bishop's Stortford North was subject to a planning application at the time, issues of viability were being considered through the application process. Other smaller sites around the town were not individually large enough to be included as strategic sites in the study. However, these were tested through the use of site typologies. The study considered the Goods Yard site as an urban brownfield site with a specific approach based on an assumed higher land value due to existing uses. The study concluded that development schemes in the Bishop's Stortford area that are predominantly or wholly residential in nature, should be considered financially viable when taking into account the policy requirements of the District Plan as a whole.
- 3.22 The East Herts Strategic Sites Delivery Study addressed the larger sites, which in the case of Bishop's Stortford included Bishop's Stortford South, which was tested for 750 homes. The Study concluded that deliverable solutions to critical infrastructure (particularly sewage, utilities, site access and provision of primary and secondary education) needed to enable the development to take place have been identified and are shown to be achievable.
- 3.23 The study makes further recommendations as to the type of infrastructure required which includes the provision of new healthcare facilities to serve the south of the town. The study raises the potential for the site to contribute towards sustainable travel within the town, and also provides suggestions as to the treatment of the Hertfordshire Way through detailed design considerations.

## **4. Duty to Co-operate**

- 4.1 For those areas such as Bishop's Stortford that are located on the eastern side of the District, the main forum for Duty to Co-operate discussions has been the Co-operation for Sustainable Development Member Board. This group comprises the four core authorities that form the West Essex/East Herts housing market area (East Herts, Epping Forest District Council, Harlow District Council and Uttlesford District Council), along with Hertfordshire and Essex County Councils, Highways England, Historic England and other local or related authorities in the wider area.
- 4.2 In the context of Bishop's Stortford, there is a clear relationship between the town and settlements within Uttlesford, for which the town is a major service, employment and education destination. In particular, pupils who live in nearby villages such as Birchanger and Stansted Mountfitchet often go to school in Bishop's Stortford. The 2015 Issues and Options Draft Local Plan Consultation for Uttlesford District considered several options for development around Bishop's Stortford, which East Herts formally objected to through its consultation response.
- 4.3 Co-operation among the constituent authorities will continue beyond the adoption of the Plan in order to address ongoing cross boundary issues.

## **5 Neighbourhood Planning**

- 5.1 There are two neighbourhood plans covering this area. The Bishop's Stortford Silverleys and Meads Neighbourhood Plan was adopted in 2015, the first in East Herts. This Plan therefore forms part of the development plan.
- 5.2 The Bishop's Stortford Neighbourhood Plan for All Saints, Central, South and part of Thorley has been submitted to East Herts Council. Consultation on the Plan is expected to commence in late September/early October. The Plan is expected to go to examination in late 2016 and a referendum in early 2017. Once adopted, this Plan will also form part of the development plan.

## **6 Emerging Strategy**

- 6.1 Following the Preferred Options consultation, and as detailed above, a significant amount of technical work has been undertaken on the District Plan to ensure deliverability of its proposed site allocations. Discussion of this and other evidence which has been presented, leads to the following Officer conclusions for the policy approach to development. In light of the evidence available, it is considered that eight strategic sites should be allocated in Bishop's Stortford:
- Bishop's Stortford North – 2,529 dwellings
  - Hadham Road Secondary School Reserve Site – 0-163 dwellings
  - Bishop's Stortford South – 750 dwellings
  - The Bishop's Stortford High School, London Road 0-150 dwellings
  - The Goods Yard – at least 400 dwellings
  - The Causeway / Old River Lane – up to 100 dwellings



- East of Manor Links – 50 dwellings
- The Mill Site

6.2 The justification for identifying these proposed allocations is presented below.

6.3 Since the Preferred Options consultation there have been planning applications approved on the Bishop's Stortford North sites and associated reserve Secondary School site in Hadham Road. The Council is also in receipt of an application on the Goods Yard site. Where detailed permission has been granted these are detailed in the appraisal below and are reflected in the policy. However, in the event that the planning permissions lapse or significant changes are proposed, it is appropriate for the District Plan to set out its preference for the sites in order to inform future proposals.

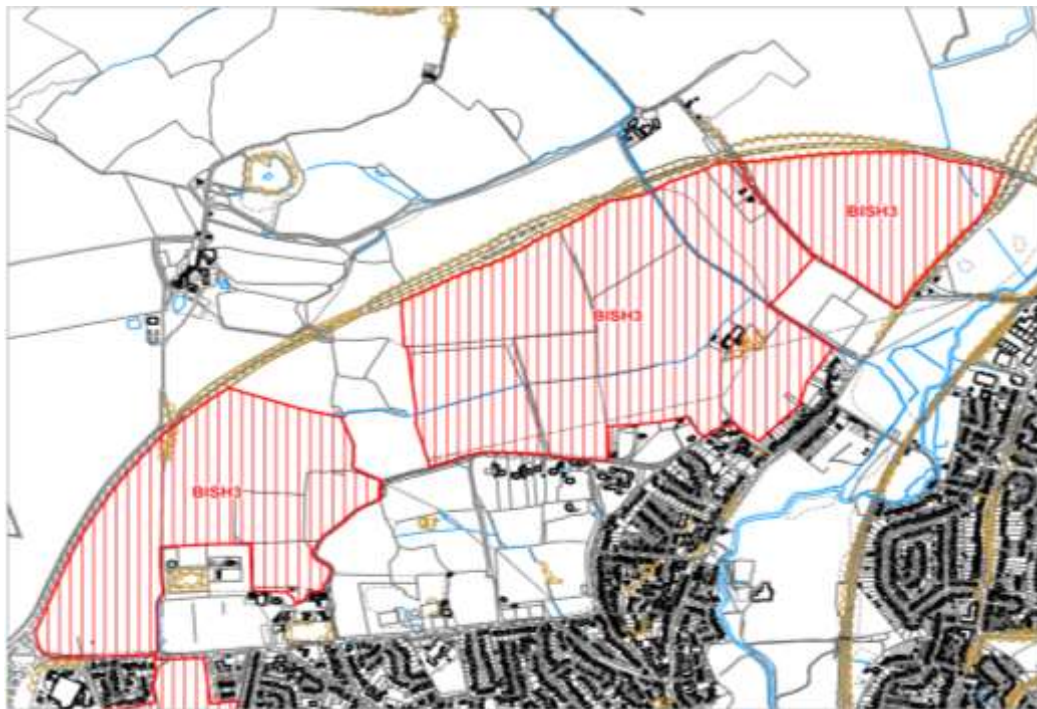
## **7. Bishop's Stortford North (Policy BISH3)**

### **Introduction**

7.1 Land to the north of Bishop's Stortford was identified as a proposed allocation for between 2,350 and 2,600 homes in the Preferred Options District Plan. Land to the north of Bishop's Stortford comprises 5 specific areas known as Areas of Special Restriction (ASRs 1-5). These sites were allocated in the 2007 Local Plan effectively to safeguard the land for future locally arising need and housing needs associated with the growth of Stansted Airport. In 2008, the Council resolved to release the land for housing development as it could not demonstrate a sufficient land supply to meet the needs identified. A consortium of developers was established which proposed development on land at ASR1-4, between the A120/Hadham Road Junction and Farnham Road, including Hoggates Wood and Ash Grove. A separate site promoter was engaged by the landowner of ASR 5, which lies to the east of Farnham Road.

7.2 Since the Preferred Options, outline planning permission has been granted for land at ASRs1-4 and ASR5. Detailed permission was granted in 2015 for the first phase of development on western part of the site, including Hoggate's Wood and Ash Grove (ASRs 1 and 2). Outline planning permission has been granted on ASR5 and the detailed Reserved Matters application relating to the first phase of development was submitted to the Council in late August 2016. However, a detailed application has not yet been submitted for the land between Hoggate's Wood and Farnham Road, apart from the proposed secondary school site, therefore it is considered appropriate to set out in policy terms what is expected of the sites, particularly in the light of technical evidence undertaken to prepare the development strategy for the town and the District. There are a number of links between ASRs 1-4 and ASR5, in terms of infrastructure provision and mitigation. Therefore it is considered that the land to the north of Bishop's Stortford should continue to be identified as an allocation within the Pre-Submission version of the Plan, reflecting the planning permissions where necessary. The site is discussed in further detail below.

**Figure 3: Site Location – Bishop’s Stortford North**



### **Consultation Responses – Bishop’s Stortford North**

- 7.3 A number of comments were received in respect of the Bishop’s Stortford North site at the 2014 Preferred Options Consultation stage.
- 7.4 The main issues raised related to (in no particular order):
- The policy should be amended to reflect the permissions granted, including the conditions imposed
  - Objection to the additional roundabout on the A120
  - Support for the site to meet housing needs
  - Concern over the impact of traffic on the strategic and local road network, particularly at Junction 8 of the M11.
  - Need to protect ecological assets within the site including through new reference to green infrastructure in the policy
  - Need for indoor and outdoor sports facilities, including football pitches and play areas
  - Should reference the Neighbourhood Plan for Silverleys and Meads Wards
  - Protection and enhancement of heritage assets
  - Provision of appropriate infrastructure required to support development

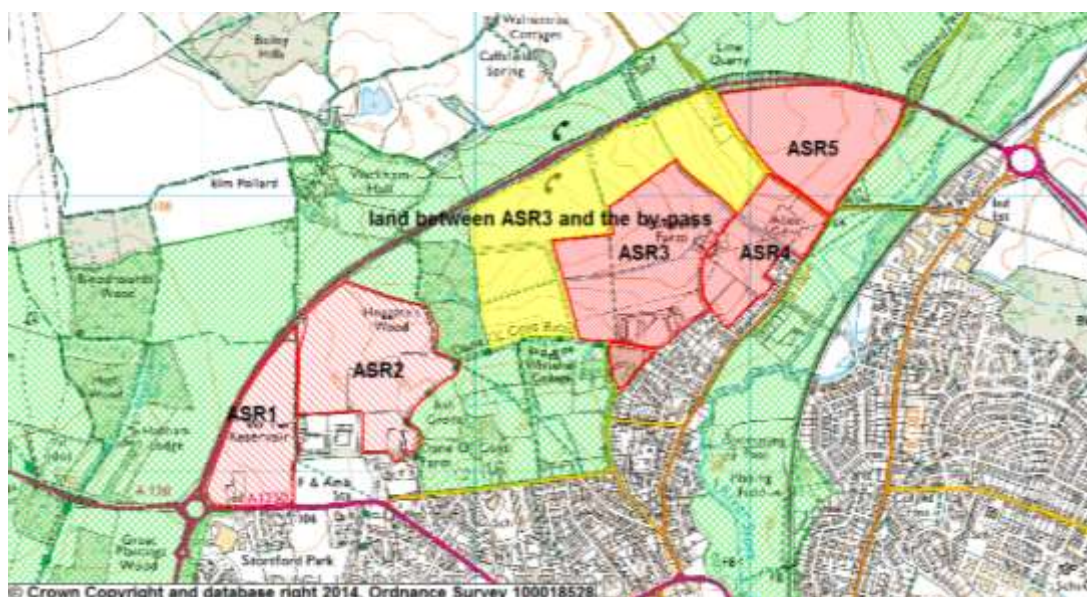
### **Technical Assessments – Bishop’s Stortford North**

- 7.5 The following sections summarise the various technical evidence based assessments that have been undertaken since the Preferred Options consultation to assess this site alongside the wider Plan preparation process, in addition to the technical work undertaken by the site promoters in respect of the applications.

## East Herts Green Belt Review 2015 (Peter Brett Associates) / Area of Special Restraint and Special Countryside Area

- 7.6 Land to the north of Bishop's Stortford was set aside for development in the Local Plan First Review 1999 and allocated as Areas of Special Restraint (ASRs). Their boundaries were re-appraised in the 2007 Local Plan. ASRs 1 and 2 (land west of Hoggates Wood) was safeguarded to provide sufficient land to provide for airport-related housing if this was not met through other allocations. ASRs 3 to 5 were safeguarded until such time that a need for development was identified through a review of the Local Plan.
- 7.7 Land between ASRs 3 and 4 and the bypass was allocated as a Special Countryside Area where the provisions of the 2007 Local Plan Green Belt Policy GBC1 apply until such time that a strategic need for development is established through the review of the Local Plan.
- 7.8 The only land left within the Green Belt to the north of Bishop's Stortford within the bypass is the land containing Hoggates Wood and Ash Grove. The 2015 Green Belt Review undertaken by Peter Brett Associates therefore only considered this remaining area in Parcel 66. Overall, the study concluded that Parcel 66 makes no contribution to checking unrestricted sprawl as the land forms a wedge of land retained between the two parts of the permitted urban extension, therefore it will be bounded on three sides by urban development. The parcel makes no contribution to the purpose of preventing neighbouring towns from merging. The parcel contains a well-defined pattern of small fields and woodlands, but this will not form part of a wider area of open countryside once the development is built, therefore the parcel makes no contribution to the purpose of assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The parcel makes no contribution to the purpose of preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

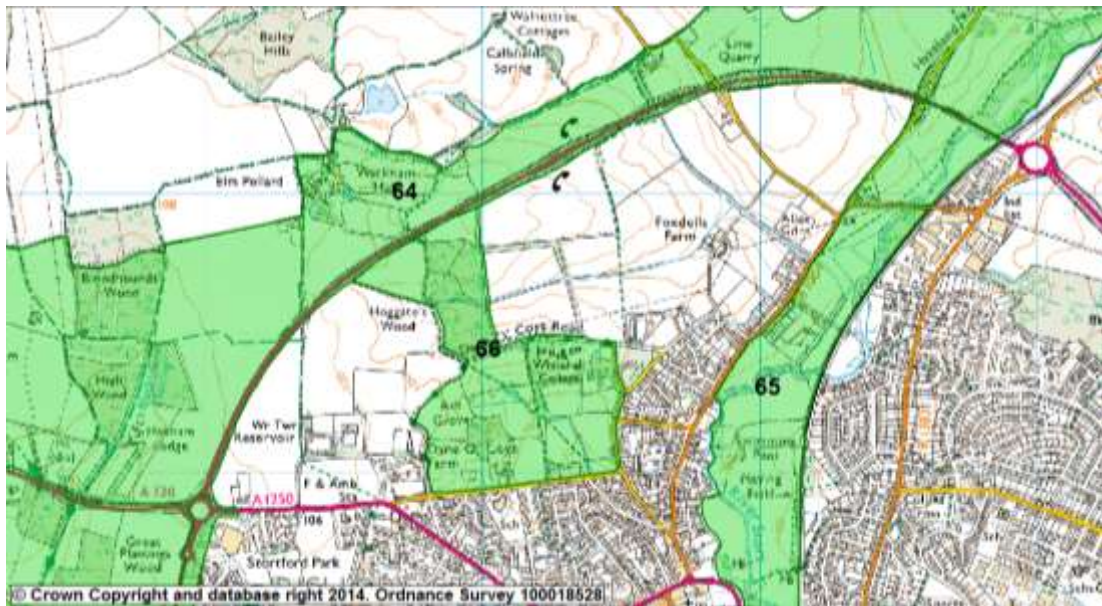
**Figure 4: Areas of Special Restraint, Special Countryside Area**



(Source: East Herts Local Plan 2007)



**Figure 5: Map of Green Belt Parcels – Bishop’s Stortford North**



(Source: Peter Brett Associates, 2015)

- 7.9 The PBA Green Belt Review suggested that as the parcel made no contribution to the four purposes assessed, the area was therefore considered to have a high suitability as an Area of Search for development and could therefore be removed from the Green Belt and be safeguarded through other policies. The A120 would therefore be defined as the northern Green Belt boundary for the town. However, it is the view of Officers that the green wedge is contiguous to the pattern of development in the town, forming a barrier between the proposed new urban areas, creates a green link from inner parts of the town to the wider countryside beyond and provides an appropriate setting for recreational uses. The green wedge is also home to three Local Wildlife Sites and forms part of the wider green infrastructure network of the town. The wedge will be designated as Local Green Space under Policy CFLR2. Given the development pressures within the town, while it could be possible to release the land from the Green Belt and keep only the Local Green Space designation, it is considered that the Green Belt policy affords additional protection. Therefore, the Submission Plan does not propose to make amendments to the Green Belt in this location.

#### [Transport Modelling, 2016](#)

- 7.10 Transport modelling has been undertaken to inform the planning applications at Bishop's Stortford North. A detailed Paramics model was developed to assess ASRs1-4 which was extended to ASR5. The applicant also commissioned a run of the Saturn Harlow Stansted Gateway Transport Model, which as a sub-regional model is less detailed than the Paramics model but covers a much larger area, and is therefore able to take account of cumulative impacts.
- 7.11 Hertfordshire County Council commented on the applications and on the modelling results. Their overall conclusions were that the models confirm that "mitigation measures along the A120 results in nil detriment to the primary route network. Significant increases in traffic and congestion are anticipated on key routes into

town and at key junctions. The mitigation of the impact of this additional traffic on the town is reliant on the achievement of modal shift through successful take up of the improved bus services and the successful application of travel planning and the Smarter Choices campaign. The mitigation measures proposed and secured through the Section 106 Agreements were considered acceptable.

## **Identification of Site Constraints – Bishop’s Stortford North**

### **Green Belt**

- 7.12 As discussed in paragraphs 7.7 to 7.10 above, the only parcel of land in the Green Belt within the Bishop’s Stortford North development site is the land at Hoggates Wood and Ash Grove. This land will be retained as woodland and used for open space and outdoor sports facilities.

### **Surface water**

- 7.13 There are two watercourses within the site; Bourne Brook, a tributary of the River Stort and Farnham Bourne, which runs into Bourne Brook. Therefore, parts of the site are subject to surface water flooding. These floodplains will need to be incorporated into the masterplanning of the site, forming part of a wider green infrastructure network, building in appropriate buffers where necessary.

### **Heritage**

- 7.14 St Michael’s Church, the town’s only Grade I listed building, is a prominent landmark in the town, with glimpsed views seen from the majority of the town. The development should therefore ensure views of the church are protected. Within the site itself, the Grade 2 listed Foxdells Farm and Barn will need to be taken into consideration in terms of its setting. The whole site lies within an Area of Archaeological Significance

### **Wildlife**

- 7.15 There are three local Wildlife Sites within the site at Hoggate’s Wood (34/015), Dane O’Coys Meadows incorporating Ash Grove (34/016) and Whitehall Field (34/018). These sites are designated for their woodland and grassland habitats. There are also individual and group Tree Preservation Orders across the site. These sites will need to be taken into account during the masterplanning stage and be incorporated into a green infrastructure plan.

### **Landscape**

- 7.16 The undulating landscape needs to form the basis of the masterplan, utilising low ground to form sustainable drainage solutions and higher ground to form landmarks and to allow key vantage points towards town centre landmarks.

## **Stakeholder Engagement – Bishop’s Stortford North**

- 7.17 Unlike other proposed strategic allocations, no specific stakeholder partnership group meetings have been held for this site as the planning applications were well underway following the Preferred Options consultation. Therefore stakeholder



discussions were being held where necessary to inform the Council's consideration of the applications.

### **Developer Meetings and Information – Bishop's Stortford North**

- 7.18 At the date of writing (September 2016), no meetings have taken place with the developers or site promoters following the Preferred Options consultation. However, communication has been ongoing in respect of the planning applications. In order to assist in its deliberations, the Council invited further information from landowners, developers and agents in the form of Delivery Statements which form the basis of draft Statements of Common Ground. These statements contain details about required infrastructure and utilities and will be used to support the submission of the Plan to the Planning Inspectorate. Given that the site promoters are already progressing through the planning application stages, they did not feel it necessary to provide further information to assist with the Plan-making process.

### **Land Uses and Proposals – Bishop's Stortford North**

- 7.19 As stated in paragraph 6.3 above, it is considered appropriate to maintain a policy in the Submission District Plan in order to provide a framework for the second phase of development. In the event that the site is reconsidered as a whole or if sub-division of the site occurs, this policy framework will be used to guide development.
- 7.20 This site is proposed for residential-led mixed-use development for in the region of 2,500 homes. In addition to a wide type and mix of new homes, the development will provide supporting infrastructure in the form of neighbourhood centres, providing for day-to-day convenience needs, schools and local job opportunities through the provision of a new employment area.
- 7.21 Schools, homes, neighbourhood centres, employment areas, public transport, green infrastructure, strategic and local highway mitigation, sports provision and other on and off-site infrastructure will provide benefits to new and existing residents alike.
- 7.22 An indicative layout accompanying the approved application is included in Figure 6 below for illustrative purposes.

**Figure 6: Indicative Layout – Bishop’s Stortford North**



### Infrastructure Needs – Bishop’s Stortford North

7.23 The infrastructure requirements arising from a development of this size are significant in comparison to other sites proposed within the District Plan. While it is anticipated that the majority of the infrastructure agreed through the Section 106 Agreement will not change, in the event that the application is reconsidered the list below sets out the minimum infrastructure requirements:

- provision of affordable housing;
- opportunities for self-build and retirement living, including specialist care;
- provision of land for two primary schools and one secondary school;
- quality local green infrastructure, including enhancement to on and off-site wildlife assets;
- public open space/s within the site, including the provision of play areas and opportunities for outdoor health and fitness activities;
- the provision of outdoor playing pitches and indoor sports provided through the community use of the secondary school facilities;
- contributions to off-site provision of sports facilities;
- two mixed-use neighbourhood centres, making provision for healthcare, retail and community/cultural/leisure uses;
- employment land;
- access and new highway junctions (A120, Hadham Road, Rye Street and Farnham Road) and contribution to improvements at Junction 8 of M11;
- public transport route through the site;

- sustainable transport measures, both through improvements to the existing walking and cycling networks in the locality and enhanced passenger transport services;
- utilities, including foul water pumping stations and integrated communications infrastructure to facilitate home working;
- sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs); and
- all necessary on-site and appropriate off-site infrastructure.

### **Implementation – Bishop’s Stortford North**

- 7.24 While outline permission has been granted for the whole site, detailed permission exists only for the western neighbourhood. In theory, this development could start at any time. A detailed application is yet to be submitted for the second phase of development, which includes the secondary school. The County Council has submitted and approved an application for the secondary school itself (Applications 3/14/2037/CC). However, provided the application is prepared along the lines of the outline permission, it is anticipated that the decision-making process would proceed swiftly. The site is anticipated to deliver 650 homes between 2017 and 2022, 1,250 homes between 2022 and 2027 and 300 homes after 2027.

## **8. Hadham Road Secondary School Reserve Site (Policy BISH4)**

### **Introduction**

- 8.1 Hertfordshire County Council first acquired land at Hadham Road for secondary school provision in the 1960s. The land by itself however, was not big enough to accommodate a school and associated playing fields, therefore playing fields would be needed in a nearby location. It was anticipated that an alternative strategy would be found to provide adequate school places in the town. As this was not forthcoming, the land was retained within the 2007 Local Plan for a secondary school unless sufficient capacity could be provided elsewhere in the town.
- 8.2 Through negotiations on the Bishop’s Stortford North applications, a ‘land swap’ has been secured through a legal agreement such that land within ASRs3 and 4 will be made available for the development of a secondary school, supported by financial contributions from the development and the County Council site at Hadham Road would be released for residential development. The County Council submitted three simultaneous applications which proposed three different development scenarios; Application A – 3/14/2143/OP (247 dwellings on northern and western fields); Application B – 3/14/2144/OP (163 dwellings on northern field only); and Application C – 3/14/2145/OP (84 dwellings on only the western field). Application A was subsequently withdrawn by the County Council. At the time, it was understood that Application C would be presented at a later time. To facilitate the land swap, Application B was progressed. The application was approved and a Section 106 Agreement has been signed.
- 8.3 The northern field site is therefore proposed for allocation in the District Plan. As the application was for outline only, with all matters reserved for later approval apart

from access, it is considered appropriate to set out how the site should come forward in planning policy terms.

- 8.4 The outline permission was granted on the condition that the County Council confirms that it is the legal owner of the proposed secondary school site provided as part of the second phase of the Bishop's Stortford North development within ASRs 3 and 4. As the land swap arrangement is yet to be triggered, this condition is yet to be met. Therefore this site will be retained for a secondary school until the requirements of the current legal agreement and land swap arrangement, or any subsequent replacement arrangements that achieve the same outcome, are achieved.

**Figure 7: Site Location – Reserve Secondary School Site, Hadham Road**



### **Consultation Responses – Hadham Road Secondary School Reserve Site**

- 8.5 A number of comments were received in respect of this site at the 2014 Preferred Options Consultation stage.
- 8.6 The main issues raised related to (in no particular order):
- The policy should be amended to reflect the permissions granted, including the conditions imposed;
  - The site should be retained only for educational use (school and/or school playing fields);
  - Sport England object to the loss of the western playing fields, but acknowledge this could be mitigated if playing fields provided in the new school have community use;



- Woodland should be retained and enhanced where possible as part of a green infrastructure plan;
- Hertfordshire County Council comment that the traffic impacts arising from school use would be localised and would only affect the morning peak;
- Hertfordshire County Council comment that the traffic impacts arising from 250 homes would be localised and impacts similar to that of the school;
- Should reference the Neighbourhood Plan for Silverleys and Meads Wards
- Provision of appropriate infrastructure required to support development

### **Technical Assessments – Hadham Road Secondary School Reserve Site**

- 8.7 No specific technical assessments have been carried out on this site as the applications have been well advanced.

### **Identification of Site Constraints – Hadham Road Secondary School Reserve Site**

#### **Woodland**

- 8.8 The woodland covering the southern third of the site (Skelleys Wood) should be retained and connections made between it and the rest of the site through buffer planting and tree-lined streets. It should also be managed appropriately.

#### **Open Space**

- 8.9 The field covering the western third of the site was in use by Bishop's Stortford Rugby Club until 2011. Since then the land has been used for informal public open space but has not been managed as a playing pitch. Given there is a deficit of outdoor playing pitches in the town, the retention and management of this land as a formal playing pitch should be secured.

#### **Other Constraints**

- 8.10 There is a Public Right of Way to the south of the site which connects the site to the countryside beyond the town, towards Maze Green Road and on through the green wedge. Connection to this route should be explored.

### **Stakeholder Engagement – Hadham Road Secondary School Reserve Site**

- 8.11 Unlike other proposed strategic allocations, no specific stakeholder partnership group meetings have been held for this site as the planning applications were well underway following the Preferred Options consultation. Therefore stakeholder discussions were being held where necessary to inform the Council's consideration of the applications.

### **Developer Meetings and Information – Hadham Road Secondary School Reserve Site**

- 8.12 At the date of writing (September 2016), no meetings have taken place with the developers or site promoters following the Preferred Options consultation.



However, communication has been ongoing in respect of the planning applications. In order to assist in its deliberations, the Council invited further information from landowners, developers and agents in the form of Delivery Statements which form the basis of draft Statements of Common Ground. These statements contain details about required infrastructure and utilities and will be used to support the submission of the Plan to the Planning Inspectorate. Given that the site promoters are already progressing through the planning application stages, they did not feel it necessary to provide further information to assist with the Plan-making process.

### Land Uses and Proposals – Hadham Road Secondary School Reserve Site

- 8.13 This site will be an entirely residential scheme apart from the provision of open spaces, one of which will be equipped for play, three of which will contribute to sustainable drainage. An indicative layout accompanying the application (3/14/2144/OP) for 163 homes is included in Figure 8 below for illustrative purposes.

**Figure 8: Indicative layout plan for Hadham Road Secondary School Reserve Site**



### Infrastructure Needs – Hadham Road Secondary School Reserve Site

- 8.14 The infrastructure requirements arising from a development of this size are relatively small compared to many strategic sites proposed within the District Plan. While it is anticipated that the majority of the infrastructure agreed through the Section 106 Agreement will not change, in the event that the application is reconsidered the list below sets out the minimum infrastructure requirements:

- Provision of affordable housing;
- Appropriate relationship between the site and neighbouring fire station;

- Green infrastructure, amenity, formal and informal open spaces including the provision of outdoor playing pitches on the western field and access to the Public Right of Way footpath 17;
- Access improvements to Hadham Road, including the provision of a safe crossing point across Hadham Road;
- Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs); and
- Other financial contributions as appropriate.

### **Implementation – Hadham Road Secondary School Reserve Site**

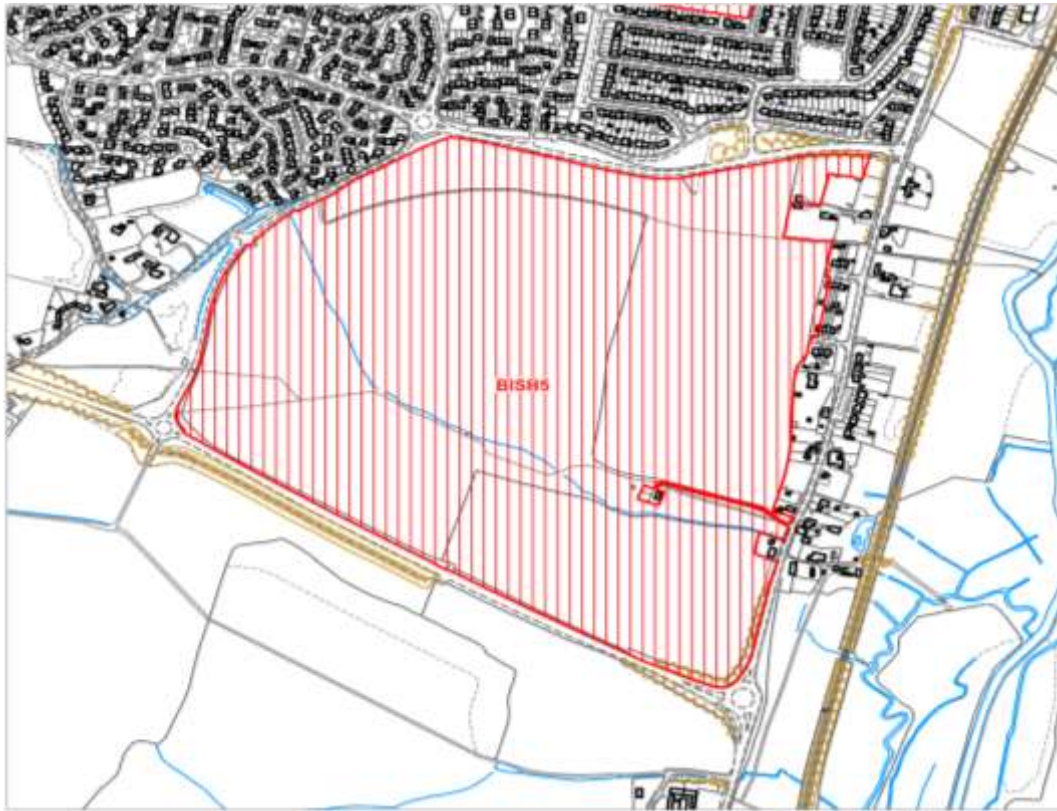
- 8.15 The delivery of this site is dependent upon the delivery of a secondary school on the Bishop's Stortford North site (or elsewhere if a suitable alternative becomes available). A detailed planning permission is still required to deal with reserved matters. Following this, it is anticipated that the site will provide 163 homes from 2022 with development complete within three years.

## **9. Bishop's Stortford South**

### **Introduction**

- 9.1 As noted in paragraph 1.2, land to the south of Bishop's Stortford was identified as a proposed allocation for between 750 and 1,000 homes in the Preferred Options District Plan. This range was identified to include the possibility of the site providing a secondary school if required and/or if a secondary school was not provided at the Reserve Secondary School site at Hadham Road, or through the Bishop's Stortford North development.
- 9.2 The Preferred Options District Plan set out that the site should be comprehensively masterplanned and a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) would be produced. It is the view of Officers that this approach should continue as this will ensure that the principles established through collaborative masterplanning are adopted and are given appropriate weight when determining future applications on the site. This approach is vital given the likelihood that different parts of the site (education and employment land for example) will come forward and/or be delivered over a number of years by different parties.
- 9.3 Development has been previously proposed on this site in 2010 through the consideration of a joint application to relocate the Bishop's Stortford High School and the Herts and Essex High School to a combined site south of Whittington Way (Application reference: 3/10/1012/OP). The application was dismissed at appeal by the Secretary of State in 2012.

**Figure 9: Site Location – Bishop’s Stortford South**



### **Consultation Responses – Bishop’s Stortford South**

- 9.4 A number of comments were received in respect of the Bishop’s Stortford South site at the 2014 Preferred Options Consultation stage. The main issues raised related to (in no particular order):
- Loss of the Green Belt;
  - Previous refusal for school application on Green Belt grounds prohibits development proposal;
  - Important gateway to the south of the town;
  - Concern about traffic generated and its impact on the town centre highway network, adding to congestion;
  - Concern about an increase in vehicles using rural roads to the south-east of the town;
  - South-eastern bypass should be provided;
  - Noise from Stansted Airport flightpath;
  - Impact on Thorley village;
  - Need for indoor and outdoor sports facilities, including football pitches and play areas;
  - Provision of appropriate infrastructure required to support development.

## Technical Assessments – Bishop’s Stortford South

- 9.5 The following sections summarise the various technical evidence based assessments that have been undertaken since the Preferred Options consultation to assess this site alongside the wider Plan preparation process.

### Green Belt Review 2015 (Peter Brett Associates)

- 9.6 The Green Belt Review looked at four parcels in the vicinity of Bishop’s Stortford South, as shown in Figure 10 below. Parcel 71 covers the Bishop’s Stortford South site in its entirety. The site is currently within the Green Belt, bounded by London Road to the east, St James’ Way to the south, Obrey Way to the west and Whittington Way to the north. A summary of the assessment of Parcel 71 is included below.

**Figure 10: Green Belt Parcels**



(Source: Peter Brett Associates, 2015)

- 9.7 The Review concluded that Parcel 71 makes a 'Major' contribution to the purpose of checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas. The Review stated that development is likely to appear as sprawl, being unrelated to the existing urban area. However, the Review also notes the role the bypass plays in providing a well-defined alternative Green Belt boundary. The parcel made no contribution to preventing towns from merging into one another or to preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.
- 9.8 The Review again concluded that the Parcel makes a 'Major' contribution to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The land is currently an open area of countryside forming a rural setting to the southern side of the town. As Obrey Way and Whittington Way currently form a well-defined boundary, any breach of these roads is likely to be perceived as encroachment into the countryside. The Review again acknowledges the role of the bypass in forming a clear boundary between the parcel and the wider countryside beyond. As the parcel scored highly against two of the purposes, the parcel scored 'Low' in terms of its suitability as an area of search for development.



- 9.9 While the Green Belt Review concludes that the overall Parcel has low suitability for development, it is considered that with careful master planning new development here would not appear as sprawl. The new neighbourhood would be well-contained within clear boundaries and by connecting to Whittington Way and Obrey Way the site will be well related to the existing urban area. Large parts of the development will not be visible from London Road, being screened by existing properties. The potential creation of landmark buildings on the south-eastern corner of the site could contribute to creating a gateway into the town. Additional buffer planting and the maintenance of open land along the Hertfordshire Way will help to maintain this important right of way's setting.
- 9.10 As discussed in the Development Strategy Chapter, the Council has a duty to meet its identified housing need and, due to the lack of brownfield opportunities, there is a consequential need to release some Green Belt land in order to achieve sustainable development in the district. Officers acknowledge that the assessment of the land to the south of Bishop's Stortford against Green Belt purposes would not in itself suggest that the land contained in this parcel would be suitable for Green Belt release. However, it should be noted that the Study should be viewed in its overall context, whereby the majority of land assessed throughout the district via this process resulted in similar ratings being achieved. Therefore, of necessity, the imperative of meeting the district's housing need brings into deliberation locations that may not otherwise have been considered suitable to be brought forward for development.
- 9.11 On balance, it is considered that, in the absence of alternative options, in order to meet identified housing need and in order to ensure that that the Councils development strategy is sustainable, it is appropriate to allow for an urban extension to the sustainable settlement of Bishop's Stortford and to allow Green Belt release in this instance. It will be important to ensure that any future development can be sensitively planned to respect the most important aspects identified in the Green Belt Review in amending the town's boundaries.

#### [Strategic Sites Delivery Study \(Peter Brett Associates, 2015\)](#)

- 9.12 The East Herts Strategic Sites Delivery Study assessed the Bishop's Stortford South site in considerable detail. Based on the 750 home option, the Study concluded that deliverable solutions to critical infrastructure (particularly sewage, utilities, site access and provision of primary and secondary education) needed to enable the development to take place have been identified and are shown to be achievable.
- 9.13 The study makes further recommendations as to the type of infrastructure required which includes the provision of new healthcare facilities to serve the south of the town. The study raises the potential for the site to contribute towards sustainable travel within the town, and also provides suggestions as to the treatment of the Hertfordshire Way through detailed design considerations.

#### [Strategic Flood Risk Assessment \(JBA Consulting, 2016\)](#)

- 9.14 The primary flood risk on this site is from an unnamed drain which runs through the centre of the site. Water is mainly confined to the channel and areas immediately adjacent, but flood hazard is mainly classed as very low outside of these areas.



Factoring in climate change does not significantly affect the area at risk of fluvial flooding.

- 9.15 In terms of implications for development, design tools should be employed to ensure that the area affected by flood zones are undeveloped, sustainable drainage options are possible and should be integrated into the design of the site through multi-functional green infrastructure, including the provision of open spaces.

### **Identification of Site Constraints: Bishop's Stortford South**

#### **Green Belt**

- 9.16 The site is currently in the Green Belt. It is acknowledged that this development will require the loss of land from within the Green Belt. As considered in paragraphs 9.5 to 9.10 above, the southern distributor road, St James' Way acts as a new strong, defensible Green Belt boundary within which development can be well contained.

#### **Transport**

- 9.17 The site promoters requested an Environmental Impact Scoping Opinion from the Council. In terms of transport, the County Council suggested that a Transport Assessment will be required and that pre-application discussions should occur to ensure all highway safety, capacity and sustainability issues are fully assessed. The cumulative impact of development on Junction 8 of the M11 will also need to be assessed through transport modelling.

#### **Foul Water Drainage**

- 9.18 In response to the Scoping Opinion request, Thames Water has indicated that the existing network may be unable to support the demand anticipated from this development. Therefore, in addition to on-site works, the impact of the site on the existing network 'downstream' will also need to be considered and appropriate upgrades will be required.

#### **Flood Risk**

- 9.19 The watercourse that runs west to east across the site should become an integrated part of the design to mitigate flood risk and to build in resilience.

#### **Surface Water Drainage**

- 9.20 Given the proximity of the site to the River Stort and the Thorley Flood Pound Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), measures taken to address surface water and flood risk need to consider the impact of discharge into the natural water course. Instead of underground storage cells, the use of naturalised interventions such as sustainable drainage filtration beds should be provided as part of a wider green infrastructure strategy for the site. This will also enable water to be treated prior to discharging, thus helping to improve water quality in the River Stort.

## Archaeology and Heritage Impact

- 9.21 The site is within an Area of Archaeological Significance within which evidence of regionally important remains have been found. Therefore, appropriate investigations will need to be undertaken in consultation with the Natural, Historic and Built Environment Advisory Team at the County Council. There are a number of listed buildings along London Road which forms the eastern boundary to the site. Care should be taken to address their setting and significance. Opportunities should also be taken to retain views of Thorley Church to the south-west of the site.

## Wildlife

- 9.22 While there are no designated wildlife assets within the site, there are designated Wildlife Sites in proximity to the site, including the Thorley Flood Pound SSSI. A full ecological assessment will need to be undertaken to check for the presence of Great Crested Newts and other protected species, and to assess the potential cumulative indirect effects on the SSSI. Opportunities should be taken to create a net gain to biodiversity through buffer planting and other suitable measures.

## The Hertfordshire Way

- 9.23 The Hertfordshire Way is a public bridleway/footpath route which traverses the whole of Hertfordshire. The Way runs west-east across the northern part of the site. As the route runs along higher ground it is afforded with wide reaching southerly views. Whilst it is acknowledged that development will by definition impact on these views, the masterplan will be required to retain an open aspect from the route, particularly in a southerly direction.

## Stakeholder Engagement – Bishop’s Stortford South

- 9.24 No stakeholder workshop has been held for this site. However, full engagement with necessary stakeholders has been achieved through the request by the site promoter for an Environmental Impact Scoping Opinion. Responses were provided by:

- East and North Herts Clinical Commissioning Group
- Environment Agency
- East Herts Drainage Engineers
- East Herts Environmental Health Officers
- Herts County Council Flood and Water Management
- Herts Ecology
- Herts Fire and Rescue
- Herts Highways
- Highways England
- Herts Historic Environment Unit
- East Herts Landscape Officers
- NATS Safeguarding
- NHS England
- Sport England
- Thames Water
- Uttlesford District Council.

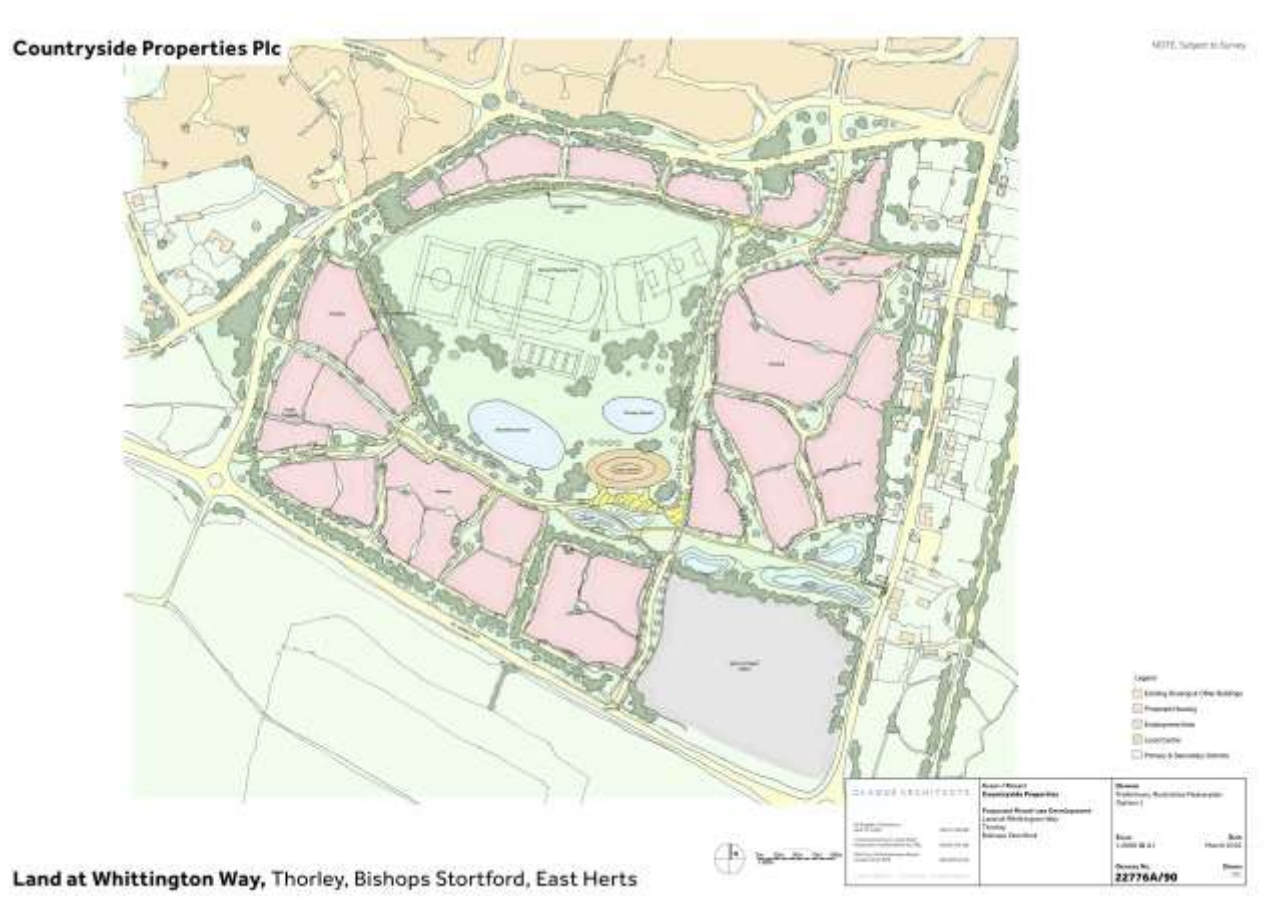
### **Developer Meetings and Information – Bishop’s Stortford South**

- 9.25 Officers have held several meetings with the site promoter Countryside Properties in order to discuss the initial parameter plans provided as part of the Environmental Impact Scoping Opinion Request and with Hertfordshire County Council Property and Schools Planning Teams to discuss education matters.
- 9.26 In addition, in order to assist in its deliberations, the Council invited further information from landowners, developers and agents in the form of Delivery Statements which form the basis of draft Statements of Common Ground. These statements in their final form will contain details about required infrastructure and utilities and will be used to support the submission of the Plan to the Planning Inspectorate.
- 9.27 Countryside Properties has prepared a preliminary draft Statement of Common Ground which sets out the proposed type and mix of development, approach to utilities, constraints and other issues raised in the Environmental Impact Scoping Response. It also sets out initial consideration of mitigation measures, phasing of delivery and the processes required moving towards a planning application. Officers consider that the Draft Delivery Statement for Bishop’s Stortford South provides sufficient assurance that the issues raised have been or are capable of being addressed and that all supporting infrastructure can be provided and forms the basis of the assessment below. The site promoter has prepared a draft Planning Performance Agreement to work together with the Council, moving towards a planning application.

### **Land Uses and Proposals – Bishop’s Stortford South**

- 9.28 Development at Bishop’s Stortford South will create an urban extension to the town. The site will provide 750 homes with a mix of tenure, affordable and aspirational homes as well as opportunities for self-build, retirement living and specialist care. The new homes will be supported by a range of community facilities located around a central hub including a primary school with early-years provision and a secondary school.
- 9.29 Accessed directly off the A1184, Obrey Way and Whittington Way, the site will support bus routes, cycle and pedestrian routes along a clearly defined road hierarchy incorporating tree-lined avenues and smaller residential roads. In addition, a new employment area will provide modern business space providing local job opportunities. This business space could also provide an opportunity for growth in bio-science industries in the town. Open spaces will be created which provide multi-functional drainage solutions as well as space for recreation, creating connections to the wider open countryside of the Stort Valley. An indicative layout accompanying the Draft Statement of Common Ground is included in Figure 11 below for illustrative purposes.

**Figure 11: Indicative Site Layout for Bishop's Stortford South**



### Infrastructure Needs – Bishop's Stortford South

- 9.30 The infrastructure requirements arising from a development of this size are significant in comparison to other sites proposed within the District Plan. A development of 750 homes would generate a need for 1.5 forms of entry. However, the County Council has indicated there is a need to provide two forms of entry at primary level in addition to that proposed at Bishop's Stortford North and anticipated to be delivered at Bishop's Stortford South to accommodate the needs arising from background growth and other developments in the town. Therefore it is proposed that the primary school provided at Bishop's Stortford South can be expanded up to three forms of entry to accommodate future demands. The Plan makes provision through the allocation of land at the existing Bishop's Stortford High School site to facilitate the expansion of Thorley Hill Primary School from 1FE to 2FE. At secondary school level, the County Council has indicated there is a need for an additional six forms of entry in addition to that proposed for Bishop's Stortford North. The provision of a new six-form entry school will meet these demands but should facilitate expansion to eight forms to accommodate future requirements.
- 9.31 The Bishop's Stortford High School has indicated a desire to relocate to Bishop's Stortford South and expand from 5.5 forms to eight forms of entry. There are also plans for the Herts and Essex High School to expand on their current site (from 5.5FE to 8FE) through the relocation of its sports facilities to land at Beldams Lane. The expansion of these two schools will therefore provide an additional five forms of entry. The county Council is currently exploring with other schools in the town as to

their potential to expand. The Bishop's Stortford South development will only be expected to directly enable (fund) 1.5FE and the Council will continue to work with Hertfordshire County Council to achieve the delivery of secondary education in the town.

9.32 The masterplan will set out the on-site and off-site infrastructure required to support the development. Therefore the list below is indicative of the minimum infrastructure requirements:

- provision of affordable housing;
- opportunities for self-build and retirement living, including specialist care;
- 4-5 hectares of employment land in a landmark location and design;
- provision of land for a two-form entry primary school with early years facility with room to expand to three forms of entry to cater for future needs;
- provision of a six-form entry secondary school with room to expand to eight-forms of entry to cater for future demands;
- financial contribution towards 1.5FE at primary and secondary level education;
- a mixed-use neighbourhood centre, making provision for healthcare, retail and community/cultural/leisure uses;
- quality local green infrastructure, including connection to and enhancement of on and off-site wildlife assets;
- public open space/s within the site, including the provision of play areas and opportunities for outdoor health and fitness activities;
- the provision of outdoor playing pitches and indoor sports provided through the community use of the secondary school facilities;
- access and new highway junctions (A1184, Obrey Way and Whittington Way);
- public transport route through the site;
- sustainable transport measures, both through improvements to the existing walking and cycling networks in the locality and enhanced passenger transport services;
- utilities, including sewage networks and integrated communications infrastructure to facilitate home working;
- sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs); and
- all necessary on-site and appropriate off-site infrastructure.

### **Implementation – Bishop's Stortford South**

9.33 The Draft Statement of Common Ground sets out an anticipated phasing plan. Assuming planning permission is granted soon after adoption of the District Plan, delivery of new homes could start on the site by Autumn 2018, with first completions by the end of 2019. The site promoters suggest that subsequent years can then deliver 100 properties per year. On this time table, serviced land will be available for the schools by 2020. However, it may be necessary to seek to expedite the earlier delivery of the school.



## 10. The Bishop's Stortford High School London Road

### Introduction

- 10.1 As discussed in paragraph 9.30 above, the Bishop's Stortford High School has a desire to relocate to the Bishop's Stortford South site. The current school site is very constrained and shares land with Thorley Hill Primary School. There is no potential to expand on their current site and significant improvements are required to some of the school facilities. The relocation of the school will therefore provide a long term solution to the needs of the school at the same time as providing for some of the additional school capacity needed within the town.
- 10.2 In the event that the school relocates to Bishop's Stortford South, this will make the current school site available for residential development. This will also be necessary in order to part fund the relocation. Given the need for additional capacity at primary school level, as discussed in paragraph 8.24, it is prudent to ensure that existing schools are able to expand where possible. Therefore land adjacent to Thorley Hill Primary School will be allocated through this policy to facilitate expansion of the school from one to two-forms of entry.

**Figure 12: Site Location – The Bishop's Stortford High School Site, London Road**



### Consultation Responses – Bishop's Stortford High School Site

- 10.3 As this site was not included in the Preferred Options District Plan Consultation, there are no specific responses in relation to this site. However, responses made to

the Bishop's Stortford South site do make reference to this site and are therefore summarised below:

- Due to a lack of capacity school children cannot be educated in the town;
- Current school buildings are run down;
- School was built for three forms of entry but currently accommodates 5.3 forms of entry;
- Support for the relocation of the school but land provided should be bigger;
- Sport England state that the provision of a new school provides the most realistic opportunity for providing indoor and outdoor sports facility for community use.

### **Technical Assessments – Bishop's Stortford High School Site**

- 10.4 No specific technical assessments have been undertaken for this site. Issues such as transport modelling were considered through the application to redevelop the school site (application reference 3/10/1013/OP), which was considered as part of the joint application to relocate the boys and girls school to the south of Whittington Way referred to in paragraph 9.3 above. The County Council Highways Department raised no objection to any of the development scenarios considered on the basis of the transport modelling undertaken. The Strategic Sites Delivery Study suggested that this site, in conjunction with the Bishop's Stortford South site would provide good opportunities to create new, and extend public transport networks from the south of the town towards the town centre.

### **Identification of Site Constraints – Bishop's Stortford High School Site**

#### **Open Space**

- 10.5 The site currently comprises school buildings and a school playing field. It would be prudent to retain a proportion of the playing field for informal outdoor recreation..

#### **Thorley Hill Primary School and The Blues Nursery**

- 10.6 New development will need to ensure an appropriate relationship is maintained between new uses and the existing school. Additional land should be provided on-site to facilitate the expansion of the school, and possibly provide a new access to the school. Where access is proposed to serve new homes in the western part of the site, this should be designed sensitively to ensure an appropriate relationship to the school. Planning permission was previously granted for the relocation of the Blues Pre-School to Cox's Gardens, Elizabeth Road, Bishop's Stortford (application reference 3/11/0423/FP). There are no anticipated reasons why the renewal of this application would not be considered favourable.

#### **Access**

- 10.7 The site is currently accessed directly off London Road. Consideration should be given as to whether an additional access could be achieved from Twyford Gardens/Grace Gardens, in order to avoid having to create an access which runs along the back of Thorley Hill Primary School.

### **Stakeholder Engagement – The Bishop’s Stortford High School Site**

- 10.8 No stakeholder workshop has been held for this site. However, full engagement with necessary stakeholders has been achieved through Officer’s request for information regarding education and highway information.

### **Developer Meetings and Information – The Bishop’s Stortford High School Site**

- 10.9 Officers have met with the Bishop’s Stortford High School, Herts County Council Property and School Planning Team to discuss the requirements of the school and to establish the principle of the school’s relocation to Bishop’s Stortford South.

### **Land Uses and Proposals – The Bishop’s Stortford High School Site**

- 10.10 It is anticipated that the site will be predominantly residential with the provision of an area of open space alongside the woodland to the west of the site. Figure 13 below shows the indicative plan for the site when it was being considered as part of the joint school application which was dismissed on appeal. The application proposed 220 homes and a small area of additional playing field for the school (application reference 3/10/1013/OP). However, in order to facilitate the expansion of the school in terms of built facilities, it is suggested that land immediately adjacent to the existing buildings is more appropriate. Furthermore, the previous proposal did not provide an area of open space considered sufficient to compensate for the loss of the school playing fields. Therefore the District Plan proposes to allocate the site for 150 homes to ensure these requirements can be met satisfactorily.

**Figure 13: Indicative Site Layout – Bishop’s Stortford High School Site**





## **Infrastructure Needs – The Bishop’s Stortford High School Site**

- 10.11 The site will need to ensure essential utilities infrastructure is provided and to provide pedestrian and cycle access through the site to connect to neighbouring residential areas. In addition, the retention of part of the playing fields to create an area of open space for informal recreation will provide for new and existing residents. A safe access on to London Road will be required and consideration should be given to whether additional access can be achieved from Twyford Gardens/ Grace Gardens. The site will also enable the expansion of Thorley Hill Primary School and consideration should be given to whether an additional access to the school can be provided.

## **Implementation – The Bishop’s Stortford High School Site**

- 10.12 As the delivery of this site is dependent upon the provision of land for, and the relocation of the Bishop’s Stortford High School. Based on the proposed time table for the Bishop’s Stortford South site, land will not be available for construction to start on the new school until 2020. Therefore, development would not be able to start until after the school relocation is complete. It is anticipated that once started, the site will not take long to complete given the lack of preliminary infrastructure required. There is a need to ensure sufficient school capacity is provided as soon as possible to address existing issues, and to ensure the delivery of new homes within the first five years of the plan period it may therefore be necessary to seek to expedite the earlier delivery of the school on the Bishop’s Stortford South site. The site is allocated to deliver 150 homes.

## **11. The Goods Yard**

### **Introduction**

- 11.1 The Goods Yard site was first designated as a potential redevelopment site in the 1999 Local Plan. Several development briefs have been prepared in the intervening years to guide development on the site, and an application was submitted but subsequently withdrawn. Being a town centre location, the site is highly accessible, benefitting from direct access to the station and a short walk to the town centre. However, with this comes a number of challenges such as the desire to accommodate competing town centre uses, ensure the opportunity of the site is maximized and, at the same time, ensure appropriate design, scale and size of development and servicing, such as sufficient parking for commuter use. The phasing of development needs to be carefully managed in order to ensure that the busy railway station and associated access and parking operate fully at all times.
- 11.2 The site is currently subject to an application (03/16/0530/OUT), which is currently undetermined. The application is a hybrid application comprising an outline application for the redevelopment of the whole site (for 682 new homes, 607sqm of retail floorspace, 3,034 sqm of hotel floorspace, two multistorey car parks and associated highway and access works), and a detailed application for the first three phases of the site (the first 462 properties, one multistorey car park, station forecourt and access from the north of the site).



- 11.3 In the 1999 and 2007 Local Plans, the designated site incorporated the Former John Dyde Training Centre. This has since been redeveloped for leisure and residential use. The previous limitations on the type and quantum of development on the remainder of the Goods Yard should be replaced by an up-to-date evaluation of what may be possible and acceptable on the site. The Council has commissioned Tibbalds to undertake a design review of the current application and the site is a key area being considered in the Bishop's Stortford Town Centre Planning Framework.

**Figure 14: Site Location – The Goods Yard Site**



### **Consultation Responses – The Goods Yard Site**

- 11.4 A number of comments were received in respect of the Goods Yard Site at the 2014 Preferred Options Consultation stage. The main issues raised related to (in no particular order):
- Development should be of high quality design
  - A link road through the site should be provided
  - Support for ambitions to integrate the river into the design and improving the riverside environment
  - Support for active ground floor uses, public spaces and direct routes to the town centre
  - Buildings should be set back from the river and building heights should be restricted;
  - Needs to be sufficient parking for all users
  - Parking should be minimised to reduce traffic congestion in the town centre
  - Should enhance the station forecourt to create a transport hub

## Technical Assessments – The Goods Yard Site

### Bishop's Stortford Town Centre Planning Framework (Allies and Morrison, 2016)

- 11.5 The emerging Town Centre Planning Framework has provided specific advice in relation to the Goods Yard site. The importance of this site in terms of creating a first impression of the town and improving the arrival experience into the town centre should be recognised. Opportunities to improve the riverside environment should be maximised along with strengthening connectivity for pedestrians over the railway line, from the river to the station, from the station to the town centre and along the river corridor. Connections between the site and the Anchor Street Leisure Park should be enhanced. The provision of a link road through the site should be included in the policy.
- 11.6 Reference should be made to creating a high quality of design which reflects the local pallet of materials, creating a variety of character areas across the site. Being a highly accessible location, opportunities should be taken to create new business floorspace as well as some retail uses to reinforce the pedestrian route between the station and the town centre.

### Bishop's Stortford Goods Yard Site Urban Design Appraisal (Tibbalds, 2016)

- 11.7 Tibbalds was commissioned to undertake a design review of the application. Tibbalds state that the site is a prominent gateway for the town, but the site lacks legibility and is dominated by surface level car parking. The review states that while the basic structure of the current proposal is sound, the more detailed aspects of the application do not realise the full potential of the site.
- 11.8 The site should include a variety in design (material and build form), size of property (rather than one and two bedroom flats only) and acknowledge the distinctive conditions of the site. More family-sized homes should be provided. The open space strategy should fully exploit the potential for routes and spaces to become distinctive focal points and useable, people friendly spaces.

### Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (JBA Consulting, 2016)

- 11.9 The primary flood risk on this site is from the River Stort itself, which runs along the western edge of the site. An area of fluvial flood risk covers the southern part of the site (Flood Zone 2). Factoring in climate change, there may be an increase in the extent of surface water flooding and fluvial flooding.
- 11.10 In terms of implications for development, design tools should be employed to ensure that the area affected by flood zones are undeveloped, sustainable drainage options are possible and should be integrated into the design of the site through multi-functional green infrastructure, including the provision of open spaces. Given the potential for flooding to impact on safe access and egress from the site, development may need to consider the provision of safe refuge in the event of occupiers being unable to evacuate.

## Identification of Site Constraints – The Goods Yard Site

### Town Centre and Station Parking Requirements

- 11.11 There are clearly conflicts between a policy approach that seeks to meet the parking needs of the uses on site such as the station and residential uses in full, and one which seeks to reduce the number of vehicles driving through the constrained town centre to access this parking. Strategies for balancing the conflicting issues should not result in the creation of impacts elsewhere in the town. For example, reduced parking provision, without a strategy to encourage the use of alternative modes, will simply lead to parking pressure elsewhere.
- 11.12 There is an Air Quality Management Area at the Hockerill junction. Several mitigation options have previously been considered but not taken forward for a number of reasons. The uses and servicing, including parking provided at this site will have an impact on the operation and air quality at the Hockerill junction.

### River Stort and Flood Risk

- 11.13 The River Stort is a key asset for the town. Running along the entire west side of the site, development provides a key opportunity to improve the riverside environment, create a riverside access directly to the town centre and create a unique public realm. Being adjacent to the River Stort, there is evidence of surface water flooding. Therefore, any proposals will need to ensure resilience against flooding.

### Legibility through the site

- 11.14 As a key gateway in to the town from the station, it is important that the site is easy to navigate and allows visitors to understand how to get to other parts of the town centre. Views of landmarks should be retained and routes should be direct and well signposted.

## Stakeholder Engagement – The Goods Yard Site

- 11.15 In order to consider the wider implications and infrastructure requirements arising from development in this location the Council invited the site promoter Solum and other statutory stakeholders to a Stakeholder meeting which was held on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2014 to discuss the potential for bringing the site forward for development. In addition to East Herts Council Officers, the following stakeholders were represented:
- Network Rail
  - Solum Regeneration (a joint venture between Network Rail and Kier Developments Ltd)
  - Savills representing Solum
  - Herts County Council – Highways
  - Herts County Council – Transport Modelling
- 11.16 The aim of the meeting was to identify the main issues that would require further testing through the District Plan. The following matters were particularly relevant:

- Due to concerns over the Hockerill junction a southern access to the site was considered essential;
- Improvements required to the station forecourt would bring wider benefits;
- Funding should be secured to widen the Station Road Bridge;
- Proposals should provide links to the town centre and to the south-west to the Southmill Trading Estate and Rhodes Centre;
- Solum recommend the site could deliver 450 homes.

### **Developer Meetings and Information – The Goods Yard Site**

- 11.17 Following this initial meeting, several meetings/discussions have taken place with Officers. These have focused on issues such as neighbourhood planning, transport modelling and moving the site towards a planning application. In order to assist in its deliberations, the Council invited further information from landowners, developers and agents in the form of Delivery Statements which form the basis of draft Statements of Common Ground. These statements contain details about required infrastructure and utilities and will be used to support the submission of the Plan to the Planning Inspectorate. Given that the site promoter is already progressing through the planning application stages, they were able to provide detailed phasing plans and an assurance that all infrastructure required (for their current proposals) could be provided.

### **Land Uses and Proposals – The Goods Yard Site**

- 11.18 As the Council has not determined the application, it is prudent to set out in planning policy terms what the Council thinks is an appropriate mix of uses on the site. Various assessments have been undertaken on the viability of various proposals including the link road and the Council has to be mindful of issues such as development viability.
- 11.19 The current application proposes 682 new homes (mainly one and two bedroom flats), 607sqm of retail floorspace, 3,034 sqm of hotel floorspace, two multistorey car parks and associated highway and access works. The application proposes a road running north-south through the site for residential access and buses only.
- 11.20 Both the Tibbalds Urban Design Review and the Town Centre Planning Framework suggest the site should provide a greater mix of uses than currently proposed. Therefore, the site should provide a mix of dwellings, including family-sized homes and affordable homes, retail floorspace and B1 office accommodation. Given this mix, a lower number of homes may be necessary so the Plan proposes a lower limit of 400 homes, with more being possible subject to full proposal and site assessment.
- 11.21 Public realm improvements are a key part of the development of this site, creating a public transport interchange at a redesigned station forecourt, pedestrian and cycle links from the river to the station and to the town centre, opportunities to cross the railway line and the creation of useable people-friendly public spaces.



**Figure 15: Site Layout from Planning Application 3/16/0530/OUT**



### **Infrastructure Needs – The Goods Yard Site**

11.22 The infrastructure requirements arising from this town centre site focus on connecting the site to its surrounding environment and creating an attractive entrance to the town. As discussions are still ongoing through the planning applications process, many of these issues will already be under consideration. The list below sets out the minimum infrastructure requirements:

- a mix of house type and size;
- provision of affordable housing;
- retail and B1 office floorspace;
- a sustainable link road north-south through the site;
- station and town centre parking;
- a new station forecourt and public transport hub;
- sustainable transport measures, both through improvements to the existing walking and cycling networks in the locality and enhanced passenger transport services;
- a network of public spaces, pedestrian and cycle routes, and a high quality riverside environment, landscaping and tree planting;
- contributions to off-site provision of sports and education facilities;
- utilities, including foul water pumping stations and integrated communications infrastructure to facilitate home working;
- sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs), including flood mitigation and resilience measures; and
- all necessary on-site and appropriate off-site infrastructure, including education and healthcare provision.

## Implementation – The Goods Yard Site

- 11.23 The Delivery Study and work undertaken to support the planning application indicate that the development of this site is considered viable. However, the phasing of development on this site is a key issue. In order for the station to operate effectively during construction, access will need to be maintained at all times and sufficient parking will also need to be available. It is anticipated that 250 homes will be delivered between 2017 and 2022, and 150 homes between 2022 and 2027.

## 12. The causeway / Old River Lane

### Introduction

- 12.1 The Causeway / Old River Lane site provides a unique opportunity to extend the town centre of Bishop's Stortford, creating a range of new uses in the town, including residential uses.
- 12.2 The site was previously granted planning permission for a mixed-use retail and leisure development (3/10/1964/OP). However, the economic downturn prevented this proposal coming to fruition. East Herts Council is now the landowner of the site and wishes to bring forward the site for development appropriate to its location.

**Figure 16: Site Location – The Causeway / Old River Lane**



## **Consultation Responses – The Causeway / Old River Lane**

- 12.3 A number of comments were received in respect of the Causeway / Old River Lane site at the 2014 Preferred Options Consultation stage. The majority of these related to the previous planning permission for the redevelopment of the town, known as the Henderson proposal.
- 12.4 The main issues raised related to (in no particular order):
- Lack of parking discourages visitors
  - Civic functions should be relocated to the town
  - Smaller shops are needed
  - Too many non-retail units
  - The site is in the flood plain where underground parking should not be considered
  - Town needs more leisure facilities
  - Pedestrianisation would help revitalise the centre
  - Conservation Area setting and heritage assets need to be managed appropriately

## **Technical Assessments – The Causeway / Old River Lane**

### **Bishop's Stortford Town Centre Planning Framework (Allies and Morrison, 2016)**

- 12.5 The emerging Town Centre Planning Framework was commissioned to consider the potential opportunities presented by this town centre location. While the Framework currently remains in preparation, initial advice has been provided to help with the Plan-making process.
- 12.6 The Framework considers that this site is an exciting opportunity to strengthen the town's retail, leisure and community offer with a high quality scheme that sits comfortably between the historic environment and town centre green spaces. This location provides the opportunity to create new, and improve existing connections between the town centre and the Castle Gardens, make improvements to Link Road, provide new frontages and enhance the setting of prominent buildings within the centre, such as Coopers.
- 12.7 The Framework also considers opportunities such as partial pedestrianisation, the creation of new parking areas, streets and public spaces and ways of managing traffic flows through the town such as the 'switching-off' of the gyratory system. New connections should be created to link the town centre to other key locations such as across the river to the Mill Site and Good Yard site.
- 12.8 In terms of uses, the Framework considers a number of potential uses such as retail, office, residential on upper floors, parking, cultural and community facilities which could include a 'civic hub' which could provide services such as GP surgery or polyclinic, Council customer service centre, nursery and gym for example.

### **Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (JBA Consulting, 2016)**

- 12.9 The primary flood risk on this site is from the River Stort itself, which runs along the eastern edge of the site. 83% of the site falls within Flood Zone 2 and 13% within

Flood Zone 3, and the site is identified as having surface water flood risk issues. Factoring in climate change, there may be an increase in the extent of surface water flooding and fluvial flooding.

- 12.10 In terms of implications for development, the site is currently protected by two privately-owned embankments and is the only site considered in the Flood Risk Assessment that would benefit from formal flood defences. Therefore this will need to be taken into account in the masterplanning of this site, including the consideration of the potential for flooding to impact on safe access and egress from the site. Development may need to consider the provision of safe refuge in the event of occupiers being unable to evacuate.

### **Identification of Site Constraints – The Causeway / Old River Lane**

#### **Flood Plain**

- 12.11 While land within the Link Road is outside Flood Zone 3b, there has been evidence of flooding in the past on this site. Therefore development proposals will need to provide resilience against flooding.

#### **Conservation Area**

- 12.12 The site lies within the Bishop's Stortford Town Centre Conservation Area, and is adjacent to several visually prominent listed buildings and the Scheduled Monument at Waytemore Castle. The development will need to ensure that these heritage assets are protected and enhanced where possible.

#### **Green Wedge / Local Green Space**

- 12.13 The site is adjacent to the green wedge that runs from the town centre outwards to and beyond the A120 bypass. The green wedge will be designated as a Local Green Space as it provides land for informal and formal recreation as well as containing features that are valuable to wildlife. However, as the wedge separates two neighbourhoods, it will be necessary for the creation of a sustainable route through or around the wedge and to ensure cycling and pedestrian access between the neighbourhoods.

### **Stakeholder Engagement – The Causeway / Old River Lane**

- 12.14 There has been considerable engagement by key stakeholders in the preparation of the Town Centre Planning Framework which will continue as the Framework is finalised. The consultants have engaged with the Town Council and other local stakeholders including through a wider public consultation exercise. The consultants have also worked with Hertfordshire County Council Highways, Transport Modelling and Passenger Transport Officers in order to understand opportunities and constraints within the highway network.

### **Developer Meetings and Information – The Causeway / Old River Lane**

- 12.15 The Council is the land owner and no developer or site promoter is currently in place. The Council will prepare more detailed proposals for the development in due

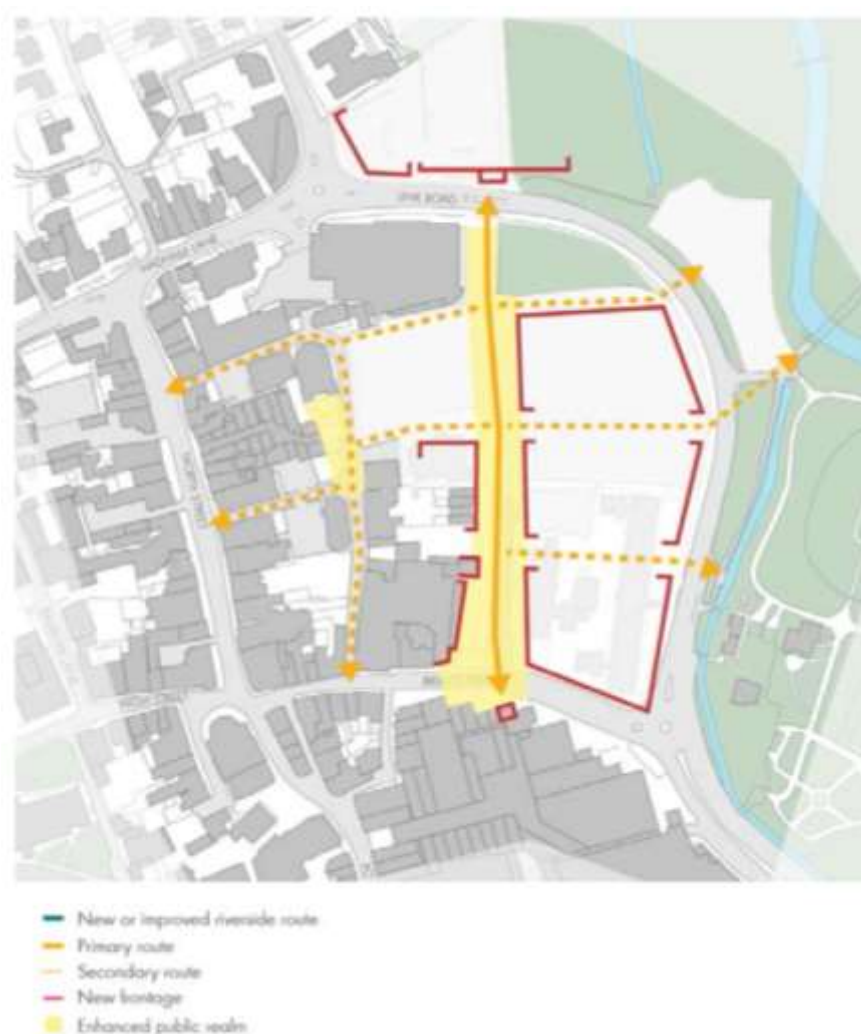


course, fully informed by the emerging policy in this plan and the guidance in the finalised Town Centre Planning Framework.

### Land Uses and Proposals – The Causeway / Old River Lane

- 12.16 As stated in paragraph 11.22, there are no proposals in place as to the form of development. Therefore, this assessment sets out what the site is expected to provide.

**Figure 17: The Causeway /Old River Lane Site Illustrative Concept Diagram from the emerging Town Centre Planning Framework (not binding on the Council)**



### Infrastructure Needs – The Causeway / Old River Lane

- 12.17 The development of this site will require the re-provision of parking if displaced to another equally accessible location. As with the Goods Yard site, there needs to be an appropriate balance between a policy approach which supports the town centre through parking provision and one which seeks to discourage traffic in the constrained town centre and in the vicinity of the Air Quality Management Area at the Hockerill junction. Resilience against flooding will also need to be planned for.

While there are no proposals for the site at this time, the list below sets out anticipated infrastructure requirements:

- a mix of house type and size;
- provision of affordable housing;
- retail, leisure and B1 office floorspace;
- 'civic hub', including D1 uses such as a GP surgery
- replacement town centre parking;
- sustainable transport measures, both through improvements to the existing walking and cycling networks in the locality and enhanced passenger transport services;
- high quality design which respects the Conservation Area location, incorporating landscaping and tree planting;
- a network of public spaces and routes, creating quality linkages to the existing town, to parking areas and towards the Local Green Space;
- utilities, including sewage networks and integrated communications infrastructure to facilitate home working;
- sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs), including flood mitigation and resilience measures; and
- all necessary on-site and appropriate off-site infrastructure.

### **Implementation – The Causeway / Old River Lane**

- 12.18 Given the importance of this site, a comprehensive masterplanning process will be required, which takes account of other opportunities in the town such as the Mill Site and the Goods Yard. It is therefore not anticipated that development will start on this site until later in the Plan period. Depending upon the final form of development proposals it may be possible to provide up to 100 new homes on the site.

## **13. East of Manor Links**

### **Introduction**

- 13.1 This site was first considered in the Preferred Options District Plan Consultation. At the time, the site promoter put forward a proposal for 150 homes on land which is currently used as a driving range and an area of disused land to the rear of properties on Manor Links. Subsequent to the consultation, the Golf Club has chosen to retain the driving range and therefore a smaller parcel of land is now available for development. Initial assessment indicates that this site could accommodate approximately 50 new homes.

## Site Location Map Figure 18: Site Location – East of Manor Links



### Consultation Responses – East of Manor Links

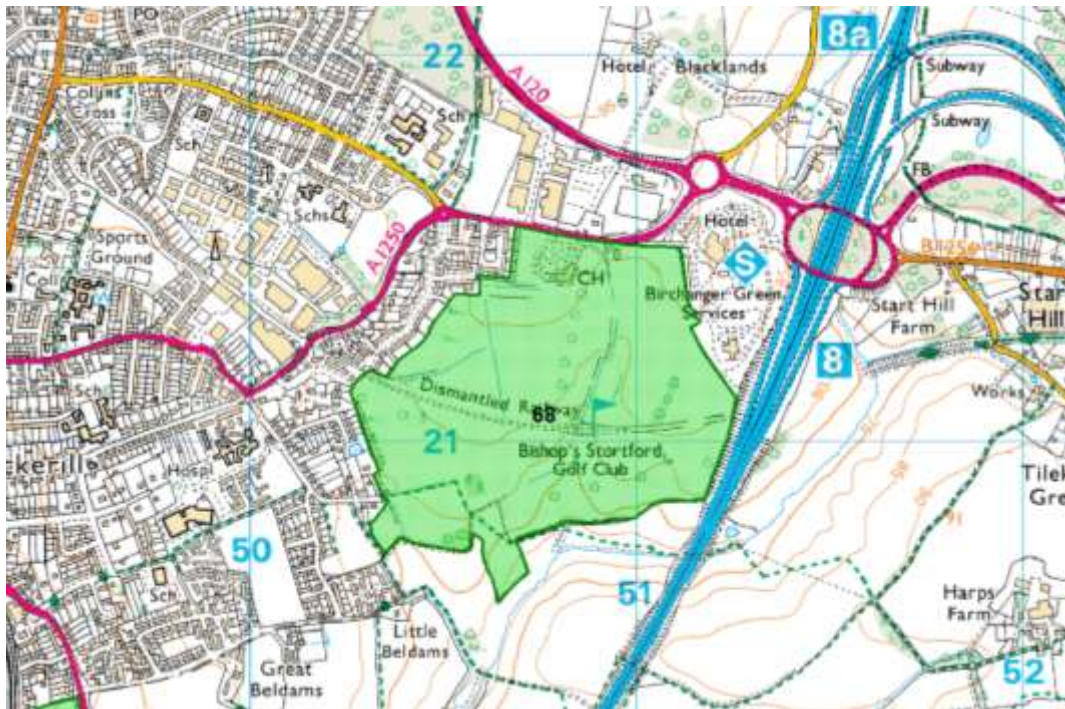
- 13.2 A number of comments were received in respect of the East of Manor Links site at the 2014 Preferred Options Consultation stage. The main issues raised related to (in no particular order):
- Objection against loss of Green Belt
  - Loss of tranquillity
  - Road insufficient width to service this site
  - Dunmow Road access not safe, conflicts with school drop-off
  - Too far from the town centre to walk or cycle, existing routes too narrow or are through private access
  - Insufficient healthcare to serve new residents
  - Protected species on-site
  - Too close to Stansted Airport, new homes will suffer from noise
  - Support for retention of areas of ecological interest
  - Will require an upgrade to the sewage network

### Technical Assessments – East of Manor Links

#### Green Belt Review (Peter Brett Associates, 2015)

- 13.3 Parcel 68 covers the Bishop's Stortford Golf Club land in its entirety. The site is currently within the Green Belt, forming the eastern-most part of Bishop's Stortford, bounded by Dunmow Road to the north, the M11 and Birchanger Green Services to the east, Manor Links to the west and open land to the south. A summary of the assessment of Parcel 68 is included below.

**Figure 19: Green Belt Parcel – East of Manor Links**



(Source: Peter Brett Associates, 2015)

- 13.4 The Review concluded that Parcel 68 makes a slight/negligible contribution to the purpose of checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas. The Review stated that the Parcel constrains the outward growth of the town, though the M11 to the east provides a well-defined edge further from the town which would provide containment. The parcel made no contribution to preventing towns from merging into one another or to preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.
- 13.5 The Review concluded that the Parcel makes a slight/negligible contribution to the purpose of safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The Review stated that the Parcel comprises a golf course crossed by a disused railway, part of which is a Local Wildlife Site. Green Belt constrains development from extending into this area, although its character is not that of open countryside. The Review concluded that the Parcel makes no contribution to preserving the setting and special character of historic towns. As the Parcel did not score highly against any of the purposes, the Parcel scored 'high' in terms of its suitability as an area of search for development.
- 13.6 As discussed in the Development Strategy Chapter, the Council has a duty to meet its identified housing need and, due to the lack of brownfield opportunities, there is a consequential need to release some Green Belt land in order to achieve sustainable development in the district. While the Green Belt Review concludes that the Parcel has a high suitability as an area of search for development, it is not considered appropriate to release any more land than required for development from the Green Belt. The emerging proposal for the site will need to provide features and a design approach that creates a clear outer boundary.



## Transport Modelling, 2016

- 13.7 Hertfordshire County Council have advised that the proposal for 150 homes was assessed in the Harlow and Stansted Gateway Transportation Model and no particular issues were identified beyond local access which could be dealt with through a planning application. A proposal for 50 homes would therefore also have no particular issues.

## Identification of Site Constraints – East of Manor Links

### Green Belt

- 13.8 The site is currently in the Green Belt. It is acknowledged that this development will require the loss of Green Belt land.

### Wildlife

- 13.9 The disused railway line that runs east to west to the south of the site was identified as a Local Wildlife Site for its grassland properties. It should be noted that the Local Wildlife Site was declassified in 2014 as the area meeting the criteria is too small. While there may be no designated site on the proposed area of land, due to the undisturbed nature of the scrubland, there may be species of ecological interest present, therefore an ecological survey should be undertaken.

### Access through Manor Links

- 13.10 Concern was raised through the consultation that Manor Links itself would be unsuitable to accommodate additional vehicle movements associated with the proposed development. Manor Links has direct access to Dunmow Road and is an entirely residential road with single yellow lines, which facilitates the free flow of vehicles. In addition, all properties have driveways. When the road was constructed, two access points were built in, complete with turning space and visibility splays to enable the creation of access to this site. These access points are of sufficient width to accommodate service and emergency vehicles.

### Other Constraints

- 13.10 There are two drainage channels that form the boundary of the smaller proposed site. These will need to be considered in preparing the layout of the site.

## Stakeholder Engagement – East of Manor Links

- 13.11 Given the relative small scale of this site, it was not considered necessary to hold a stakeholder workshop. However, engagement has been undertaken with key stakeholders through the Plan-making process and direct from the site promoter which is evidenced in documents submitted to the Council.

## Developer Meetings and Information – East of Manor Links

- 13.12 In order to assist in its deliberations, the Council invited further information from landowners, developers and agents in the form of Delivery Statements which form



## 14. The Mill Site

### Introduction

- 14.1 The Mill Site occupies a strategic location between the railway station and the town centre and fronting the River Stort. While acknowledging that not all the properties on the site are associated with the Mill, are in Mill usage or in single ownership, for ease of reference, the site is collectively known as the Mill Site. In the long term, the opportunities for sensitive mixed-used development are significant, as set out in the Mill Site Development Brief (2011). However, at present there is no indication that the Mill owners are seeking to relocate to an alternative site. Therefore, this appraisal considers two eventualities; if the occupier of the milling operation wishes to relocate at some point during the plan period; or if only the non-milling use land within the site comes forward for development. For example, the Council is aware that part of the site known as Stonemasons Yard is available for development, independent of the rest of the site. Given the importance of the Mill Site as a whole, it is considered that proposals for parts of the site should not prejudice the ability to plan comprehensively for the site as a whole and will be expected to reflect the provisions of the policy.

**Figure 21: Site Location – The Mill Site**



### Consultation Responses – The Mill Site

- 14.2 A number of comments were received in respect of the Mill Site at the 2014 Preferred Options Consultation stage. The agents representing the landowner responded to the Preferred Options Consultation, objecting to many of the proposed policy criteria. Although the landowner has no intention to bring forward any alternative uses to the current operation, they wanted to ensure they have flexibility

to facilitate future development should their intentions change. In addition, other issues were raised regarding the site (in no particular order):

- Site should provide opportunities for moorings;
- Site provides opportunity to deliver housing in an accessible location;
- Support for the creation of new public realm and pedestrian options, including the widening of Station Road Bridge for pedestrians;
- Support for retention and renovation of the heritage assets such as the Registration Office and Conservation Area;

## **Technical Assessments – The Mill Site**

### **Bishop's Stortford Town Centre Planning Framework (Allies and Morrison, 2016)**

- 14.3 The emerging Town Centre Planning Framework has provided specific initial advice in relation to the Mill Site. The importance of this site in terms of creating connections between the station and the town centre should be recognised. Opportunities to improve the riverside environment should be maximised along with strengthening connectivity for pedestrians from the station to the town centre and along the river corridor. Connections between the site and the Anchor Street Leisure Park should be enhanced.
- 14.4 The emerging advice suggests that this site could come forward in two stages, separating the operational and non-operational Mill Site. The site is ideally located to create a new leisure and retail quarter with an active public realm fronting the river. New mooring opportunities may be appropriate along with commercial and residential uses. The design of new development should reflect the riverside character, taking reference from the historic mill and industrial riverside buildings in Bishop's Stortford.

## **Identification of Site Constraints – The Mill Site**

### **River Stort and Flood Risk**

- 14.5 The River Stort is a key asset for the town. Running along the entire west side of the site, it provides a key opportunity to improve the riverside environment, create a riverside access directly to the town centre and create a unique public realm. As the site in total is not available for development at this current time and therefore it is unclear what form development might take, a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment has not been undertaken. However, being adjacent to the River Stort, there is evidence of surface water flooding. Therefore, any proposals will need to ensure resilience against flooding and a detailed flood risk assessment will be necessary to inform any proposal.



### Legibility through the site

- 14.6 Given the location of the site between the station and the town centre, it is important that the site is easy to navigate and allows visitors to understand how to get to other parts of the town centre. Views of landmarks should be retained and routes should be direct and well signposted.

### Stakeholder Engagement – The Mill Site

- 14.7 As the site is currently not being promoted for development, there has not been a specific stakeholder workshop to discuss this site. However, engagement has been undertaken with key stakeholders through the Plan-making process.

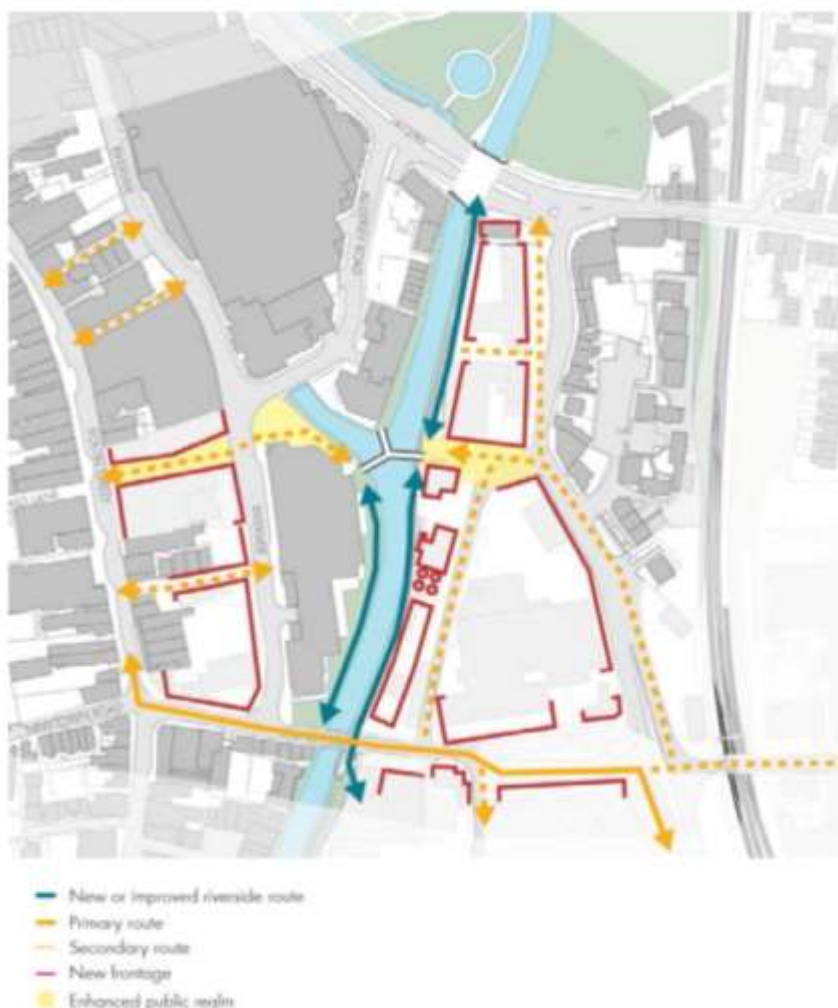
### Developer Meetings and Information – The Mill Site

- 14.8 In order to assist in its deliberations, the Council invited further information from landowners, developers and agents in the form of Delivery Statements which form the basis of draft Statements of Common Ground. These statements in their final form will contain details about required infrastructure and utilities and will be used to support the submission of the Plan to the Planning Inspectorate. As the site is currently not being promoted for development no specific meetings have been held with site promoters or landowners.

### Land Uses and Proposals – The Mill Site

- 14.9 Given the importance of the site in terms of its location, it is considered prudent to set out in planning policy terms what the Council thinks is an appropriate mix of uses on the site. Should the site come forward for development, the development should comprise a new riverside hub of leisure and commercial uses with active frontages, with B1 offices and residential uses on upper floors. The river frontage could also provide opportunities for residential moorings.

**Figure 22: The Mill Site Illustrative Concept Diagram from the emerging Town Centre Planning Framework (not binding on the Council)**



### Infrastructure Needs – The Mill Site

14.10 In order to support development on this site, the list below sets out the minimum infrastructure requirements:

- new footbridge crossing the River Stort, enabling the site to operate as a connecting route between the town centre to the west and the station to the south;
- the retention and enhancement of listed buildings;
- a design which reflects the riverside and industrial mill heritage;
- a network of public spaces, pedestrian and cycle routes, and a high quality riverside environment, landscaping and tree planting;
- opportunities for mooring and a mix of residential size;
- provision of affordable housing;
- contributions towards a new station forecourt and public transport hub;
- utilities, including sewage networks and integrated communications infrastructure to facilitate home working;
- sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs), including flood mitigation and resilience measures; and

- all necessary on-site and appropriate off-site infrastructure.

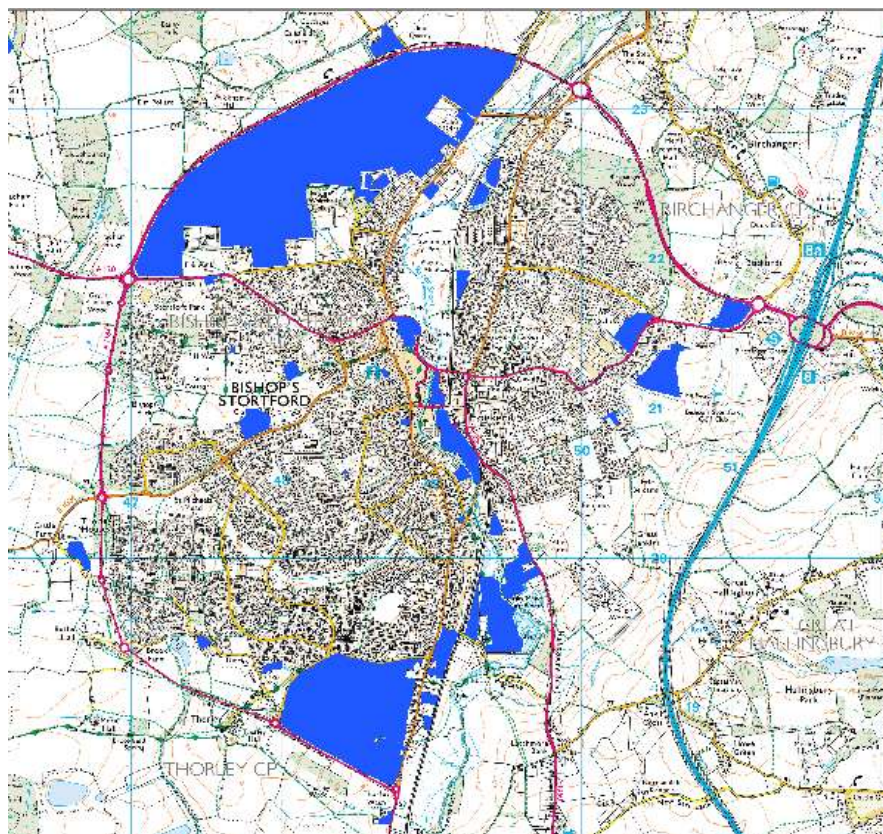
### Implementation – The Mill Site

- 14.11 As indicated in paragraph 13.4, the emerging Town Centre Planning Framework suggests that the development of this site could occur in two stages. The non-operational part of the site could be brought forward for development in advance of the operational Mill. However, the proposal should not prejudice the proper planning of the site as a whole. The Plan does not allocate a particular number of dwellings, nor estimate when or if development will come forward during the Plan period.

## 15. Consideration of Alternative Sites

- 15.1 As part of the Plan-making process it is necessary to consider whether there are alternative options to the proposed development. As identified by Paragraph 1.1, the Supporting Document of the Preferred Options District Plan assessed a number of Areas of Search to inform the Preferred Options consultation. In addition, a large number of sites were also submitted to the Council through the 'Call for Sites' process. Figure 23 below illustrates the location of sites considered through the Strategic Land Availability Assessment.

**Figure 23: SLAA Sites in and around Bishop's Stortford**



- 15.2 These sites have been considered in detail in the SLAA Report presented to the District Planning Executive Panel on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2016. Where representations

were received on these sites in the Preferred Options Consultation, they have been considered in the Bishop's Stortford Issues Report which was presented to the District Planning Executive Panel on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2016.

- 15.3 It is clear that the majority of alternative sites in and around Bishop's Stortford are relatively small, are located in the green wedges, or are outside the town (in Uttlesford). Individually and collectively they would not be capable of providing an alternative to the proposed development strategy considered in this appraisal.
- 15.4 One alternative approach that was raised through the consultation has been given consideration. The alternative proposed is to not locate development to the south of the town on Green Belt land and direct this development to the rural area. This approach has been considered in the village development strategy. It has been determined that there are few locations within the District's rural area that can accommodate development, and those locations that can are not capable of accommodating the same level of development.
- 15.5 The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) for the District Plan considers this point in detail, testing an option whereby no Green Belt release occurs around the District's towns and the equivalent number of homes is directed towards the rural area beyond the Green Belt. This equates to approximately 3,050 homes (800 of which would be from Bishop's Stortford). The SA indicates that this is an inherently unsustainable and undeliverable option. No single site is available to accommodate this level of development, thereby requiring dispersal across a number of locations. This dispersed approach would result in development which would not create the economies of scale to provide new facilities and infrastructure such as schools and bus services for example, and would result in significant increases in journeys by car. Such an approach will be contrary to the NPPF which requires local authorities to plan for sustainable patterns of development.
- 15.6 The NPPF states that Green Belt boundaries can only be amended in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of a Local Plan (paragraph 83). There is no definition in the NPPF of what constitutes exceptional circumstances, as this will vary for each locality.
- 15.7 In East Herts there is a combination of factors that exist locally that together constitute the exceptional circumstances that require the Council to amend its Green Belt boundaries. This includes the high level of housing need, including affordable homes, exacerbated by a significant backlog of unmet need, and the lack of suitable alternative locations to the north of the District.
- 15.8 Chapter 3 (The Development Strategy) therefore sets out that the challenging level of housing need cannot be met in a sustainable way without undertaking a carefully planned review of the Green Belt. As such approximately 6% of the District's Green Belt has been removed in order to help meet a significant proportion of the housing need, both within this Plan period and beyond.



## 16. SA Objectives

- 16.1 The Sustainability Appraisal is an integral part of Plan-making. This Settlement Appraisal forms part of the Sustainability Appraisal process as it considers the impacts arising from development, and a consideration of alternative options. To assist the broader District-Wide Sustainability Appraisal, each of the urban extension options and the proposed development strategy for each East Herts town has been assessed against the Sustainability Appraisal Framework as updated by the Strategic Housing Market Area Spatial Options Distribution work. The appraisal, below, of proposed development in Bishop's Stortford describes how the sites will meet the objectives as set out in the Sustainability Appraisal Framework.

### *Air Quality*

- 16.2 There is an existing Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in Bishop's Stortford at the Hockerill junction. As there are two sites within the town centre that the Plan anticipates coming forward for development, it is acknowledged that there may be impacts on this junction through increased vehicle movements. Therefore the policy for each site requires mitigation to be provided in the form of enhancement of existing and provision of new bus routes and priority given to walking and cycling. In addition, the Town Centre Planning Framework is considering options such as the creation of more direct routes, and 'switching-off' the one-way gyratory system, which effectively encourages vehicles to circulate the town rather than using more direct routes.
- 16.3 At a more strategic level, the transport modelling undertaken to inform the planning of a new junction 7a on the M11 shows a reduction in the number of vehicles using the A120 and A1184 and provides an alternative route for vehicles from the south of the town wishing to access the M11.

### *Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure*

- 16.4 The proposed allocations in the town centre will see significant improvement in biodiversity value through the creation of urban planting and landscaping and enhancements to the riverside environment. For the three greenfield sites, north, east and south of the town, the integration of existing landscape features and the creation of multi-functional green infrastructure will minimise and mitigate harm caused by development. Sustainable drainage features such as filtration beds will have beneficial effects on water quality, which is particularly important for the Bishop's Stortford South site which is upstream of the Thorley Flood Pound Site of Special Scientific Interest.

### *Community and Wellbeing*

- 16.5 The proposed housing mix and tenure will support all age ranges, including the needs of an ageing population. Land to the north and south will facilitate the provision of new schools and neighbourhood services providing convenience retail and community facilities such as healthcare, minimising the need to travel to access day-to-day services. New employment areas will also provide local job opportunities, again reducing the need to travel. The creation of cycle and

pedestrian networks will provide healthier modes of travel. All sites will provide financial contributions towards healthcare and education, among other things.

### *Economy and Employment*

- 16.6 The proposed developments to the north and south of the town and the town centre sites will provide new employment opportunities, and the town is well located for Stansted Airport and Harlow where substantial employment opportunities exist.

### *Historic Environment*

- 16.7 The proposed town centre allocations provide opportunities to enhance existing heritage assets and to provide development that reflects better the riverside and industrial mill heritage of the town. In terms of archaeology, site assessments will be required prior to development as there is evidence of artifacts of regional importance in and around Bishop's Stortford.

### *Housing*

- 16.8 The proposals will provide for a wide range of house types and mix, including an appropriate quantum and mix of affordable housing and family sized homes. In addition, opportunities for self-build and specialist accommodation such as care homes and retirement living will be provided. In the town centre, potential new river moorings could provide an alternative form of accommodation.

### *Land*

- 16.9 The town centre sites provide the opportunity to make the effective use of land through high density, accessible development. Whilst it is not anticipated that there are mineral deposits to the north and south of the town, an assessment will need to be made at the planning application stage in order to ascertain whether any material can be extracted to be used during construction.

### *Landscape*

- 16.10 The proposed allocations are all well contained and any significant impact on landscape quality can be mitigated through careful design and the use of landscape buffers and planting. Mature tree belts and hedgerows will be maintained and enhanced and layouts will incorporate tree-lined avenues and areas of open space and water features. The topography will dictate the layout and density of development to maintain a softer outer edge and to ensure building heights on areas of higher ground are appropriate.

### *Low Carbon Development*

- 16.11 The developments to the north and south of the town will provide neighbourhood centres, schools and employment opportunities, thus reducing the need to travel to access day-to-day services. All sites will incorporate footpaths and cycleways and facilitate new or improved bus routes connecting to the town centre, thus facilitating the use of alternative modes of transport. All the sites will comprise buildings that incorporate sustainable building features exceeding building standards. On-site flood attenuation measures will be a fundamental element of the overall design of

each site, particularly the town centre sites, incorporating natural drainage features and the creations of suds and swales where possible.

### *Transport*

- 16.12 The town centre sites are highly accessible being in close proximity to the rail station which provides direct services to London and Cambridge, and public transport routes. Each edge of town site will provide enhancements to or create new bus routes that will connect to the town centre and beyond the town. It is acknowledged that development in the town and the wider area will increase the amount of car borne traffic using the local road network which is constrained particularly at peak times. However congestion is not by itself a reason to prevent development unless it creates an impact that is severe in either highway safety or other terms. Local junction improvements will help to mitigate local impacts, while improvements to the strategic road network are also planned to Junction 8 of the M11 along with the provision of a new Junction 7a on the M11

### *Water*

- 16.13 Methods to minimise water consumption through construction and occupation of the development will be utilised and appropriate connections to water supply and waste water networks are possible. The wider Rye Meads Sewage Treatment Works has capacity with local improvements to connection points required. The use of sustainable drainage such as filtration beds and swales will improve the water quality of surface water discharging into watercourses.

## **17. Conclusion**

- 17.1 The Settlement Appraisal for Bishop's Stortford has demonstrated that, having considered the reasonable alternatives, eight sites should be proposed for allocation within the District Plan in order to deliver between 3,829 and 4,412 homes.
- 17.2 Two sites are located within the Green Belt at present. However, a carefully planned review of Green Belt in East Herts is considered justified by the significant level of housing need that exists across the District. In the case of Bishop's Stortford, these proposed sites are considered to be the most preferable, taking into consideration sustainability and Green Belt criteria.
- 17.3 Officers acknowledge that the assessment of the area to the south of Bishop's Stortford would not in itself suggest that the land would be suitable for Green Belt release. However, it should be noted that the Green Belt Review should be viewed in its overall context, whereby the majority of land assessed throughout the district via this process resulted in similar ratings being achieved. Therefore, of necessity, the imperative of meeting the District's housing need brings into deliberation locations that may not otherwise have been considered suitable to be brought forward for development.

- 17.4 All developments in the town will provide a range of housing mix and tenures, including affordable housing. Development will also provide enhanced education and health services in the town. New retail, leisure and commercial floorspace will increase the offer of the town helping to ensure that it remains competitive. Meanwhile, improvements to local road junctions will help to mitigate the impact of increased traffic, while improvements to Junction 8 of the M11 and the provision of a new Junction 7a on the M11 will alleviate congestion on the strategic road network.
- 17.5 It is considered that this presents a positive and sustainable strategy for Bishop's Stortford.