

Chapter 1

Introduction

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1.1 What is the District Plan?

- 1.1.1** The District Plan sets out the Council's planning framework for the district. It identifies how East Herts will grow and develop to become an even more desirable and prosperous place to live, work and visit. It covers the period 2011–2033 and consists of a Written Statement (this document) and a Policies Map. Once adopted, the policies in the District Plan will replace the policies in the Local Plan 2007.
- 1.1.2** The District Plan, together with the Minerals and Waste Local Plans for Hertfordshire and any adopted Neighbourhood Plans, form the Development Plan for the district. The Development Plan is the basis upon which planning applications will be determined, unless there are material planning considerations that indicate otherwise. The policies of the Plan should be read as a whole.
- 1.1.3** The District Plan is a long-term document which provides certainty to communities and businesses as to where development will be provided and, likewise, where precluding restrictions may apply. It also allows infrastructure providers to plan effectively for the future.
- 1.1.4** The District Plan should be read alongside policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

1.2 Content of this Document

- 1.2.1** The District Plan Written Statement is divided into three parts:
- **Part 1: Development Strategy** comprises Chapters 1-13 and includes the vision and strategic objectives, development strategy and settlement/site specific policies.
 - **Part 2: Development Management Policies** comprises Chapters 14-24 and contains the policies which will be used by the Council in the determination of planning applications.
 - **Part 3: Delivery and Monitoring** contains policies on infrastructure and service delivery.
- 1.2.2** The Policies Map shows the main policy designations, such as Green Belt, housing allocations, employment areas, environmental assets, conservation areas and open spaces.

1.3 Evidence Base

- 1.3.1** The preparation of the District Plan has been informed by an extensive evidence base which is available to view on the Council's website at www.eastherts.gov.uk/technicalstudies
- 1.3.2** The technical studies cover a range of topics including housing need and delivery, transport modelling, infrastructure requirements and economic development. A Sustainability Appraisal and a Habitats Regulations Assessment have also been undertaken.

1.4 Duty to Co-operate and Strategic Planning

- 1.4.1** The duty to co-operate was created in the Localism Act 2011 and places a legal duty on local planning authorities, county councils and public bodies to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis to maximise the effectiveness of local plan preparation in the context of strategic cross boundary matters.
- 1.4.2** The Council has undertaken extensive engagement with a range of organisations including its neighbouring authorities and infrastructure providers throughout the preparation of the District Plan.
- 1.4.3** East Herts forms part of the London Stansted Cambridge Corridor (LSCC) core area which seeks to capitalise on the strategic locations of the corridor in order to promote economic growth and prosperity. The Council is working with partner authorities in the corridor to deliver the LSCC vision for the area.
- 1.4.4** The Council is also working, and will continue to work, with various other groups, including the Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership (HIPP) and the Co-operation for Sustainable Development Board.

1.5 Sustainable Development

- 1.5.1** The purpose of the planning system is to help achieve sustainable development. There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the District Plan to perform a number of roles:
- an **economic role**: contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;

- a **social role**: supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and
- an **environmental role**: contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

1.5.2 These roles are mutually dependent and as such should not be undertaken in isolation. Economic growth can secure higher social and environmental standards, and well-designed buildings and places can improve the lives of people and communities. Therefore, to achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system.

1.5.3 In line with the requirements of the NPPF, the East Herts District Plan seeks to create sustainable communities which embrace the principles of sustainable development using a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of homes, jobs and infrastructure.

1.5.4 The NPPF also highlights the Government’s desire to promote and support the delivery of growth. Local authorities are urged to work proactively with applicants and approve proposals wherever possible – where they accord with policies in the District Plan. If the Plan is silent or out of date, local authorities are urged to grant approval, having regard to whether any adverse effects would significantly outweigh the benefits, and other aspects of the NPPF. This approach has been termed a ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’. The Government has issued advice that a ‘model policy’ should be included within local plans, which reiterates national guidance. This policy is set out below.

Policy INT1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

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

- II. Planning applications that accord with the policies in this District Plan (and, where relevant, policies in Neighbourhood Plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- III. Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise taking into account whether:
 - a. Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole.
 - b. Specific policies in the National Planning Policy Framework indicate that development should be restricted.

