

Draft East Herts District Plan: Frequently Asked  
Questions for a Younger Audience (January  
2014)

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## 1 What is a District Plan?

- 1.1 The Local Plan 2007 is the current plan for the district, along with other plans prepared by Hertfordshire County Council. It includes a number of locations where the Council has planned for development to go, as well as policies that explain what type of development this should be. It may be found at [www.eastherts.gov.uk/localplan](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/localplan). The Local Plan is used as the basis for decisions taken by the Development Management Committee, where decisions are made as to whether plans for new homes or businesses should be allowed to be built.
- 1.2 This Local Plan is now getting old and no longer works well, so we need to replace it with a new one called the District Plan. The new District Plan is similar but has been updated to allow us to plan to 2031. It maps where the Council thinks new development should go and the type of development this should be. It provides a framework for what new development should provide, such as new homes, schools, parks and playgrounds and places for people to work for example.
- 1.3 At this stage, the Council has made a draft plan setting out its ideas on what the new plan should contain. We would like people to read it and tell us whether they like the ideas or not. This is called a consultation exercise.

## 2 Why do we need a Plan?

- 2.1 It is important that people understand how many new homes and jobs there should be and where they should be. This way the people who provide services such as schools, doctors and dentists, for example, know where they need to build new services.
- 2.2 As it takes a long time to plan and build new roads, schools and hospitals, once we know where development should be they can get started as soon as possible to make sure they are ready for when new homes are built. The District Plan also allows the Council and those building new roads and schools for example, to ask others to help pay for them as they are very expensive.
- 2.3 We think people should be able to walk to shops or schools and not have to drive everywhere. But sometimes that means making towns and villages a bit bigger and the Plan decides the best place for this to happen and prevent new buildings being built in the wrong places.
- 2.4 Trees, woodlands, rivers and open spaces provide places (or habitats) for birds, animals and special rare plants to live. If these habitats are lost as a result of new buildings being built, these birds and animals will have nowhere to live and we will also lose the rare plants and special environments. Trees and woodlands help to keep the air clean, and parks keep us healthy so we need to make sure there are new trees planted and parks to play in. We don't want homes to flood when it rains for a long time, so the plan prevents new buildings being located close to rivers,

where we think flooding might happen. We also think new buildings should be built in a way that reduces the need to put the heating on, and which use new technology such as solar panels which turn sunlight into electricity.

- 2.5** The District Plan cannot plan for everything but when people want to build in places we don't think is right, then a Planning Inspector can use the plan to decide what should happen.

## 3 How have we worked out what should be in the District Plan?

- 3.1** We have done lots of research and thought about a lot of things before making this Plan. We have made a lot of documents called technical studies, which explain what we have considered and these can all be found on the Council's website by using the following web addresses:

- Technical studies: [www.eastherts.gov.uk/technicalstudies](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/technicalstudies)
- A Supporting Document explains the process of choosing the options in the Plan: [www.eastherts.gov.uk/supportingdocument](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/supportingdocument)
- The Interim Development Strategy Report looks at all the evidence and explains how we have made decisions: [www.eastherts.gov.uk/strategyreport](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/strategyreport)
- An Infrastructure Topic Paper explains how we have planned for new roads and schools for example, and all the work we will still have to do on this before we make a final Plan: [www.eastherts.gov.uk/infrastructure](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/infrastructure)
- The Sustainability Appraisal of the draft District Plan compares different options we have thought about: [www.eastherts.gov.uk/sa](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/sa)

- 3.2** All this information runs to thousands of pages, but we need to do this amount of work to make sure we have got the Plan right. We are asking people to tell us what they think of all these documents as part of the consultation.

## 4 How else is the Plan used?

- 4.1** Most of the time people use the Plan when choosing what new buildings or homes should look like or how new homes and roads are laid out. People make a planning application where they ask the Council for permission to build a new room on their house or a new house or lots of new houses. The Council checks these plans and decides if they match the District Plan. This is called the Development Management process.
- 4.2** The Plan provides guidance but there are lots of things to think about that the Plan doesn't cover. Often more detailed work is needed such as checking whether there are bats that live nearby (ecological surveys) or whether a new factory makes the air dirty (environmental health issues) for example.
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## 5 Who has made the decisions on the draft Plan so far?

- 5.1 East Herts Council is the Local Planning Authority and one of its main roles is to produce a District Plan.
- 5.2 There are lots of people within the Council who make decisions but the Council as a whole has agreed what is in the Plan. Every time there is a meeting to discuss and decide things about the Plan, these meetings are filmed and put on the Council's website so everyone can see what things have been talked about. A written record is also kept and can be seen on the website.

## 6 How can I get involved in the Plan?

- 6.1 We have produced a draft Plan for consultation. This Plan sets out our preferred option for new development. It contains our ideas as to what we think the final Plan should look like.
- 6.2 However, because the Plan could affect everyone who lives in East Herts, we think it is important that everyone in East Herts gets a chance to tell us whether they think we have got these ideas right or not.
- 6.3 So we are giving people the opportunity to write to us with their ideas and they have twelve weeks to do so.
- 6.4 You will be able to see printed copies of the draft Plan at your local library, at East Herts Council offices in Hertford and Bishop's Stortford, at your local Town Council office or leisure centre. The Plan is very long but there are summary documents available that you can take home which are much easier to read. We are also sending summary brochures to every home.
- 6.5 There are several ways to contact us; you can write to us, send us an email or use an online portal. All the contact details are at the end of this booklet.

## 7 What happens next?

- 7.1 We expect to get lots of comments on the draft Plan and it will take a while to go through them all and work out what changes we will need to make to the Plan.
  - 7.2 Once we have done that, we will make a final Plan which we will then send to a Planning Inspector. It is their job to decide whether we have got the final Plan right or not, whether we have used the right evidence and met all legal requirements.
  - 7.3 The Inspector will hold a long meeting, which is called an Examination and may take several weeks, where they will discuss the Plan with lots of people who are interested before making a final decision. They may suggest we make changes to the Plan before the Council can adopt the Plan and be able to use it to guide development and make decisions on planning applications.
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- 7.4** After this we will have to do more work to make new plans for future development and check that the District Plan is working well.

## 8 Contact Us

- 8.1** The Council is required by law to consult for 6 weeks. However, East Herts Council will be consulting on the draft Plan for 12 weeks in spring 2014. The Council's agreed procedure for handling consultations is set out in the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).
- 8.2** The Draft District Plan can be viewed at all local libraries, leisure centres, Town Council offices and the District Council offices in Hertford and Bishop's Stortford. The Draft Plan and all supporting documents can also be viewed online at [www.eastherts.gov.uk/districtplan](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/districtplan). Alternatively direct access to the consultation portal is via <http://consult.eastherts.gov.uk> (note: no 'www'). You can also register online to receive updates on the progress of the Plan.
- 8.3** Comments should preferably be made online via the consultation portal. Alternatively, you can email us at [planningpolicy@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@eastherts.gov.uk) or write to the Planning Policy Team at East Herts Council, Wallfields, Pegs Lane, Hertford, SG13 8EQ.
- 8.4** You can also download a standard Comment Form from the website and printed copies will be available at all locations listed above.
- 8.5** All comments should be received by 5pm on Thursday 22nd May 2014. The Council cannot guarantee that comments made after this time will be considered.
- 8.6** If you have any further questions on the Draft District Plan, please contact the Planning Policy Team on 01279 655261 or email at [planningpolicy@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@eastherts.gov.uk).
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