



East Herts Draft District Plan Preferred Options Consultation

Summary Document

What do you think?

Consultation February 27 2014 to May 22 2014

January 2014



www.eastherts.gov.uk/districtplan

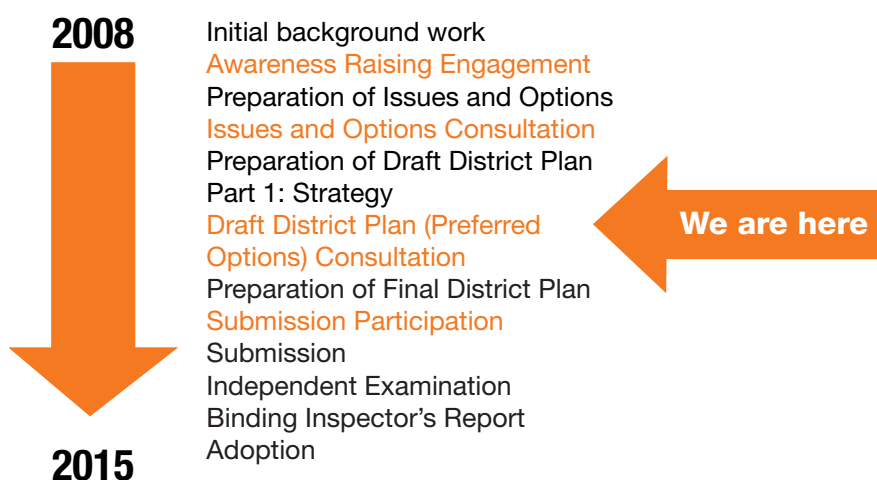
What do you think?

The Council has prepared a Draft District Plan for consultation and wants your views before proceeding to the next stage. The consultation runs for twelve weeks between 27 February to 22 May 2014

What is the District Plan?

The East Herts Draft District Plan is the overarching strategy guiding development up to 2031. It establishes a number of objectives for the District and sets out the policies and development strategy that will achieve these objectives.

Local Planning Authorities are required to establish the level of housing need through demographic projections. These show that there will be a need for approximately 15,000 dwellings over 20 years. In addition to housing it is important that the Council plans for the right types of jobs in the right locations and also ensures the necessary community infrastructure is provided alongside development. This strategy therefore plans approximately 9,700 jobs, new schools and new roads to support new and existing communities.



The District Plan contains two parts. The first part contains the development strategy for the District and settlement-specific policies guiding development in each town, the villages and broad locations of growth. The second part contains detailed topic-based policies to guide development and achieve the development strategy and the overall objectives of the District Plan.

This summary document contains a brief overview of the contents of the Draft District Plan (Preferred Options). It is not intended to replace the depth of material available in the consultation Draft District Plan nor the background evidence.

Why Plan?

Having a plan in place:

- ✓ Provides a framework for local community needs in terms of jobs, housing (including affordable housing) and infrastructure (e.g. roads, schools, drainage, green space etc);
- ✓ Provides a strong basis for negotiations with developers to secure benefits from new development;
- ✓ Provides greater certainty for communities and businesses over where development will go – they can plan ahead with confidence;
- ✓ Allows infrastructure providers to plan more effectively – helping them to assess and deliver necessary capacity enhancements;
- ✓ Provides the relevant bodies with a firm basis on which to apply for infrastructure funding;
- ✓ Provides the private sector with greater confidence to invest in East Herts.

Not having a plan in place:

- ✗ Loss of local control, making it more difficult to defend the District against inappropriate development (risk that if planning permission is refused developers may be more successful at appeal);
- ✗ New development may not be supported by adequate infrastructure;
- ✗ The cost of defending and losing appeals using an out-of-date plan can be a considerable cost to the tax payer;
- ✗ Opportunities to attract new businesses, investment and infrastructure funding are diminished without a plan.

Where is the evidence behind the Draft Plan?

There are five main sources of evidence:

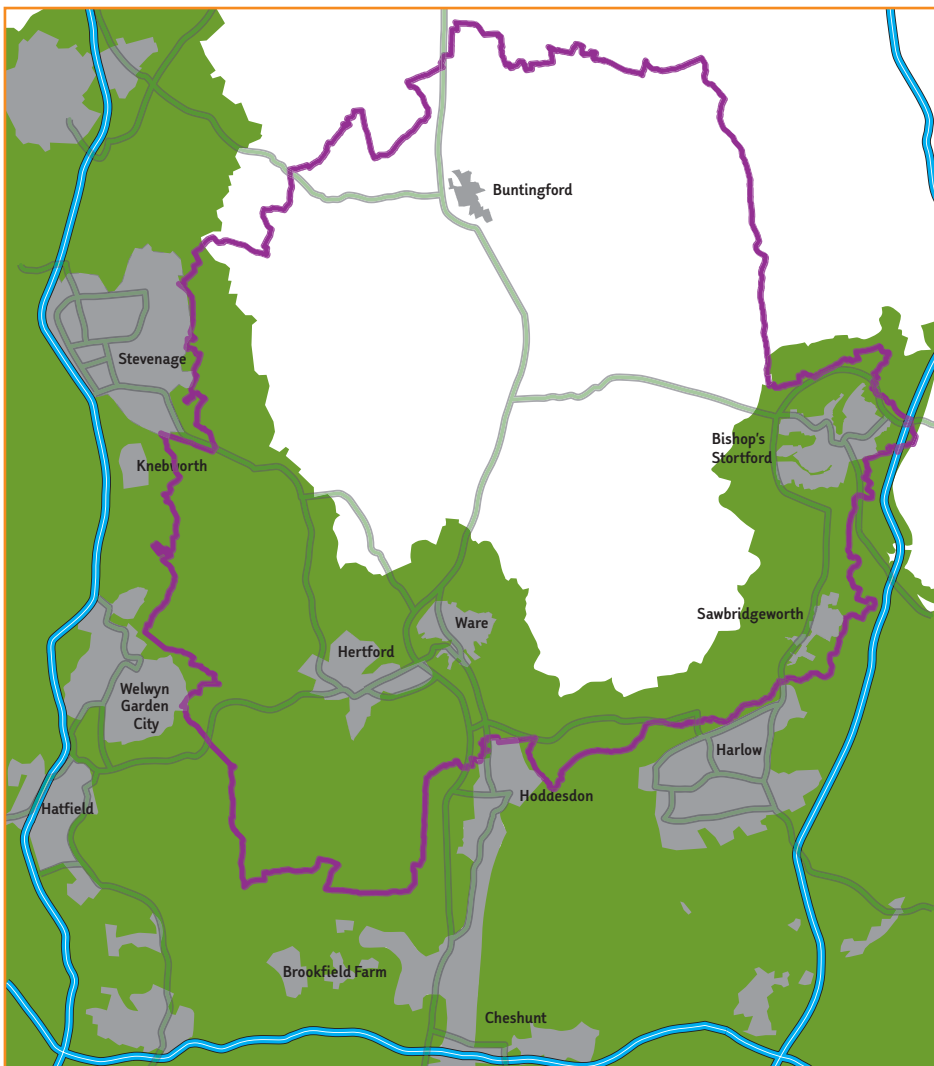
- The Supporting Document explains the process of identifying and shortlisting development options;
- An Interim Development Strategy Report demonstrates how the Plan meets national policy requirements;
- The Infrastructure Topic Paper sets out the evolving programme of infrastructure planning work;
- The Sustainability Appraisal appraises alternative options; and
- Other technical evidence including population projections.

All these documents, plus all other supporting technical studies and Frequently Asked Questions, are available on the Council's website at: www.eastherts.gov.uk/districtplan

Main Challenges

There are many challenges facing East Herts: High levels of housing need;

- Cross-boundary growth and infrastructure issues;
- The cumulative impacts of development;
- Traffic congestion and difficulties with east-west access;
- Developer challenges to the Green Belt and the rural area;
- A lack of primary and secondary education places in all of the towns;
- Competition in retail and employment terms from major towns outside the district with high levels of out-commuting;
- A need to balance the desire of people wishing to live in the District's historic settlements with the need to protect their special character;
- A lack of affordable housing across the District and a gap in the housing market for those with low to average earnings; and
- A wealth of sites of importance to wildlife which are particularly vulnerable to the effects of development.



The Green Belt

Large parts of the District are designated Green Belt as shown below. However, national policy requires Local Planning Authorities to make every effort to meet projected housing needs – where necessary involving the release of Green Belt. Therefore some carefully selected Green Belt releases are necessary in locations adjacent to the towns with good access to services and facilities. In the longer term, large scale development and new settlements may be needed to ease the pressures on the market towns and villages.

Bishop's Stortford

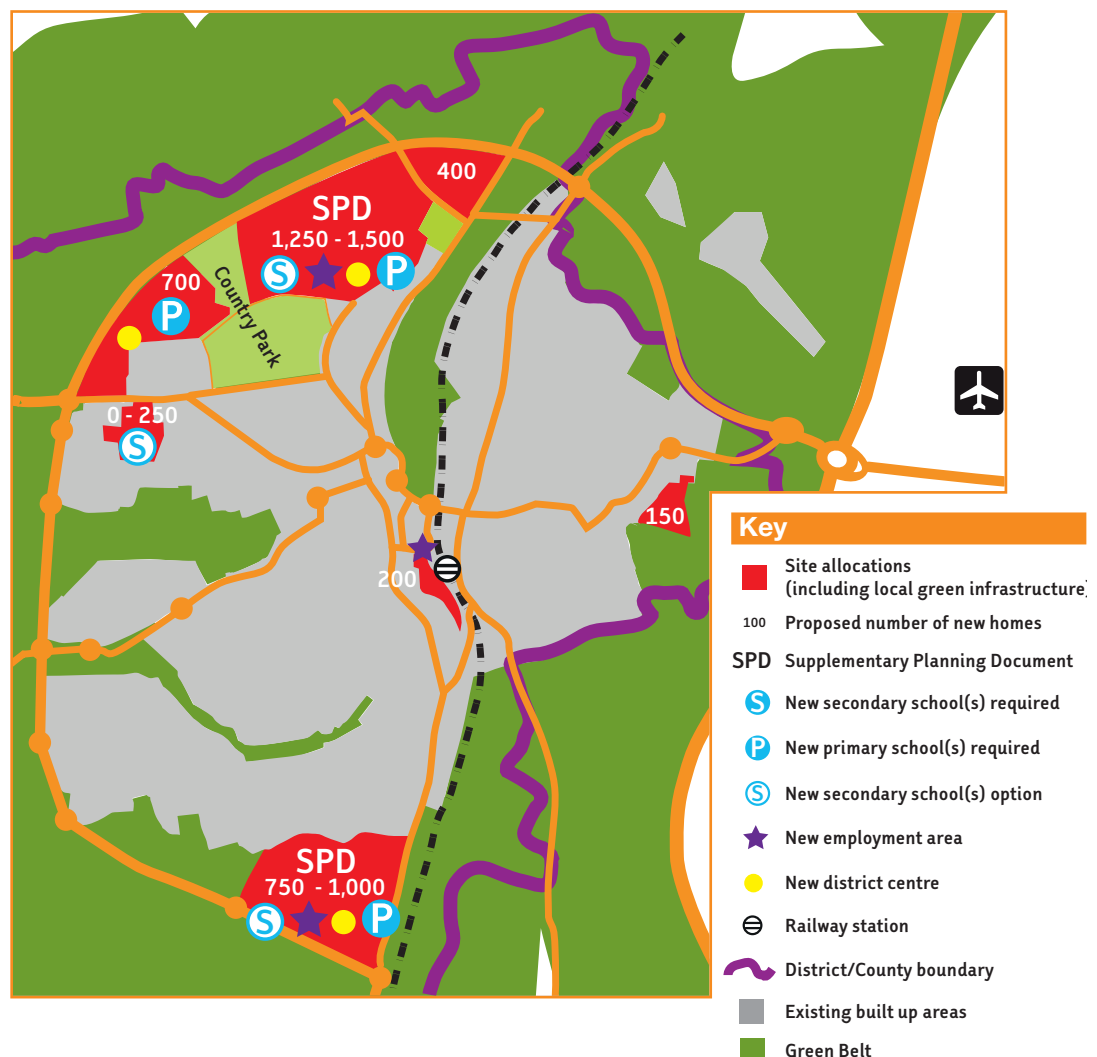
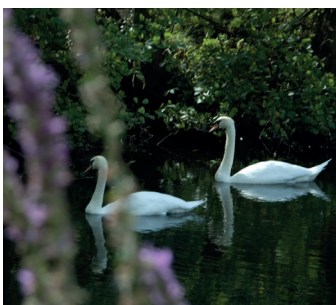
Bishop's Stortford is the largest town in East Herts with a population of approximately 37,500 people (2011 Census). The town has an important role related to its retail, leisure and employment offer, enhanced by good transport links including the M11 and the railway.

Main challenges

- A lack of education capacity, particularly at the secondary level;
- Congestion at key roads and a lack of town centre parking spaces at peak time;
- Development opportunities in the town centre mean that the town has capacity to provide more retail and employment opportunities and reduce the outflow of shopping trips to Harlow and Cambridge;
- Creating a coherent economic development strategy, taking account of the town's strengths including its proximity to the M11 and Stansted Airport.

Development Strategy Headlines

- Population projections show a need for 5,380 homes;
- 4,634 of these can be accommodated within the town;
- 3,950 will be on identified site allocations (as shown on the map below);
- 684 will be at locations in the town which have recently been completed, have planning permission and other small sites;
- The remainder to be directed to the Gilston Area (north of Harlow);
- Town centre sites include the Goods Yard and Old River Lane/Causeway;
- Areas ruled out include the Stort Valley and beyond the A1184/A120 bypass;
- Potential secondary school site options, new neighbourhood/district centres, employment areas and a Country Park are also proposed.



Buntingford is the district's smallest town, with a population of approximately 5,000 people (2011 Census). It is also the only town without a train station. Despite this, Buntingford is a thriving market town with a relatively high provision of local employment land, community facilities and retail, serving a wider hinterland of approximately 14,000 residents.

Main challenges

- Buntingford has a three-tier education system that is near capacity at lower tiers and is full in middle and upper tiers.
- The town's distance from larger towns and lack of rail line means there is a relative lack of public transport and a dependence on private vehicles to access services.
- The valley landscape places part of the town at risk of flooding.
- The town's limited retail offer leads to a general outflow of shoppers.
- Whilst there is a high level of out-commuting, Buntingford also attracts workers from a wide area into its small but successful employment areas.

Development Strategy Headlines

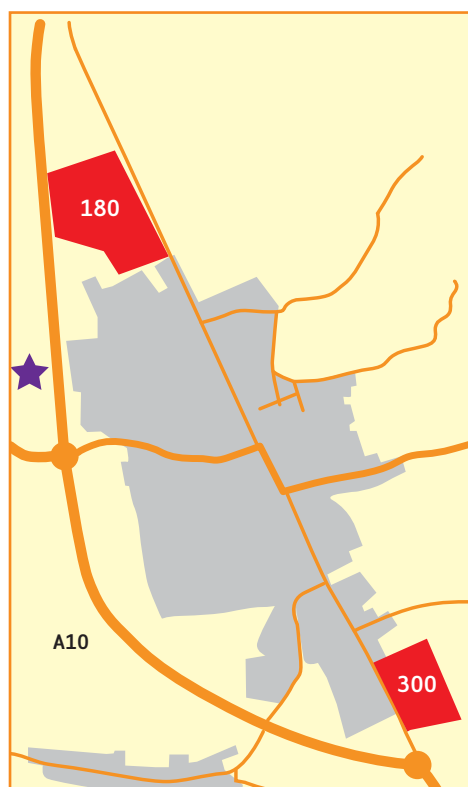
Buntingford will receive at least 500 new homes in the period to 2031. Development will be located in the following locations:

- Approximately 300 dwellings to the south on the former Sainsbury's depot site
- 180 dwellings to the north plus an extension to Freman College;
- Other identified SLAA sites, commitments and a proportion of windfall development;
- An additional 3 hectares to the north of Buntingford Business Park for employment purposes.



Key

- Site allocations (including local green infrastructure)
- 100 Proposed number of new homes
- ★ New employment area
- Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt
- Existing built up areas



Hertford

Hertford is the second largest town in East Herts, with a population of approximately 25,000 people (2011 Census). As the county town of Hertfordshire, there is a strong presence of local government, businesses and independent retailers set within and around an historic town centre.

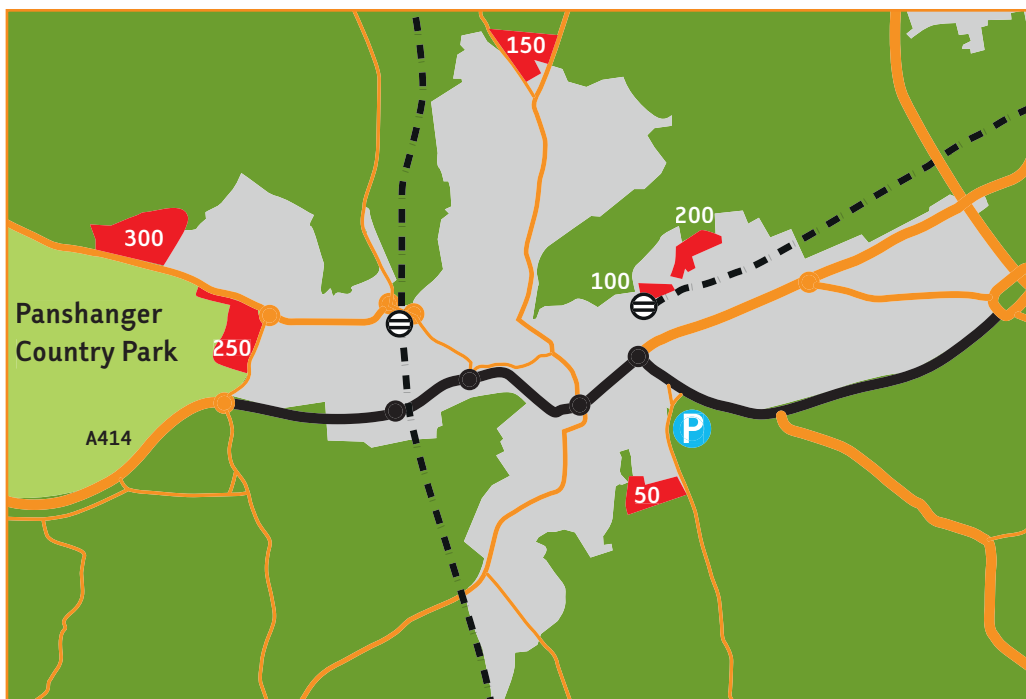
Hertford's urban form is largely influenced by the waterways that run through the town. 'Green fingers', which penetrate the urban core, contribute to the character and attractiveness of the town as well as providing valuable wildlife habitats and opportunities for recreation.

Main challenges

- There are capacity issues within Hertford's schools at both primary and secondary level.
- The town benefits from, but is also constrained by, its historic character, the A414, and by the presence of locally and nationally important wildlife assets.
- The town suffers from peak time congestion.
- Affordability of housing is a key issue which is exacerbated by high demand.

Development Strategy Headlines

- Population projections show a need for 3,242 homes;
- 1,948 of these can be accommodated within the town;
- 1,050 will be on identified site allocations (as shown on the map below);
- 898 will be at locations in the town which have recently been completed, have planning permission and other small sites;
- The remainder to be directed East of Welwyn Garden City;
- Areas ruled out include the historic parks and river valleys;
- A new primary school site and a Country Park are also proposed.



Key

- Site allocations (including local green infrastructure)
- 100 Proposed number of new homes
- P New primary school required
- ⊖ Railway station
- Potential road improvements
- Existing built up areas
- Green Belt



Sawbridgeworth

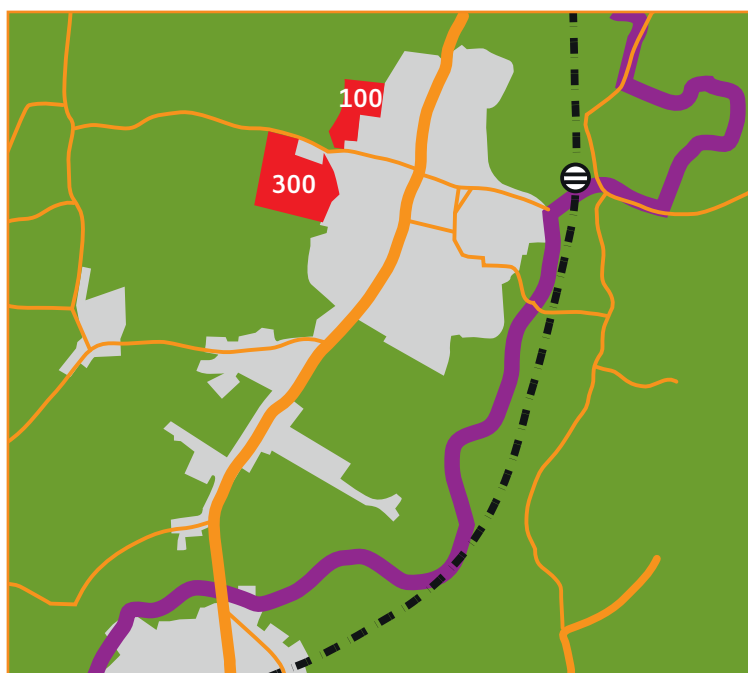
Sawbridgeworth is the District's second smallest town with a population of approximately 10,000 people (2011 Census). The location of the town between the larger settlements of Bishop's Stortford and Harlow, and its good rail connection, contributes to how the town functions; predominantly as a dormitory town, providing limited employment and retail opportunities, resulting in significant outflows of residents.

Main challenges

- Peak time congestion on the A1184 London Road with conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians in the historic town centre;
- The historic character of the town is both an advantage and disadvantage in terms of attracting new businesses;
- Proximity to larger centres results in out-commuting for employment and retail purposes;
- The town supports a wide rural area and as such suffers from a lack of capacity in its schools;
- Sawbridgeworth is physically constrained by features such as the valley landscape and River Stort floodplain but benefits from sites of national wildlife importance.

Development Strategy Headlines

- Population projections show a need for 456 homes;
- 562 homes can be accommodated within the town;
- 400 of which will be at identified site allocations (as shown on the map below);
- 162 will be at locations in the town which have recently been completed, have planning permission and other small sites.



Key

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Site allocations (including local green infrastructure) | Green Belt |
| Proposed number of new homes | Railway station |
| Existing built up areas | District/County boundary |



The Development Strategy

- At least 15,000 new homes across the whole district to 2031;
- 9,700 new jobs;
- 10% growth to villages: Braughing, High Cross, Hunsdon, Little Hadham & Hadham Ford, Much Hadham, Standon & Puckeridge, Walkern, Watton-at-Stone and Widford;
- Site allocations for short and medium-term planning; and
- Broad locations identified for further assessment for long-term planning.

List of Topic Policies with their aims

Housing – ensuring the right types of accommodation are provided when needed.

Economy – providing new employment opportunities and protecting existing employment land.

Retail and Town Centres – supporting the role of town centres and protecting vital local centres.

Design – ensuring all proposals make a positive contribution to the built environment.

Transport – minimising the need to travel and encouraging journeys by sustainable modes of transport.

Community Facilities, Sport and Recreation – ensuring that residents benefit from improved access to community and leisure facilities.

Natural Environment – protecting and enhancing biodiversity assets and creating new green spaces for wildlife and recreation.

Landscape – conserving and enhancing valued landscapes for their intrinsic beauty and their role in providing a setting for our towns and villages.

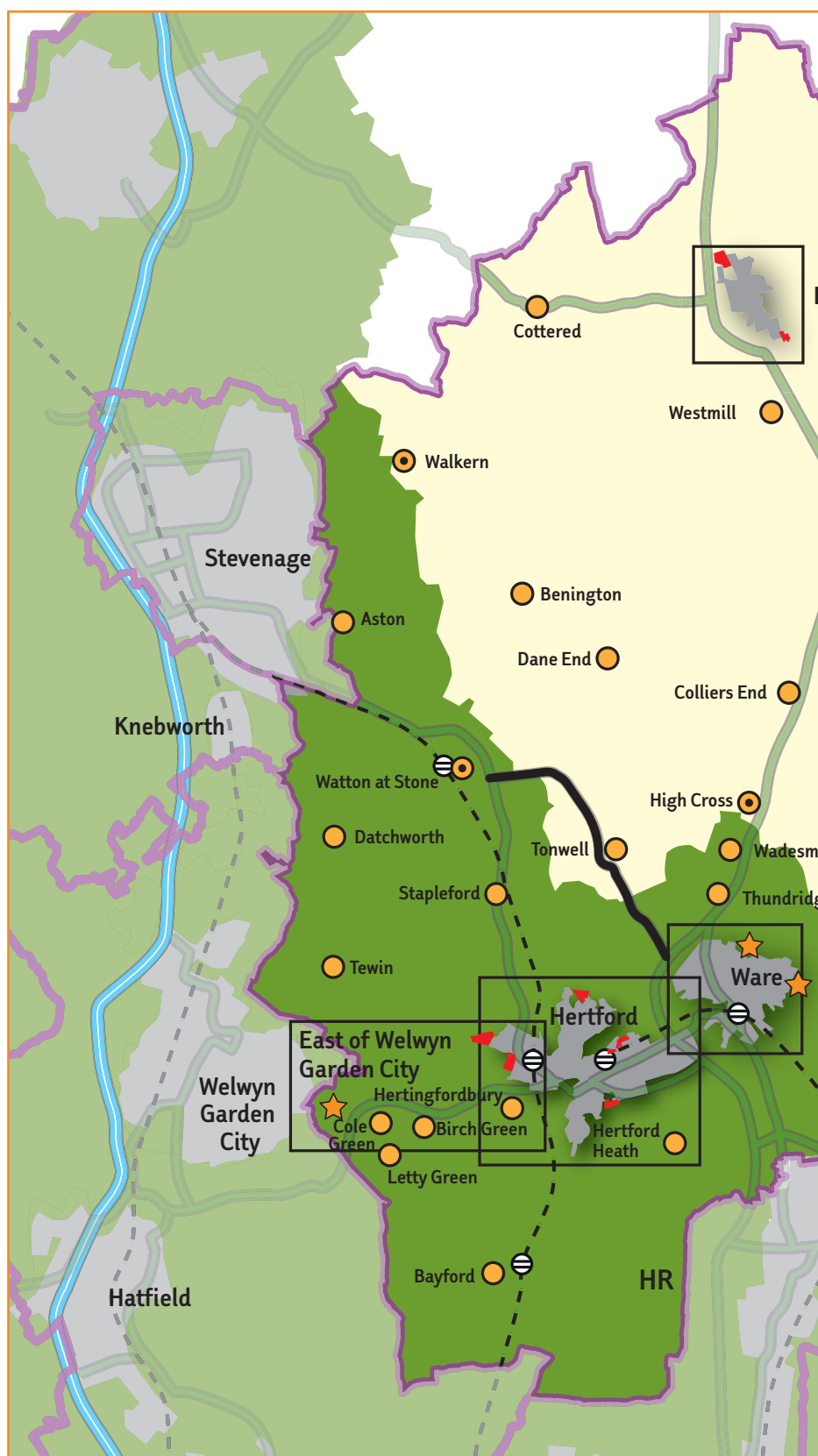
Heritage – protecting and enhancing the historic character of East Herts while managing the impacts of change.

Climate Change – minimising the impacts of development on the natural environment and mitigating impacts caused by a changing climate.

Water – protecting valuable water resources and managing the risks of flooding.

Environmental Quality – minimising potential environmental impacts of development.

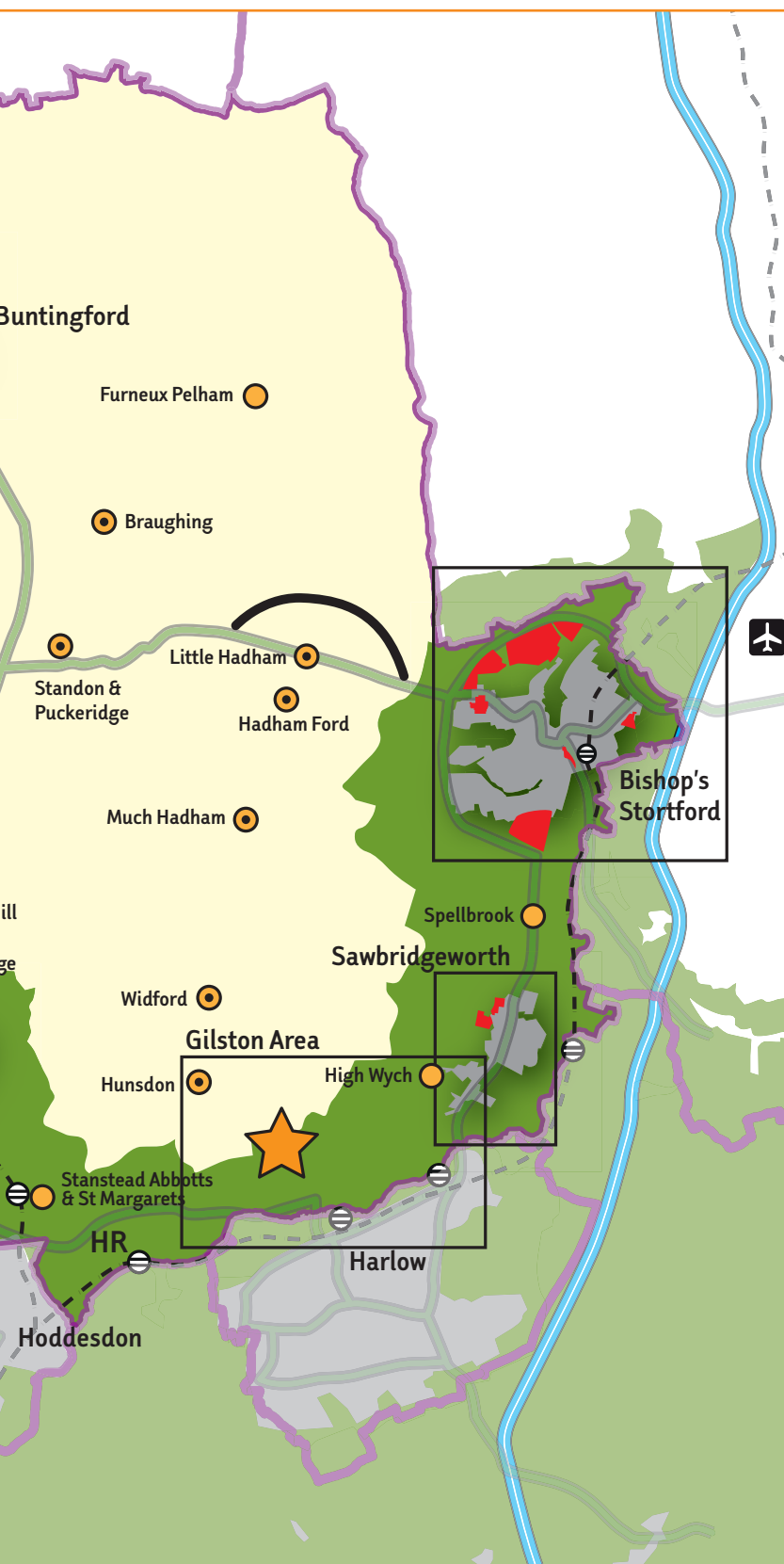
Delivery – setting out how the objectives of the Plan will be delivered and monitored.



Key

- Site allocations (including local green infrastructure)
- 100 Proposed number of new homes
- ★ Broad location for development
- Group 1 village
- Group 2 village

- DPD Development Plan Document
- SPD Supplementary Planning Document
- Ⓢ New secondary school(s) required
- Ⓟ New primary school(s) required
- Ⓢ New secondary school(s) option



Guiding principles

The guiding principles informing the Development Strategy are as follows:

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

Ware

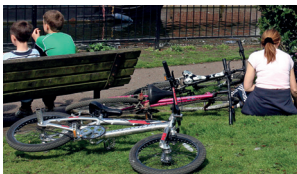
Ware is the District's third largest market town with a population of approximately 18,000 people (2011 Census). The town benefits from a wide range of independent retailers and cultural facilities in its historic core and hosts several sports and leisure facilities on its outskirts. Ware plays a key role as a market town and rural service centre serving both the town itself and rural hinterland. The presence of the River Lea, which historically influenced the town's development pattern, provides wildlife and leisure benefits as well as contributing to the form and character of the town.

Main challenges

- Located along the valley of the River Lea, parts of the town are at considerable risk of flooding;
- The town's historic core is both an advantage and disadvantage in terms of attracting businesses;
- The majority of the town's employment offer is concentrated on one major employer;
- The town centre suffers from peak time congestion, exacerbated by the delivery needs of the town centre shops;
- There is a lack of capacity in the town's education facilities, particularly at secondary level.

Development Strategy Headlines

- Population projections show a need for 2,261 homes;
- At least 330 can be accommodated within the town;
- 14 of which will be at an identified site allocation;
- 316 will be at locations in the town which have recently been completed, have planning permission and other small sites;
- The remainder will be addressed at the Broad Location to the north and east;
- Areas ruled out include the south-east and south-west, and the Meads.



Key

- ★ Broad location for development
- New district centre
- DPD Development Plan Document
- ⊖ Railway station
- S New secondary school(s) required
- Existing built up areas
- P New primary school(s) required
- Green Belt
- ★ New employment area

In addition, land to the North and East of Ware is identified as a Broad Location for Development of between 200 and 3,000 new homes and supporting infrastructure, with the potential to deliver 1,800 homes between 2022 and 2031, (see 'Longer Term Planning' below for more information on Broad Locations).

- A Development Plan Document (DPD) will need to be prepared in collaboration with Ware Town Council, Wareside Parish Council, Hertfordshire County Council, landowners and stakeholders. The development will need to consider among other things:
- Means of access, sustainable transport and highway mitigation measures (including a new link road);
- The need for new school/s;
- Provision of a new sewer and satisfactory water supply;
- Community facilities, retail and employment opportunities;
- Sustainable design, green infrastructure, landscaping and environmental mitigation; and
- Green Belt boundaries.
- The area will remain in the Green Belt until adoption of the DPD, anticipated in 2019-20.



The Villages

There are over a hundred villages and hamlets in the District, which are home to a significant proportion of the population. These villages vary in scale and range of facilities, and the development strategy differentiates these by designating villages as either Group 1, Group 2 or Group 3 villages (Group 3 not shown). Group 1 villages are considered more able to accommodate development, benefitting from local shops or schools for example.

The District Plan will give a significant role to Parish Councils for the Group 1 villages, by providing them with the opportunity to prepare Neighbourhood Plans. These will identify suitable development locations and planning guidance which will form an important consideration in relation to future planning applications.

Main challenges

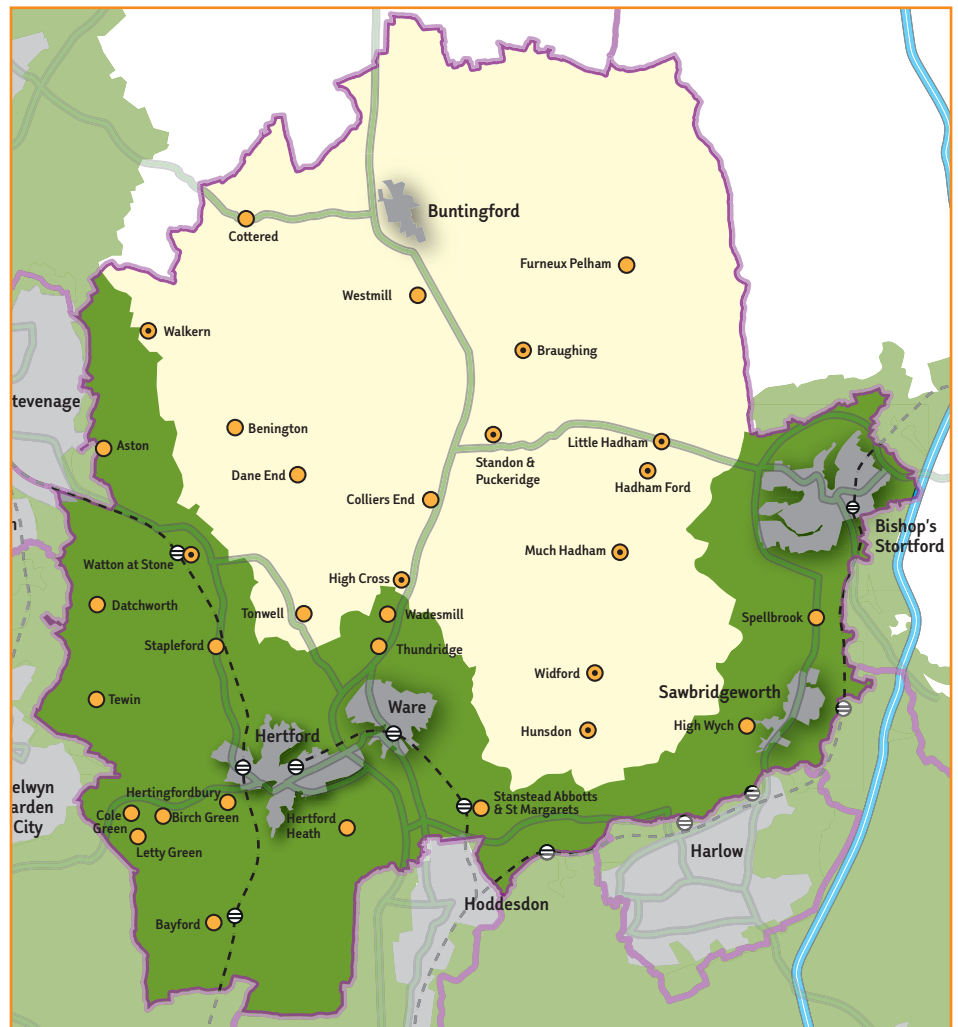
- Rural housing affordability;
- Ageing demographic profile;
- Preservation of the historic character and countryside setting;
- Continued viability of local services and facilities;
- Poor rural transport and significant volume of car-based trips to nearby towns.

Development Strategy Headlines

- Population projections show a need for 3,364 homes;
- 757 of these will be met through locations which have recently been completed or have planning permission;
- 500 will be met in Group 1 villages (see Key Diagram) through 10% growth. These will be delivered through Neighbourhood Planning;
- Limited infill only will be acceptable at Group 2 villages;
- The remainder of unmet rural housing need will be directed to the Gilston Area (north of Harlow).

Key

- Group 1 village
- Group 2 village
- ⊖ Railway station
- ⌞ District/County boundary
- Existing built up areas



Longer Term Planning

In order to ensure longer term development needs are met, three locations have been identified as Broad Locations for development. These locations will need further assessment and detailed planning through a Development Plan Document (DPD), subject to full consultation and examination in public. Due to the need to ensure necessary infrastructure is delivered as part of these proposals, development would not occur until the latter stages and beyond the current Plan process.

All three Broad Locations will remain in the Green Belt until the adoption of the DPD, anticipated in 2019-20. In addition to the land to the North and East of Ware (see above), the following two locations are proposed:

The Gilston Area

Land in the Gilston Area could accommodate between 5,000 and 10,000 new homes, with the potential to deliver 3,000 homes to meet the housing needs of East Herts between 2022 and 2031, and the remainder after 2031.

The DPD will need to be prepared in collaboration with neighbouring authorities of Harlow and Epping Forest District Councils, Sawbridgeworth Town Council, Hunsdon, Eastwick & Gilston, High Wych and Widford Parish Councils, Essex and Hertfordshire County Councils, landowners and stakeholders.

Development Strategy Headlines

The development will need to consider among other things:

- Local and sub-regional transport infrastructure measures;
- The need for new school/s;
- Sustainability features including district heating and rainwater harvesting;
- The relationship with surrounding settlements, including Eastwick, Gilston, High Wych, and Hunsdon;
- Linkages and connections with Harlow;
- Other infrastructure including a potential new sewage treatment works;
- Green infrastructure network including the Stort Valley and the streams crossing the area; and
- Green Belt boundaries and new Green Belt.



East of Welwyn Garden City

Land to the east of Welwyn Garden City could accommodate around 1,700 new homes to meet the housing needs of East Herts, with the potential to deliver 450 homes between 2029 and 2031 and the remainder after 2031.

The DPD will need to be prepared in collaboration with Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, Hertingfordbury Parish Council, Hertfordshire County Council, landowners and stakeholders.

Development Strategy Headlines

The development will need to consider among other things:

- Linkages to potential sites in neighbouring Welwyn Hatfield Borough;
- The need for new school/s;
- Transport measures to address congestion on the A414, the A1(M) junction 4 and in Welwyn Garden City;
- A new County Park between the development area and Hertford;
- Green Belt boundaries; and
- Prior mineral extraction.

Key

- Site allocations (including local green infrastructure)
- ★ Broad location for development
- DPD Development Plan Document
- Ⓢ New secondary school(s) required
- Ⓟ New primary school(s) required
- ★ New employment area
- New district centre
- ⊖ Railway station
- District/County boundary
- Existing built up areas
- Green Belt



What happens next

Comments and consultation feedback on the Draft District Plan will be used to inform the preparation of the Submission Draft District Plan.

The Council will consider all responses, along with any changes arising to the Plan as a result of the consultation. The Plan will be subsequently made available for a final round of consultation, to ensure it has been prepared correctly, and is 'sound'. In other words, it has been positively prepared, justified, is effective and consistent with national policy.

The Plan will then be submitted for independent examination by a Planning Inspector appointed by the Government. The Inspector will publish a report and recommendations and the Plan will in due course be adopted by the Council.

Whilst the Plan has been prepared using a stepped approach, the potential impacts of the plan will be monitored using the 'plan – monitor – manage approach'. This is a method that establishes a system of monitoring and reporting that then enables changes to be made to the plan in the form of revisions.

How can I view the Draft District Plan?

The Draft District Plan can be viewed at all local libraries, Town Council offices and the District Council offices in Hertford and Bishop's Stortford.

The Draft District Plan and all supporting documents, together with some Frequently Asked Questions, can also be viewed online at: www.eastherts.gov.uk/districtplan

How do I respond to the Consultation?

Comments should preferably be made online using our Consultation Portal by following the links at www.eastherts.gov.uk/districtplan. The Portal also enables you to register to receive updates on the progress of the Plan.

Alternatively you can email us at planningpolicy@eastherts.gov.uk or write to the Planning Policy Team at East Herts Council, Wallfields, Pegs Lane, Hertford, SG13 8EQ.

All comments should be received by 5pm on Thursday 22 May 2014. The Council cannot guarantee that responses received after the consultation deadline will be considered.

If you have questions on the Draft District Plan, please contact the Planning Policy Team on 01279 655261 or email at planningpolicy@eastherts.gov.uk.

If you would like a translation of this document in another language, large print, Braille, audio or an electronic format, please contact Communications at East Herts Council on 01279 655 261 or email communications@eastherts.gov.uk



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