

# **Gunnels Wood Employment Area Supplementary Planning Document**

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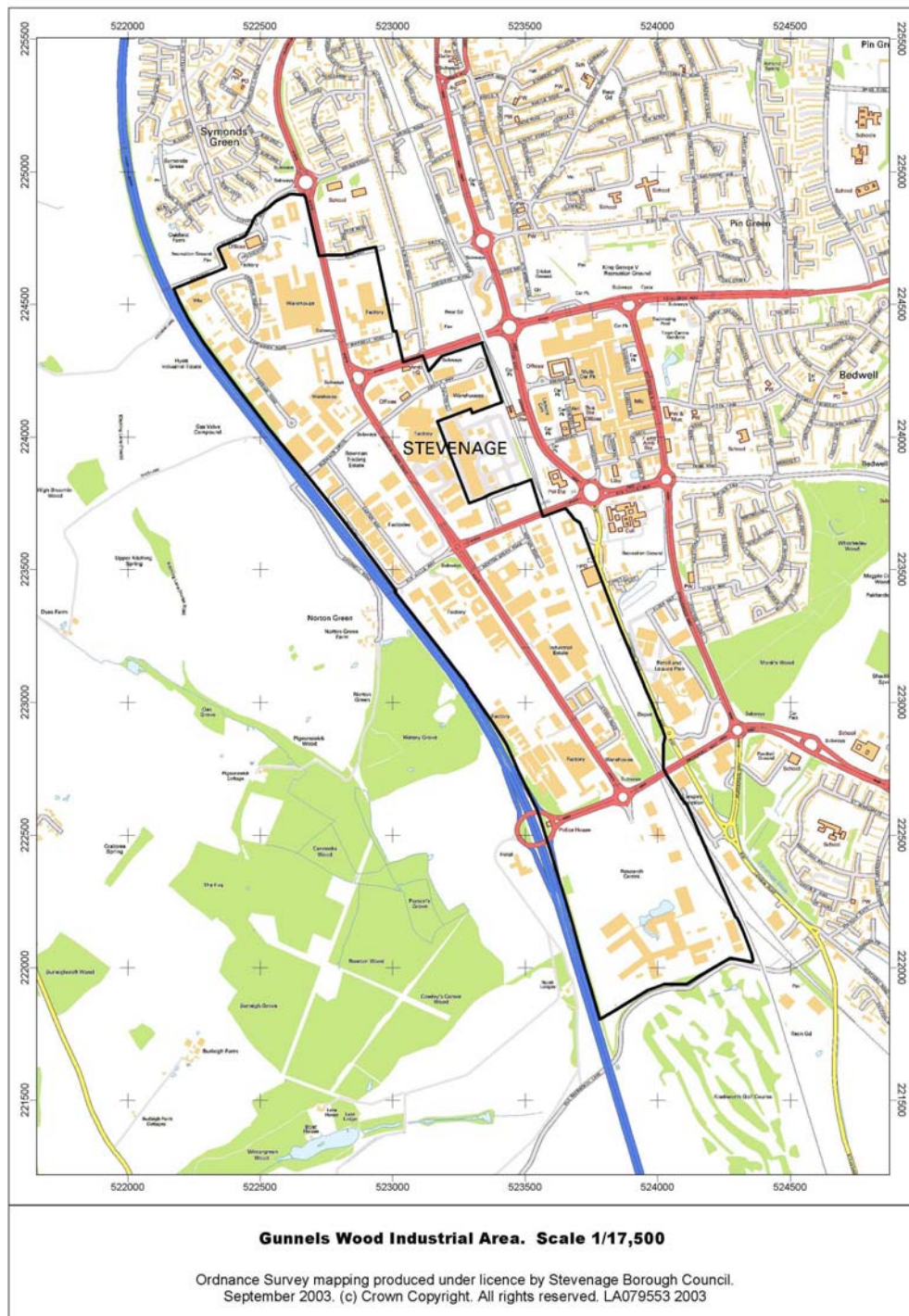


Figure 1: Gunnels Wood Employment Area

## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Context

The Gunnels Wood employment area largely lies between the A1(M) and the East Coast Main Line railway - to the west of Stevenage town centre. The area was originally planned as part of the New Town to provide employment for the incoming residents. However, since the 1950s it has expanded to become the largest employment area in Hertfordshire and is now a sub-regional employment centre containing up to 350 companies which employ almost 19,000 people. As such, employees working within the area are often from well outside Stevenage. The area has a diverse mix of businesses including major international companies, traditional manufacturing and distribution operations as well as new and small businesses.

Gunnels Wood fulfils an essential function in underpinning Stevenage's economy as the principal place of local employment for residents. Historically, Stevenage has lost jobs in traditional industries and, as a result, a diverse range of businesses will continue to be sought for its major employment areas. The Regional Economic Development Strategy and the draft Hertfordshire Economic Development Strategy both include the desire to access "the knowledge economy" by attracting high-tech sector industries to the major employment areas in the region.

The Borough Council is committed to taking the necessary actions required to support the adaptation of Stevenage's economy from its current form to that of a knowledge economy, as this process of change will have long-term benefits for the Stevenage community in terms of local employment and skills. However, change will be gradual and dependent upon two factors. Firstly, the Stevenage workforce will need to develop appropriate skills and secondly, Gunnels Wood will need to be reconfigured to achieve an environment more conducive to modern industry. This will require Gunnels Wood to develop into an area that is not only attractive physically but one that works well both within itself as well as within the broader Stevenage context.

### 1.2 Vision

The recent 10-year strategy document "*Gunnels Wood...Focus on the Future*" set out the following vision for the Gunnels Wood employment area:

*"A revitalised Gunnels Wood provides an outstanding business area that is an attractive place to invest, work and visit. The quality of development, the environment and transport provision is of the highest standard, providing an exemplar business area and gateway to Stevenage that benefits the whole town."*

In order to achieve this vision, a number of high-level strategic aims were developed for the employment area and these included:

- To facilitate the development of a modern business area containing a diverse mix of predominantly employment activities, with an emphasis on knowledge-based and innovative operations, but including modern office, manufacturing and warehousing activities;

- To encourage new and small enterprises to develop within the area alongside major companies;
- To maximise development opportunities in the area;
- To promote supporting facilities for companies and their employees where they improve the quality of the working environment;
- To provide a modern image that reflects the characteristics of the business area;
- To provide a high quality environment where people will want to work, invest and visit;
- To improve the quality of transportation and access to, from and within the area by all modes of travel; and
- To have a strong representative partnership organisation to help deliver the vision for the area.

### 1.3 Purpose of this guidance

The purpose of this document is to build upon policy provisions in the Stevenage District Plan Second Review 2004 and recommendations made in *“Gunnels Wood...Focus on the Future”* so that they become more meaningful guidance on the type of development occurring within the Gunnels Wood area. The document will:

- Clarify the suitability of particular uses within Gunnels Wood;
- Set out guidelines for new development in terms of design, layout, materials, landscaping and the incorporation of sustainable development principles;
- Establish more clearly the type of planning obligations that will be sought as part of new developments; and
- Provide a framework for the future development and implementation of a masterplan for Gunnels Wood that, in turn, will form the basis of an Area Action Plan to be developed as part of the future Stevenage Local Development Framework.

### 1.4 Status

This SPD is intended to supplement the policies set out in the Stevenage District Plan Second Review but does not form part of the plan. It sets out additional material for those preparing planning applications for land within the Gunnels Wood employment area (as allocated in the district plan) including owners, prospective new businesses and investors.

The Borough Council will take the following SPD provisions into account as material considerations in the determination of future planning applications within the Gunnels Wood area.

Moreover, this document can also be used as guidance for key stakeholders, businesses and members of the public for all issues relating to the development and use of land in Gunnels Wood.

## **1.5 Consultation**

In accordance with planning legislation, this document was subject to a formal 6 week consultation period, taking place from September to October 2005. This involved consultation with both statutory and non-statutory stakeholders, workshops, publicity and a public exhibition. All comments were considered in the finalisation of the SPD.

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## 2.0 Existing situation

As mentioned in the previous pages, the economic development plans for both the eastern region and Hertfordshire highlight the desire to focus on attracting high technology industries and research and development facilities to key employment areas. The issues associated with attracting this form of development are being investigated by Stevenage Borough Council. The Stevenage District Plan generally permits B1, B2 and B8 uses in the designated employment areas. As such, traditional industry including manufacturing, packaging and distribution are all uses permitted under the plan.

Stevenage Borough Council supports the aim of attracting hi-tech industry and research and development, while at the same time acknowledging that traditional industry will continue to play an important part in providing employment for the borough. The challenge is, therefore, how we can facilitate an environment conducive for technology-based industries, typically characterised by modern office style accommodation, into an area currently characterised, to a large degree, by warehouse and industrial development.

An additional challenge will be strengthening the relationship between Gunnels Wood and the areas surrounding it, particularly in response to the Town Centre regeneration programme currently underway. At present, this relationship is hindered by outdated and inappropriate urban design. Significant distances separate the area from its surroundings and it creates the impression of being relatively isolated on the town's western edge. The layout of streets and the design of buildings in Gunnels Wood seem to exacerbate this feeling, resulting in an area not in keeping with a human scale.

Gunnels Wood has an extensive cycle and pedestrian path network. However, these routes are not inviting and few people are seen using them during the day. Employees in the area tend to use cars; both to and from work, as well as during lunch breaks. It is hoped that this tendency can be reversed through careful redesign of both public and private spaces, to make these spaces more appealing and more conducive to pedestrian and cyclist use. The more that these alternative modes of transport are utilised the less the environment is impacted upon by greenhouse gas emissions.

Another way that the environment can be safeguarded is through ensuring that new development is as environmentally efficient as possible. At present, few new developments are characterised by energy efficient layout and design. This is seen as wasteful and unsustainable and as such, the council is keen to adopt a best-practice approach to address this issue.

Some of the costs associated with resolving the urban design and environmental impact issues highlighted above can be met by securing developer contributions as part of new developments. At present, developer contributions are collected on a relatively ad-hoc basis, with a "bigger picture" yet to be established. Contributions can be sought for a broad range of initiatives that when combined will contribute significantly to achieving the aims highlighted previously.

The following guidance will begin to address each of these issues.

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## 3.0 Guidance

### 3.1 Land use

Table E1 of the Stevenage District Plan Second Review illustrates that over the period of the plan (1996-2011) there will be sufficient employment floorspace to cater for employment demand. However, of the employment use classes B1, B2 and B8, Table E1 projects that there will be a surplus of B2 and B8 and a deficit of B1. Please see appendix 1 for a summary of the use classes order.

The District Plan generally encourages a mix of development within the B1, B2 and B8 use classes on employment sites and also makes provision for applications for sui generis uses to be assessed and determined on their individual merits. These use classes encompass a broad range development types, and limited policy guidance exists relating to the site suitability of particular uses. As such, it is considered that additional guidance providing criteria for assessing whether developments fully comply with the intent of the District Plan are warranted.

This section is intended to supplement saved policy E4 (Acceptable Uses in Employment Areas), which reads as follows:

*POLICY E4 (ACCEPTABLE USES IN EMPLOYMENT AREAS)*

*IN THE EMPLOYMENT AREAS ALREADY DESIGNATED A RANGE OF EMPLOYMENT USES WITHIN THE B1, B2 AND B8 USE CLASSES WILL BE ENCOURAGED. A MIX OF USES WITHIN A DEVELOPMENT SITE WILL ALSO BE ENCOURAGED.*

*ON DEVELOPMENT SITES OVER TWO HECTARES IN SIZE PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE B8 USE CLASS WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED IF THE DEVELOPMENT FORMS PART OF A LARGER MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE B1, B2 AND B8 USE CLASSES OR THE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL IS FOR MEETING THE OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS OF AN EXISTING OCCUPIER OF THE EMPLOYMENT AREA.*

*PROPOSALS FOR EMPLOYMENT GENERATING USES THAT DO NOT FALL WITHIN THE USE CLASSES ORDER WILL BE CONSIDERED ON THEIR MERITS.*

The guidelines outlined in the following sections are intended to supplement this policy.

#### **Objective**

**To achieve a beneficial mix of employment uses that blend harmoniously with each other and contribute to the economic well being of Stevenage.**

### **Acceptable uses (general guidelines)**

- i. In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999, all developments exceeding the thresholds outlined in Schedule 2 of the Regulations will require an Environmental Statement to be prepared.
- ii. Large sites having areas greater than 2 hectares will be required to accommodate a variety of compatible use classes, unless it is to meet the operational requirements of an existing occupier.

### **B1, B2 and B8 uses**

In accordance with PPG 13 'Transport', the Borough Council wishes to maximise the efficiency of transport infrastructure within Gunnels Wood. As such, dense employment land uses such as B1(a) (office) will be restricted to locations close to passenger transport nodes, with other uses encouraged in areas further away. In assessing what types of land uses should be encouraged on particular sites the Council will have due regard to the following:

- i. Developments proposing high employment densities (particularly high density office developments) are encouraged within the area bounded by Six Hills Way, the railway line, the Leisure Park, Gunnels Wood Road and Fairlands Way. B2 and B8 uses are unlikely to be suitable in this area.
- ii. B1 (b) and (c) and B2 use classes will be supported in all other parts of the Gunnels Wood area where they are provided in a way that integrates well with surrounding uses.
- iii. B8 use classes will be encouraged in locations that provide an easy access to either Junction 7 or Junction 8 of the A1(M) or where a rail freight siding is accessible. These uses are not considered appropriate in areas close to residential land use or where existing street widths are insufficient to allow easy access by articulated lorries.

### **Sui Generis uses**

The District Plan includes a general presumption against allowing A-type use classes in Gunnels Wood. However, it does include a provision relating to sui generis uses (uses not falling within a specific use class). The plan states that these uses may be suitable in employment areas if it is shown that they meet employment density objectives and do not have negative impacts on the town centre, the environment or contribute to traffic problems.

Generally, sui generis uses will only be permitted where they are incorporated as a part of a larger mixed use development.

#### **(a) Vehicle sales premises/showrooms**

It is often difficult to find a suitable location for vehicle sales premises. In this regard, it is considered that neither residential nor town centre areas are

particularly suited to the environmental impacts associated with vehicle sales. The tendency of vehicle sales premises to generate significant levels of traffic and associated noise result in them being more consistent with the activities occurring in industrial areas. In addition, vehicle sales premises are often linked with car servicing and repair activities, which do fall within the B2 use class - a use permitted and encouraged in Gunnels Wood.

In relation to vehicle sales showrooms, the following development criteria will apply:

- i. Such uses will only be permitted on development sites with land areas exceeding 1.0 hectare that are being developed for a variety of employment uses, and only where the sales premises are provided in the form of a showroom with associated workshops/service centres. Expansive outside display areas will not be supported.
- ii. Any showrooms should be located either on, or close to, the front boundary of the main highway frontage. The buildings should be constructed of high quality materials and to a high standard of design.
- iii. Non-permanent structures or buildings (such as portakabins) will not be permitted for periods in excess of 12 months and renewals will not be permitted.
- iv. Parking areas and external display areas should be located away from the main highway frontage and/or to the rear and sides of any showroom building.
- v. Access arrangements should be provided to facilitate safe and efficient vehicular access to and from the site, and should not result in undue congestion either within or outside the development site.

*(b) Fuel filling stations*

In Gunnels Wood, it is considered that fuel filling stations may be an appropriate type of use, when positioned away from residential areas, subject to an appropriate design and adequate landscaping. It is considered that, given the small shop component often incorporated, a filling station could contribute a valuable amenity to the area. When assessing proposals for new filling stations, the Council will take into consideration the impact the proposal will have on the neighbouring land uses, and the application will be considered in conjunction with the following provisions:

- i. Fuel filling stations will only be permitted on sites where their development will not result in undue congestion or road hazards.
- ii. The visual impact of the proposed buildings and signage should be kept to a minimum.
- iii. The height of any canopy should be the minimum operationally necessary and relate to nearby buildings. It should be constructed of high quality materials.

- iv. Any ancillary shop/retail facility should be incorporated into the fuel sales building and should consist of no more than 25% of the total floor area of the building. The building should be constructed of materials that reflect those surrounding it, and should be set back from the street in accordance with the general pattern existing in the street.
- v. Landscaping should be incorporated into the development to soften the impact of the buildings. With the exception of the access points, a landscape strip with a minimum depth of 2.0 metres should be provided across the frontage of the site.
- vi. Lighting should be kept to a safe and functional minimum. Spotlights and floodlights should not be used.

*(c) Amusement centres/theatres*

- i. Further expansion of the Leisure Park into the Gunnels Wood area or any new A3, A4 or A5 uses within Gunnels Wood is not considered desirable.

***Employee amenities and other uses***

Large employment sites should provide areas set aside and maintained for employee amenity. These can be provided in the form of either accessible open space or serviced indoor facilities. The following provisions will be taken into consideration when assessing applications for new development in Gunnels Wood.

- i. Amenities for employees should be provided as part of all new developments. As a minimum, for all businesses employing 10 or more employees, space should be provided inside buildings for lunchtime use. It is also strongly encouraged that a specifically segregated outside area be provided.
- iii. To support employees cycling or walking to work, showers, changing rooms and lockers should be provided as part of new developments.
- iv. A general guide to the types of amenities that will be encouraged for particular sizes of the development/numbers of employees on-site is as follows:
  - 49 employees or less:
    - Inside seating area for lunch and breaks
  - 50-250 employees:
    - Inside seating area for lunch and breaks
    - Outside area for lunch and breaks
  - 250+ employees:
    - Inside seating area for lunch and breaks
    - Outside area for lunch and breaks
    - Cafeteria/In-house catering facilities
    - Cash machine(s)
    - Crèche facilities (although these may be provided off-site)

- Encourage the provision of multi-modal transport to support sustainable transport methods linking the town centre, new development sites and Gunnels Wood.

### 3.2 Architectural and urban design quality

One of the primary goals of this Supplementary Planning Document is the achievement of a high-quality urban environment, incorporating principles of sustainable development recognising social, economic and environmental needs. It is considered that in addition to enhancing Gunnels Wood's overall image, quality urban design and architecture will generally transcend passing styles and prove more durable, attractive and economical in the long term.

The Stevenage District Plan includes policy TW9, which states as follows:

*POLICY TW9 (QUALITY IN DESIGN)*

*ALL FORMS OF DEVELOPMENT WILL BE REQUIRED TO MEET A HIGH STANDARD OF DESIGN INCLUDING:*

- A) FORM OF BUILT DEVELOPMENT; AND*
- B) ELEVATION TREATMENT; AND*
- C) MATERIALS; AND*
- D) INTEGRATION WITH THE URBAN FABRIC OF THE TOWN AND SURROUNDING COUNTRYSIDE; AND*
- E) RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BUILDINGS AND OPEN SPACE; AND*
- F) OTHER ASPECTS OF LANDSCAPE DESIGN; AND*
- G) ASPECTS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.*

*DEVELOPERS WILL BE ENCOURAGED TO SUBMIT A DESIGN STATEMENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH ANNEX A TO PLANNING POLICY GUIDANCE NOTE 1 (PPG1), WHICH SHOULD INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSAL AGAINST THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CHECKLIST IN APPENDIX E.*

The design guidelines outlined in the following sections are intended to supplement this policy. Whilst not all information will be relevant to all types of planning application, the Council will expect applicants to have regard to all appropriate guidance in the design of their proposals.

In addition to following guidelines, applicants are encouraged to seek the advice of Police Architectural Liaison Officer in relation to designing for community safety. Also developers may wish to consider the Park Mark - Safer Parking guide developed by the Association of Chief Police Officers to encourage safe design of parking areas, which minimises crime potential.

#### **Objective**

**All development within Gunnels Wood should seek to achieve a contemporary style that is innovative and designed to produce a high quality employment area, with sensitivity to its surroundings.**

#### *Architectural and urban design (general guidelines)*

- i. Regardless of the type of use, new developments in Gunnels Wood should incorporate a high standard of building design, incorporating good quality building materials.



- ii. Large-scale, tall or visually prominent development proposals will be required to submit a design statement to explain the design principles of the development and how these address the guidelines set out in this SPD.
- iii. The design and detail of new developments, especially those which front onto or are primarily seen from major roads (i.e. Gunnels Wood Road, Six Hills Way, Fairlands Way, Bessemer Drive and Broadhall Way) or the railway, will be required to be of the highest standard.

### **Site design**

- i. New development should enhance the character of its surrounding area through the incorporation of high quality architecture and landscaping, and appropriate site arrangement.
- ii. New development proposals should include active frontages along main thoroughfares. This facilitates a sense of security, place and character throughout the area. It also helps to enlarge the public realm and provide public space with passive surveillance promoting community safety.
- iii. Where a site is to be developed for a number of buildings, a clear visual link should be established across the site, promoting community safety. Material selection, the provision of footpaths and consistent, high quality landscaping can all assist in establishing continuity.
- iv. Where feasible, landscaping on a development site should be integrated with the landscaping of the adjoining sites to provide a visually compatible and consistent streetscape.
- v. Existing site features, including good quality trees, should be retained and taken advantage of in new developments.
- vi. Where existing vegetation cannot be retained, structured planting should be provided to assist the integration of buildings into the wider landscape.
- vii. Sites should be designed to locate service areas away from street frontages and boundaries shared with residential properties. If this is not possible these areas should be fully screened with dense landscaping.
- viii. The provision of landscape features such as public art, benches and usable open spaces is encouraged.
- ix. Where new development is proposed that will abut a residential area, adequate measures must be taken to minimise any adverse impact the development will have on residential amenity.
- x. Where a development site is on the corner of two streets, any new building(s) must present an attractive frontage to both streets. This would include the provision of windows overlooking both streets as this contributes towards a more safe and attractive street scene.
- xi. In order to create an attractive, legible environment that is in-keeping with the Gunnels Wood environment as a whole, developers are encouraged

to consult with the Borough Council to ensure a consistent approach towards the design of signage is adopted.

### ***Building design and appearance***

- i. Where a building has frontage to a public street, its main entrance should be positioned to face the principal public street.
- ii. Front façades of buildings visible from the street should include architectural features to add interest to the front elevation. Such features include windows and doors; changes in colour and texture; and changes in materials.
- iii. Setbacks of new buildings should generally be consistent with the pattern of existing buildings unless otherwise agreed with the Council.
- iv. Where function necessitates a basic box-like building, visual interest such as change in colour, material and other façade details should be incorporated into the elevations.
- v. In order to respect and enhance the existing character of Gunnels Wood, the sensitive use of heights and massing is essential. Generally, the height of new buildings should be determined against their surroundings. Developments should not however exceed the equivalent of five storeys, particularly where adverse impacts may be caused to residential areas.
- vi. The height of developments should incorporate well-designed roof structures that create a diverse and interesting roofscape.
- vii. A comprehensive material and colour scheme should be submitted for approval with every application.
- viii. Exterior materials and paint should be durable and of high quality to prevent fading and dilapidation.
- ix. Sheet metal cladding will not be used on buildings with boundaries fronting Gunnels Wood Road, Six Hills Way, Bessemer Drive, Fairlands way or Broadhall Way. .

### ***Parking***

- i. Developments should not provide parking areas on prominent frontages on the main streets in Gunnels Wood, i.e. Gunnels Wood Road, Six Hills Way, Fairlands Way and Bessemer Drive
- ii. Parking arrangements should, where practicable, be provided in basement or multi-storey blocks to achieve increased density of development.
- iii. Multi-storey parking blocks will be preferred on larger developments. They should be designed to minimise the visual impact of the building. The best way to achieve this would be to employ a “wrapping technique”,

where usable business/commercial space is wrapped around the multi-storey parking unit. This provides a more attractive building and allows the building to increase its footprint (and hence, floor area) as it does not need to accommodate surface parking.

- iv. Large expanses of tarmac or paving for surface parking must be avoided and where possible divided into smaller areas dispersed around the site. As much as possible, these areas should be overlooked by adjacent buildings, for natural surveillance.
- v. Where a large area of parking is required, pockets of low landscaping should be provided intermittently to break up the space.
- vi. Pedestrian and car accesses should be separated as much as possible to minimise potential conflict areas.
- vii. Parking for staff/visitors likely to be using premises outside normal working hours should be located close to the principal entrance of any building to encourage community safety through design.
- viii. Facilities for cyclists should be provided in convenient locations near building entrances in new developments.
- ix. To create a safer environment, new car parks should, as far as practicable, be subject to natural surveillance for as much as the day as possible. All proposals should also consider the provision of a CCTV system.

### ***Servicing and access***

- i. Servicing areas in developments are often the least attractive and, in the case of refuse areas, are often not formally provided for on existing sites. In considering new development proposals the Borough Council will wish to see details of areas provided for storage of refuse and other materials, which must be adequately enclosed behind screen walls and in a location easily accessible to refuse collection vehicles.
- ii. Storage of hazardous materials requires special consideration. The Borough Council's Environmental Health Officer and the Health and Safety Executive can give early and useful advice on this aspect of any development.
- iii. The number of new road accesses in new developments that bisect cycleways/pedestrian routes should be kept to a minimum.

### 3.3 Landscaping

Landscaping fulfils an essential role in integrating developments into the environment. It softens the often harsh appearance of buildings and parking areas and reduces the amount of run-off that flows into drains. As such, the way that landscaping will be incorporated into a new development should be considered at the earliest opportunity.

The guidelines set out subsequently are intended to supplement Policy TW9 (Quality in Design) set out in section 3.2.

#### Objective

**All development within Gunnels Wood will incorporate high quality landscaped areas that contribute positively to the area in terms of visual amenity, biodiversity and other environmental benefits.**

#### *Landscaping (general guidelines)*

- i. A detailed landscaping scheme should be submitted to demonstrate the developer's commitment to landscaping. Applicants are strongly advised to employ a professionally qualified landscape architect, particularly where landscaping large portions of the site.
- ii. Comprehensive (ie; a variety of canopy plantings, formal or informal depending on use) landscaping will be sought on development sites fronting Gunnels Wood Road, Six Hills Way, Bessemer Drive, Fairlands Way or Broadhall Way. To enhance bio-diversity, i.e. create lots of wildlife habitat, native species should be used predominantly – although not necessarily exclusively.
- iii. Schemes close to residential uses should provide buffering through the use of trees, other planting and fencing to ensure that the visual and noise impact is reduced to acceptable levels.
- iv. The use of sculpture, gardens and fountains within new developments is encouraged as these features contribute to an area's sense of quality. For developments exceeding 1.0 hectare publicly oriented art/sculpture will be encouraged to be incorporated into the project design and may be used to justify a density increase or the relaxation of a standard.

The Borough Council's Landscape Study provides examples of plant species for the enhancement of Gunnels Wood. Please contact the Planning Policy team for a copy of this report.

### 3.4 Sustainable development principles

Almost 50% of the UK's energy consumption and carbon dioxide emissions can be attributed to the everyday functioning of the built environment (Horsley *et al.*, 2000). Adopting an environmentally sound approach towards the design, construction and management of buildings can significantly reduce this burden.

Although design and implementation costs are usually higher when comparing energy efficient buildings with conventionally designed buildings, these costs are more than made up for by the reduction in long-term operational costs as well as the health, productivity and comfort of occupants. As such, the Council encourages developers to think about the sustainability of their proposals at the earliest opportunity in order to achieve a high environmental performance.

Policy EN38 of the District Plan states:

*POLICY EN38 (ENERGY CONSERVATION AND SUPPLY)*

*DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS WILL BE EXPECTED TO DEMONSTRATE THAT METHODS OF MAXIMISING EFFICIENT ENERGY USE AND SUPPLYING ENERGY IN THE DEVELOPMENT HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED BY:*

- (A) FACILITATING THE EFFICIENT USE OF ENERGY THROUGH THE USE OF ENERGY EFFICIENT AND ENERGY CONSERVATION TECHNOLOGIES WHICH DO NOT HAVE AN UNACCEPTABLE ADVERSE IMPACT ON THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT; AND*
- (B) INCORPORATING, WHERE VIABLE, THE MOST SUSTAINABLE FORMS OF ENERGY SUPPLY INCLUDING RENEWABLE SOURCES BOTH ON AN INDIVIDUAL BUILDING BASIS AND IN LARGE BUILDING DEVELOPMENTS; AND*
- (C) USING LOCAL OR RECYCLED BUILDING MATERIALS WHEREVER POSSIBLE.*

The following provisions are intended to provide an example of how new development can address this policy.

**Objective**

**To adopt a best practice approach in assessing the environmental efficiency of the built form by requiring all new buildings to meet an excellent rating on a BREEAM assessment or a comparable form of environmental assessment.**

The *Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method* (BREEAM) is the UK's most widely used system of reviewing and improving the environmental performance of buildings. There are schemes in place for assessing the environmental performance of all building types in terms of

management; energy use; health and well-being; pollution; transport; land use; ecology; materials; and water.

Credits are awarded to each area according to the performance of the building and these are then rated as *pass*, *good*, *very good*, or *excellent*.

### ***Sustainable development (general guidelines)***

- i. The Council will require that all proposals meet a standard of environmental efficiency equivalent to achieving a “very good” rating from a BREEAM assessment.
- ii. New development should wherever possible adhere to the principles of passive solar design. Consideration should also be given to the internal design of buildings making the most of natural light to minimise electricity used for lighting, heating and cooling ie: locate rooms with a high level of need for cooling away from areas of direct sunlight.
- iii. The following techniques of sustainable development should be incorporated into future development:
  - a. Building insulation or cladding;
  - b. Section lighting within buildings to enable lights to be switched off in areas that are not in use and activation controls for those areas infrequently used; and
  - c. Water saving systems ie; reduced pressure taps.
- iv. Wherever possible sustainable construction material, including recycled materials, local materials (to reduce transportation and its associated effects), materials with low embodied energy and timber from sustainable sources should be used as part of new developments.

### 3.5 Drainage and flood risk

All urban landscapes have large areas of impermeable ground, from where water runs off rather than filtering through the ground. This can often have the effect of increasing total and peak water flows, resulting in increased flows downstream and therefore increasing the risk of flooding. The Council therefore encourages developers to introduce measures to minimise flood risk in Gunnels Wood.

Policy EN33 of the District Plan states:

*POLICY EN33 (FLOOD RISK AND DRAINAGE)*

*DEVELOPERS WILL BE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE A FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT WHERE A PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT IS LIKELY TO:-*

*(A) BE AT RISK FROM FLOODING; OR*

*(B) INCREASE THE RISK OF FLOODING ELSEWHERE; OR*

*(C) PREJUDICE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE DRAINAGE SYSTEM OR FLOOD DEFENCES.*

*WHERE THE FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT SHOWS AN INCREASE IN THE RISK OF FLOODING OR A REDUCTION IN THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE DRAINAGE SYSTEM OR FLOOD DEFENCES, DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS APPROPRIATE FLOOD PROTECTION AND MITIGATION MEASURES ARE IMPLEMENTED.*

*DEVELOPMENT WILL BE REQUIRED TO INCORPORATE APPROPRIATE SURFACE WATER MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES WHICH WILL SEEK TO MAINTAIN EXISTING HYDROLOGICAL CONDITIONS AND WHICH WILL NOT HAVE MATERIAL ADVERSE EFFECTS UPON THE AQUIFER AND THE EXISTING NATURAL WATER CYCLE.*

*WHERE APPROPRIATE, DEVELOPERS WILL BE ENCOURAGED TO INCORPORATE SUITABLE SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE SYSTEMS.*

The following provisions are intended to provide an example of how new development can address this policy.

#### **Objective**

**To adopt a sustainable approach towards flood risk through effective management of the urban drainage system, control of surface water run-off and water conservation techniques.**

***Flood risk and drainage (general guidelines)***

- i. All development proposals of more than 1 hectare in size should, in line with Environment Agency advice, undertake a surface water flood risk assessment.
- ii. To control the quantity and quality of surface runoff, development proposals should consider the inclusion of sustainable drainage techniques (SuDS).
- iii. New development is encouraged, wherever possible, to make use of water conservation techniques, such as grey water reuse, rainwater harvesting and the use of 'greenroofs'.

The Environment Agency can provide further advice on these techniques.



### 3.6 Sustainable transport

Chapter 5 of the District Plan addresses transport and accessibility issues in Stevenage. In accordance with Government guidance, it identifies the need to encourage an effective and efficient transport system, as well as reducing the need to travel by car by integrating land uses and enabling people to meet their everyday needs locally.

The District Plan generally encourages development proposals to reduce the need to travel and to take into consideration the impact it will have on encouraging a reduction in travel. The District Plan contains provisions encouraging new developments to submit Green Travel Plans (GTP) to promote the use of alternative modes of travel. Joint work with Hertfordshire County Council has resulted in a guidance note for developers in producing a GTP. It is expected that developers should have regard to this document in producing their GTP.

The policies contained within the District Plan cover a broad range of developments with limited guidance existing relating to the detail of a GTP. As such, it is considered that additional guidance providing criteria for assessing whether developments fully comply with the intent of the District Plan are warranted.

This section is intended to supplement policy T1 (Transport Implications from Developments) and T4 (Green Travel Plans), which read as follows:

#### *POLICY T1 (TRANSPORT IMPLICATIONS FROM DEVELOPMENTS)*

*THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES WILL BE CONSIDERED IN ASSESSING TRANSPORT IMPLICATIONS FROM DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS:*

- (A) A REQUIREMENT TO REDUCE THE NEED TO TRAVEL IN DECIDING THE LOCATION OF NEW DEVELOPMENT; AND*
- (B) ACCESS TO MODES OF TRAVEL OTHER THAN PRIVATE MOTORISED TRANSPORT, INCLUDING PASSENGER TRANSPORT, CYCLING AND WALKING; AND*
- (C) IMPLICATIONS OF TRAFFIC GENERATION; AND*
- (D) SAFETY; AND*
- (E) DETAILED DESIGN TO FACILITATE ACCESS, PARTICULARLY BY ALTERNATIVE MODES OF TRANSPORT USING PRIORITY MEASURES IF APPROPRIATE; AND*
- (F) DETAILED DESIGN TO FACILITATE ACCESS BY THOSE WITH MOBILITY PROBLEMS.*

*NEW DEVELOPMENTS WILL NOT BE PERMITTED WHERE THEY ONLY MAKE PROVISION FOR ACCESS BY PRIVATE MOTORISED TRANSPORT.*

#### *POLICY T4 (GREEN TRAVEL PLANS)*

*AS PART OF THE TRANSPORT ASSESSMENT FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS, DEVELOPERS WILL BE EXPECTED TO SUBMIT A GREEN TRAVEL PLAN TO ENCOURAGE THE USE OF ALTERNATIVE MODES OF TRAVEL AND REDUCE RELIANCE ON PRIVATE MOTORISED TRANSPORT. DEVELOPERS WILL BE EXPECTED TO DEMONSTRATE HOW THIS PLAN WILL BE IMPLEMENTED.*

The guidelines outlined in the following sections are intended to supplement these policies.

#### **Objective**

**To achieve a reduction in the need to travel, to promote the use of alternative modes of transport and to reduce reliance on private vehicles.**

#### *Location of Development*

Section 3.1 on land use provides guidelines encouraging land uses to be located in the most sustainable locations, promoting a reduction in the need to travel.

The following guideline encourages the most appropriate siting for development proposals:

- i. Pedestrian entrances should be located so that they are easily accessible to passenger transport, walking and cycling routes, thereby encouraging the use of alternative modes of transport.

#### *Green Travel Plans*

All new major development proposals in Gunnels Wood will require the submission of a GTP to assist in delivering sustainable transport objectives. GTPs should have measurable outputs and set out arrangements for monitoring the progress of the plan. The following measures should be considered when preparing a GTP:

- Efficient car use, through the provision of:
  - i. Car sharing schemes;
  - ii. Pool cars or bikes for those who need a car during the day for work; and
  - iii. Parking management that encourages more efficient use of spaces. This can be achieved through strengthened parking controls and the allocation of permits. A reserved section for car sharers could also be considered.

- Cycling and Walking
  - iv. Provide secure (covered) cycle parking – cycle stands or lockers;
  - v. Provide changing facilities, showers and clothes lockers;
  - vi. Identify and publicise suitable routes for cycling to work and investigate the creation of cycle lanes;
  - vii. Ensure footpaths are well lit, maintained and signposted; and
  - viii. Set up a Bicycle Users Group (BUG), who can offer support and advice.
  
- Passenger transport
  - ix. Provide interest free loans for season tickets;
  - x. Negotiate staff discounts;
  - xi. Ensure that timetables are readily available, using displays or a journey planner on PC's
  - xii. Work with the County Council's Passenger Transport Unit to improve bus routes and shelters.
  - xiii. Where possible GTPs should be prepared in partnership with adjoining businesses. The GTP should encourage a sharing of facilities across those in the partnership.

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## 4.0 Planning obligations

The following section is intended to provide additional guidance on what the council anticipates planning obligations will deliver in the Gunnels Wood area. In accordance with relevant planning legislation, planning obligations may restrict development or use of land; require operations or activities to be carried out; require the land to be used in any specified way; or require payments to be made to the authority either in a single sum or periodically.

Planning obligations form an important part of the planning system; they can enhance the quality of development and enable proposals to go ahead which might otherwise be refused if such provision was not made. Notwithstanding this, contributions cannot be collected to render a development acceptable if it is fundamentally unacceptable in planning terms.

The general basis for collecting additional developer contributions as part of the development application process is set out in policy TW11 of the Stevenage District Plan, which states:

*TW11 : PLANNING REQUIREMENTS*

*PLANNING OBLIGATIONS WILL BE SOUGHT THAT ENSURE THAT ON AND OFF SITE WORKS, FACILITIES, SERVICES, AND OTHER NEEDS REQUIRED BY THE DEVELOPMENT OR TO OFFSET THE IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND LOCAL AMENITY, THAT ARE FAIRLY AND REASONABLY RELATED IN SCALE AND KIND TO THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AND WHICH ARE NECESSARY TO GRANTING OF PLANNING PERMISSION ARE PROVIDED OR CONTRIBUTED TO BY THE DEVELOPER.*

The Borough Council has undertaken an audit of Gunnels Wood in terms of the overall level of amenity. This audit has found the area to have an under-provision of various facilities, services and amenities. As a result, planning obligations will be negotiated for all new major developments within Gunnels Wood i.e. where developments exceed any of the following criteria: 1000m<sup>2</sup> of new floorspace; the development site exceeds 1.0 hectare; or where 50 or more employees will result. The Council may seek contributions from smaller developments where they are likely to create impacts that need to be addressed.

Generally, obligations will be sought in the following areas:

### *Open Space (not vested in a public authority)*

- i. 5% of the land on all development sites over 1.0 hectare should be set aside for the purpose of usable open space and should be developed and maintained for this purpose. Such development should comprise landscaping (including paths and paved areas), furniture and public art (as provided for in a subsequent provision).
- ii. Where the open space is to be provided on site, it should generally be located within the front setback area to increase the level of activity occurring between the building and the street.

### **Transport**

- i. Developer contributions will be sought to provide footpaths/cycleways, street furniture, lighting, pavement and road surfaces (design and materials), and cycleways, where works are included in any future masterplan for the area.
- ii. Contributions will also be sought to provide passenger transport initiatives in the area. In particular, the Council will seek to fund improved bus facilities and services, for example telematics provision of information, improved service times and upgrading of infrastructure such as bus stops, that assist in providing a more direct and regular link between the train station and the employment area.

### **Landscaping**

- i. Developer contributions will be sought to implement the landscaping works proposed as part of any future masterplan for the area.

### **Public art**

- i. The Council will seek a contribution for the purpose of artistic enhancement of the employment area. This should be in the form of:
  - a. A specially commissioned work of art forming an integral part of the development; or
  - b. A financial contribution which will be spent on public art commissions in Gunnels Wood.

### **Local Recruitment and Training**

- i. Where development proposals will result in 50 or more employees a contribution towards local recruitment and training programmes for the types of positions to be created will be sought. For every 50 posts created the developer will be encouraged to contribute to the training of one Stevenage resident to fill such positions.

## 5.0 Local Development Framework

The Borough Council adopted its District Plan on 8 December 2004, to provide the policy context for land use decisions within the Borough. However, as required by the new planning legislation, the council has commenced preparation of its Local Development Framework. Over the next three years the Core Strategy will be developed followed by a number of Area Action Plans (AAPs). These will have the effect of incrementally phasing out district plan policies.

It is envisaged that one of these Area Action Plans will be prepared for Gunnels Wood and that this AAP will be based on a masterplanning exercise.

The Borough Council, along with the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) have now commissioned Buro Happold to undertake this exercise. This work has been commissioned with the aim of producing a masterplan for Gunnels Wood that is characterised by:

- A strong and positive identity;
- A high quality public realm where spaces are attractive, inviting and valued by those who use them;
- A legible and high quality transport network that caters for all modes of travel, resulting in ease of movement within the Gunnels Wood area, while strengthening linkages between the area and its adjacent existing and future neighbourhoods and Stevenage town centre; and
- A robust structure that accommodates a diverse range of business and business support activities and provides a suitable level of high quality infrastructure.

It is envisaged that there will be recommendations as a result of this masterplan that relate to both improvements to the public and private domain. To ensure the plan is ultimately successful in its implementation, all new development will be required to contribute towards the cost of implementing elements of the masterplan.

The relationship between the masterplan and other relevant documents is illustrated in Figure 2.

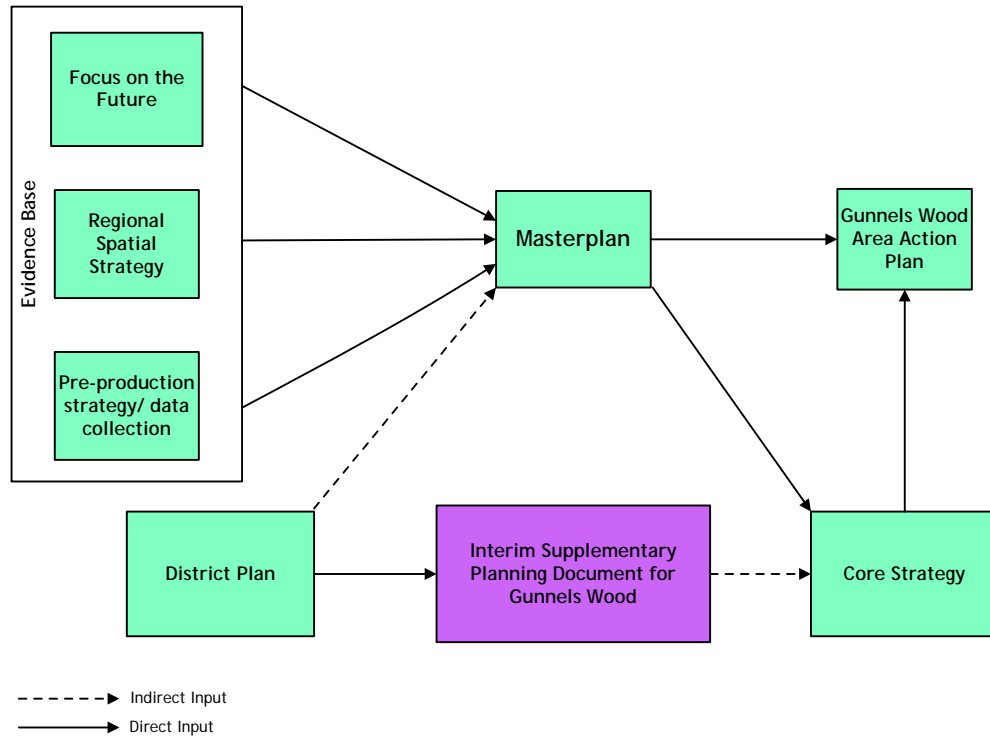


Figure 2: Gunnels Wood policy framework

### *Local development framework requirements*

- i. New development should adhere to the urban design principles established through any masterplanning exercise undertaken in the area.



## 6.0 Conclusions

The preparation of this document Council has undertaken extensive consultation with the Gunnels Wood Initiative Steering committee, key stakeholders and the community. The development of the document has also drawn on the aims and objectives of the initiative, the Focus on the Future Strategy for Gunnels Wood and the preliminary Master planning work.

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## 8.0 Appendices

### 8.1 Use Classes Order guide

<b>Use Classes (Amendment) Order 2005</b>	<b>Description (e.g.)</b>	<b>General Permitted Development (Amendment) Order 2005</b>
A1 <i>Shops</i>	Shops, retails warehouses, hairdressers, post offices, dry cleaners, sandwich bars, showrooms	No permitted changes
A2 <i>Financial and professional services</i>	Banks, building societies, estate and employment agencies, professional and financial services, betting offices	Permitted change to A1
A3 <i>Restaurants and cafes</i>	Restaurants, snack bars, cafes	Permitted change to A1 or A2
A4 <i>Drinking establishments</i>	Pubs and bars	Permitted change to A1, A2 or A3
A5 <i>Hot food take-aways</i>	Take-aways	Permitted change to A1, A2 or A3
Sui Generis*	Shops selling and/or displaying motor vehicles, launderettes, petrol filling stations	No permitted change
B1 <i>Business</i>	(a) Offices not within A2 (b) Research and development, laboratories, high tech (c) Light industry	Permitted change to B8
B2 <i>General industry</i>	General industry	Permitted change to B1 or B8
B8 <i>Storage and distribution</i>	Wholesale warehouse, distribution centres, repositories	Permitted change to B1
Sui Generis*	Any work registrable under the Alkali, etc. Works Regulation Act, 1906	No permitted change
C1 <i>Hotels</i>	Hotels, boarding and guest houses	No permitted change
C2 <i>Residential institutions</i>	Residential schools and colleges, hospitals and nursing homes	No permitted change
C3 <i>Dwelling houses</i>	Dwellings, small businesses at home, communal housing of the elderly and handicapped	No permitted change
Sui Generis*	Hostel	No permitted change
D1 <i>Non-residential institutions</i>	Places of worship, church halls, clinics, health centres, crèches, day nurseries, consulting rooms, public halls, art galleries	No permitted change
D2 <i>Assembly and leisure</i>	Cinemas, music and concert halls, dance, sports halls, swimming baths, skating rinks, gymnasiums, outdoor sports and leisure uses	No permitted change
Sui Generis*	Theatres, nightclubs	No permitted change

\* This term is used to describe a use on its own. Any use not falling within a specific use class falls within this category

## 8.2 Glossary

### **Area Action Plan (AAP)**

These provide the planning framework for areas where significant change or conservation is needed or anticipated. These plans will have Ordnance Survey based maps, which will act as insets to the main proposals map. These are voluntary Local Development Documents that, if written, are statutory documents.

### **Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE)**

A Government sponsored body charged with securing better townscape, architecture and building.

### **Development Plan Documents (DPD)**

These are the documents that must be taken into account in determining planning applications. Planning permission must be granted in accordance with these documents unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Development Plan Documents must be subjected to independent examination before being adopted.

### **District Plan (*Stevenage District Plan Second Review*)**

This is the local plan for Stevenage. It sets out all the council's policies on the development and change of use of land and buildings.

### **East of England Development Agency (EEDA)**

Established in April 1999, EEDA is the Government sponsored regional economic development agency for the East of England region. Charged with the responsibility of ensuring economic prosperity across the region, its wide-ranging remit includes working in the following areas:

- Economic development and social & physical regeneration
- Business support, investment and competitiveness
- Skills and employment
- Sustainable development and high-quality environment
- Creating a public profile for the region

EEDA promotes the benefits of investing in the East of England and acts as a powerful lobbying and influencing voice. It also brings together the work of partners and businesses at a regional level, enabling the spread of best practice.

### **English Partnerships (EP)**

The Government's national regeneration agency. Responsible for securing major regeneration schemes across England, either on their own or in public and/or private sector partnerships. Stevenage West and Stevenage town centre feature among the agency's top national priorities

### **Green Travel Plan (GTP)**

A package of practical measures to encourage staff to choose alternatives to single-occupancy car-use, and to reduce the need to travel at all for their work. Such measures could include car sharing schemes; the provision of (or improvement of existing) cycle facilities; negotiating improved passenger transport services; implementing more flexible-working practices and restricting and/or charging for car parking.

### **Knowledge Economy**

Part of the economy, which is driven more by knowledge and technology than the traditional factors of capital and labour. In Gunnels Wood this may refer to economic uses such as science, research, information technology and hi-tech development work. The term innovative operations can be used to refer to the abovementioned uses.

### **Local Development Documents (LDD)**

These documents can be Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), both of which are used to guide development and by the council in the determination of planning applications. The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is also an LDD.

### **Local Development Framework (LDF)**

This statutory document, prepared by LPAs (cf), comprises a number of different types of document - Local Development Scheme, Annual Monitoring Report, Statement of Community Involvement, Local Development Documents, Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents.

### **Passive solar design**

Refers designing buildings to make optimal use of energy from the sun. This can be achieved through building orientation, size and positing of glazed areas, development density and building materials.

### **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)**

Required under the terms of the European directive 2001/42/EC for "environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes, including those in the field of planning and land use". Undertaken in conjunction with the Sustainability Appraisal (cf).

### **Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)**

There is no legal requirement to take these documents into account in determining planning applications, so their nature is to provide guidance to applicants wishing to develop land. The community will be involved in their preparation, but there is no independent examination of the document.

### **Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)**

Same as SPD (cf), but as produced

### **Sustainability Appraisal (SA)**

An assessment of the impact the proposals contained within a Local Development Document would have on the environment, economy and society. SA is an iterative process; it should be used to improve the sustainability of subsequent versions of the document. It is to be carried out in conjunction with the Strategic Environmental Assessment (cf).

### **Sustainable development**

"Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). Since the 2004 Act, this principle has become the principal objective of the planning system.

## **Universal Design**

The design of products and environments to be useable by all people, to the greatest extent possible without the need for adaptation or specialised design.