

Public Document Pack



EXECUTIVE

Date: Tuesday, 30 April 2019

Time: 10.00am

Location: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete

Contact: Ian Gourlay (01438) 242703

Members: Councillors: Sharon Taylor OBE (Chair), Mrs Joan Lloyd (Vice-Chair), Rob Broom, John Gardner, Richard Henry, Jackie Hollywell, Ralph Raynor and Jeannette Thomas.

AGENDA

PART 1

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. MINUTES - 14 MARCH 2019

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 14 March 2019 for signature by the Chair.

Pages 3 – 12

3. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (LDS)

To consider updates to the Local Development Scheme (LDS) and to approve a revised LDS.

Pages 13 – 42

4. STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN: PRE-ADOPTION DRAFT

To consider initial proposals for recommendation to Council on the adoption of the Local Plan, incorporating main and minor modifications, for consultation with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework rules in the Council's Constitution.

Pages 43 - 324

PLEASE WOULD EXECUTIVE MEMBERS RETAIN THE APPENDICES TO THE ABOVE ITEM FOR USE AT THE NEXT EXECUTIVE MEETING.

5. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

To consider any Part I business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

6. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

To consider the following motions –

1. That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1 – 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.
2. That Members consider the reasons for the following reports being in Part II and determine whether or not maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

7. PART II MINUTES - EXECUTIVE - 14 MARCH 2019

To approve as a correct record the Part II section of the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 14 March 2019.
Pages 325 - 328

8. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

To consider any Part II business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

NOTE: Links to Part 1 Background Documents are shown on the last page of the individual report, where this is not the case they may be viewed by using the following link to agendas for Executive meetings and then opening the agenda for Tuesday, 30 April 2019 – <http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/have-your-say/council-meetings/161153/>

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE MINUTES

Date: Thursday, 14 March 2019

Time: 2.00pm

Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Sharon Taylor OBE CC (Chair), Mrs Joan Lloyd (Vice-Chair), Rob Broom, John Gardner, Richard Henry, Jackie Hollywell, Ralph Raynor and Jeannette Thomas.

Start / End Time: Start Time: 2.00pm
End Time: 4.09pm

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No apologies for absence were received.

There were no declarations of interest.

The Leader advised that Councillor Ralph Raynor (Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise & Transport) was attending his final Executive meeting as he was standing down at the forthcoming Borough Elections. She was grateful for Councillor Raynor's work during his time as Portfolio Holder, thanked him for his sterling work in fostering excellent relationships with local businesses, and wished him all the best for the future.

The Leader stated that Scott Crudginton (Chief Executive) was also attending his final Executive meeting, prior him leaving the Council's service to take up the position of Director of Resources with Hertfordshire County Council. On behalf of the Executive, she thanked Scott for his support and advice in both his Chief Executive role and his previous roles at SBC, and wished him every success in his new role and for the future.

2 **MINUTES - 13 FEBRUARY 2019**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 13 February 2019 are approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

3 **MINUTES OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND SELECT COMMITTEES**

In relation to the Minutes of the Community Select Committee meeting held on 12 February 2019, the Leader commended the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health & Older People and officers who had worked on the production of the Healthy Stevenage Strategy.

In respect of the Minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 18 February 2019, the Community Development Team was requested to liaise with the Portfolio Holder for Communities, Community Safety & Equalities regarding any initiatives looking to undertake any work around resident involvement for the Council in building diversity in groups and services.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the following meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees are noted –

Environment & Economy Select Committee – 31 January 2019

Community Select Committee – 12 February 2019

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 18 February 2019

4 **THIRD QUARTER REVENUE MONITORING REPORT 2018/19 - GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT**

The Executive considered a report in respect of the Third Quarter Revenue Monitoring Report 2018/19 – General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

The Portfolio Holder for Resources advised that the 2018/19 General Fund net spend was projected to be £80.9K lower than the working budget. The report stated that ‘this includes carry forward requests of £80,000’, however this should read £97.5K, as the Brexit funding had also been requested for carry forward into 2019/20. This meant that the net change in the General Fund projected expenditure was not a decrease of £890, as reported, but an increase of £16.6K once carry forward requests were excluded. It was further noted that ongoing budget pressures may require a review of the Financial Security savings target and any revision would be considered in the next Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) update.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources commented that the HRA net deficit was projected to decrease by £966K. However, from this underspend there were requests to carry forward expenditure budgets totalling £507.4K. The ongoing pressures of £19K would be reviewed at the next Business Plan and MTFS update.

The following matters were discussed:

- Paragraph 4.9.9 - Council Tax on Empty Property – in the light of the budget for council tax on void properties likely to be overspent by £75,750 for the year, officers were requested to investigate steps to be taken to mitigate against this in the future by returning as many void properties as possible back into the housing stock for re-letting.
- Paragraph 4.9.12 – Communal Area Maintenance – officers were requested to provide the Leader with details of and reasons for the underspend of £40,000, and an indicative date for when the review of caretaking/maintenance services would be taking place.

It was **RESOLVED**:

General Fund

1. That the 2018/19 3rd Quarter General Fund projected net decrease in expenditure of £80,890 is approved.
2. That it is noted that the cumulative changes made to the General Fund net budget remain within the £400,000 (increase) variation limit delegated to Executive.
3. That the progress of the 2018/19 approved savings, growth bids and carry forwards is noted.
4. That the 2019/20 pressure of £118,420 is approved. The ongoing pressure is £51,800 with £66,620 being for one year only.
5. That the new carry forward requests of £80,000 are approved.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

6. That the 2018/19 3rd Quarter decrease in the net HRA deficit of £966,030 is approved.
7. That the progress of the 2018/19 approved savings, growth bids and carry forward requests is noted.
8. That the 2019/20 ongoing pressure of £17,000 is approved.
9. That the new carry forward requests of £507,470 are approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

5 THIRD QUARTER CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT 2018/19 - GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

The Executive considered a report in respect of the Third Quarter Monitoring Report 2018/19 – General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

The Portfolio Holder for Resources stated that the 2018/19 General Fund Programme was projected to be £3.870Million lower than the working budget or 25% of the budgeted amount. Most of this related to slippage of £3.015Million and of this £1.19Million related to regeneration schemes. The largest slippage, relating to the CCTV relocation (£645K), had occurred as a result of reliance on third party cable providers to allow the scheme to be delivered.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources explained that the 2018/19 HRA capital programme was projected to be £911K lower than the budget or 3.9% underspent. All of the underspend related to slippage in the programme, of which £781K related to ICT and digital schemes.

The following matters were raised:

- Paragraph 4.1.10 – ICT expenditure – in response to a question regarding the anticipated 2018/19 underspend of £552,000, it was confirmed that slippage had occurred due to the time taken to appoint a new ICT Strategic Partnerships Manager and the scaling up of revenue resources to support the delivery of the required ICT capital projects. It was expected that this capital expenditure would take place in Quarter 1 of 2019/20.
- Paragraph 4.1.21 – Boilers in community centres – officers were requested to provide an answer to Executive Members in respect of a both the annual maintenance arrangements and planned replacement for boilers in community centres.
- Paragraph 4.1.23 – Pedaloos at Fairlands Valley Park – SLL be asked to ensure that the new pedaloos were made available for public use on a regular basis during 2019.
- Commercial investments – officers undertook to consult with the Estates Team and report back to Executive Members on progress with the Acquisition Strategy (ie. proposals to acquire commercial property inside and outside of the Borough).

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the 2018/19 General Fund capital programme net decrease in expenditure of £3.870Million is approved, as summarised in Section 4.1 of the report.
2. That the 2018/19 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital programme net decrease in expenditure of £0.911Million is approved, as summarised in Section 4.2 of the report.
3. That the 2019/20 General Fund increase in capital expenditure of £3.015Million (slippage from 2018/19) is approved, as summarised in Paragraph 4.1.3 of the report.
4. That the 2019/20 HRA increase in capital expenditure of £1.036Million (£911,000 slippage from 2018/19 and £125,000 vehicles) is approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

6 **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

The Executive considered a report in respect of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Asset Management Strategy 2019-2024.

The Portfolio for Housing, Health and Older People advised that the Strategy sought to set out the underlying principles which sat behind excellent asset management for SBC and the key strategic projects and programmes to ensure the Council derived maximum value from its assets, whilst providing high quality homes for its tenants.

The Executive noted that Strategy would allow the Council to meet its strategic goals of having fit for purpose, safe, well maintained and well-presented stock, with a view to optimising housing development opportunities where appropriate. It contained a

series of key strategic aims and associated objectives. The objectives were summarised in the accompanying action plan, which would become the principal method for reporting and monitoring the delivery of the Strategy. A “plan on a page” had been provided to help provide an overview of how the constituent elements fitted together.

The Leader requested officers to ensure that the Asset Management Strategy included measures to be undertaken to ensure that when works were taking place, appropriate steps would be taken to protect the safety and security of residents and their properties.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Asset Management Strategy, as set out in Appendix D to the report, is approved.
2. That delegated authority is given to the Assistant Director (Housing & Investment), following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health & Older People, to finalise the Strategy and related Action Plan.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

7 **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE FOR QUARTER THREE 2018/19**

The Executive considered a report in respect of corporate performance results for Quarter 3 2018/19, including an update on the delivery status of Future Town, Future Council Programme performance indicators.

The Chief Executive gave a presentation on the report, and drew attention to the one Future Town, Future Council (FTFC) Programme and seven Corporate Performance measures at red status, together with improvement activities for each of these measures, as set out in the report.

The Executive was informed that there were three key areas that required specific attention and active management by officers. They were health and safety governance, Licensing of Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and the Customer Service Centre.

The following points were raised during the debate:

- Customer Feedback – in order to tackle areas where feedback to customers was not meeting performance targets, officers were requested to investigate methods (such as the option to provide additional administrative support) to improve communication and response times to customer enquiries within service areas where performance improvement was required.
- Garage Business Plan – officers were requested to report back to the Leader and relevant Portfolio Holders on the reasons why a petition had been submitted regarding the proposals for the Nash Close Garage complex when the overall proposals for the Garage Business Plan had yet to be decided or made public.

- Use of Agency staff – officers were requested to provide the Leader with a brief paper setting out the position regarding the use of agency staff and action that had / was being taken to seek to reduce agency usage.

The Leader wished to record her thanks to all staff associated with the recent achievement of the signing of the SG1 Project Development Agreement with Mace Developments Limited.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the delivery of priorities which form the Future Town, Future Council Programme and performance of the Council across the key themes for Quarter 3 2018/19, together with the latest achievements, is noted.
2. That the review of contractual arrangements for the management of health and safety compliance and measures implemented to ensure regulations continue to be met are noted and endorsed (Paragraphs 3.90 to 3.91 of the report).
3. That arrangements to meet new regulations (introduced in October 2018) relating to the Licensing of Houses of Multiple Occupation are noted and endorsed (Paragraphs 3.102 to 3.105 of the report).
4. That the resource planning implemented to provide a sustainable solution to meeting the level of customer contacts through the Customer Service Centre and provide a more consistent level of service to customers is noted and endorsed (Paragraphs 3.115 to 3.121 of the report).
5. That the improvements in sickness management practice is noted and future plans are endorsed (Paragraphs 3.131 to 3.135 of the report).

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

8 **CO-OPERATIVE NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME DELIVERY 2018/19**

The Executive considered a report in respect of a summary of the delivery of the Co-operative Neighbourhood Management (CNM) Programme, and a review of expenditure and delivered improvements in each ward in 2017/18 and 2018/19.

The Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Co-operative Working stated that the report reflected on some of the learning from the Enabling Social Action Partnership research which had been undertaken by the universities of Hull and Sheffield on behalf of the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). This had recognised the need to involve Ward Members and communities more directly in shaping the final programme of ward improvements, and had also recognised the added social outcomes that emerged from driving delivery at a neighbourhood level.

The Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Co-operative Working commented that the Programme also proposed some refocussing of priorities next year to ensure

that the impact of improvements better met community and Ward Member expectations. Part of this would be reinforced by the proposed area-based working model being developed by the Communities & Neighbourhoods, Stevenage Direct Services and Housing & Investment Teams.

The Executive viewed a video sponsored by the Communities and Neighbourhoods Team and forming part of the Council's successful bid to drive a Co-operative Policy Lab through the Co-operative Council Innovation Network (CCIN).

The following matters were discussed:

- Timescale for cross Business Unit Area Based Working – some of the background work had been completed leading up to the introduction of combined teams of Community/Neighbourhood and Housing Officers to drive forward the CNM Programme. A post was being recruited to in order to help drive this area of work forward across the Business Units.
- Involvement of Ward Members – officers were asked to ensure that schedules of works completed and works to be carried out in each ward were provided to Ward Members.
- The Executive was of the view that it should be made clear in all future communications regarding the CNM Programme that all Councillors were in full support of the programme; also that accuracy was essential when identifying locations where improvements had taken place or were scheduled to take place.

The Executive supported an additional recommendation requesting officers to prepare a document setting out the purpose and aims of the CNM Programme, and to devote a whole edition of the Council's Chronicle Magazine based around the work taking place in connection with the CNM Programme, including details of the rationale of the timetable for the work in various wards.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the delivery of activity undertaken through the Co-operative Neighbourhood Management (CNM) Programme to date is noted.
2. That the proposed Forward Plan for the CNM Programme over the coming year is noted.
3. That officers be requested to prepare a document setting out the purpose and aims of the CNM Programme, and to devote a whole edition of the Council's Chronicle Magazine based around the work taking place in connection with the CNM Programme.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report; and 3. To better publicise the the CNM Programme.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

Future High Street Fund: Expression of Interest

The Leader had accepted that this urgent item could be considered at the meeting, and could not wait until the following meeting of the Executive, because the deadline for expressions of interest regarding the Future High Street Fund to be submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) was by 22 March 2019.

In presenting the report, the Strategic Director (TP) advised that the as part of its “Our plan for the High Street” initiative, funding of £675Million had been made available for which authorities could bid, with the aspiration of supporting high streets to counter the challenges that they faced in the current economic and digital climate.

The report summarised the Fund’s criteria and application process and sought determination of how to best proceed with an expression of interest to be submitted by the Council. Although the Fund could contribute up to £25Million to a successful bid, it had been suggested that within the region of £5-10Million per town centre was more likely to be the upper limit of allocations.

The Leader asked officers to ensure that the expression of interest was accompanied by details of the type of projects that the Council would be hoping to implement should it be allowed to progress to the second stage of the process.

It was noted that, regrettably, the Old Stevenage High Street did not meet the criteria for the submission of an expression of interest. However, it was hoped that the possible use of heritage-related external funding could be obtained for investment in the High Street area.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the bid process and guidance issued by the MCHLG is noted.
2. That the submission of an Expression of Interest based on the Stevenage Central Framework and its associated evidence base is endorsed.
3. That delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director (TP), following consultation with the Executive Member for Environment and Regeneration, to agree a letter of support on behalf of Executive, to be submitted with the Expression of Interest

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other options considered: As contained in report.

10 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That, under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in Paragraphs 1 to 7 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by SI 2006 No. 88.
2. That, having considered the reasons for the following items being in Part II, it be determined that maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighed the public interest in disclosure.

11 **PART II MINUTES - EXECUTIVE - 13 FEBRUARY 2019**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 13 February 2019 are approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

12 **HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENTS WRITE OFFS GREATER THAN £10,000**

The Executive considered a Part II report in respect of the proposed write off of Housing Benefits Overpayments Write Offs greater than £10,000.

It was **RESOLVED** that the debts referred to in the report be written off.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

13 **FORMATION OF A WHOLLY OWNED HOUSING DEVELOPMENT COMPANY - BUSINESS PLAN AND FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS**

The Executive considered a Part II report in respect of the proposed formation of a Wholly Owned Housing Development Company (WOC) – Business Plan approval and financial projections.

It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendations contained in the report be approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

14 **REGENERATION SCHEME UPDATE AND THE DISPOSAL OF FOUR RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES AT GILES CRESCENT (FORMER WEDGEWOOD WAY SCHEME / DU PONT SITE)**

The Executive considered a Part II report seeking approval for the disposal of four residential units at Giles Crescent (former Du Pont site) that were intended to be for outright home ownership.

It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendations contained in the report, together with an additional recommendation made at the meeting, be approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

15 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR

Meeting Executive
Portfolio Area Planning and Regulation
Date 30 April 2019



LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (LDS)

KEY DECISION

Authors Caroline Danby | 2823
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Lead Officers Chris Berry | 2954
Contact Officer Caroline Danby | 2823

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To inform members of updates to the Local Development Scheme (LDS).
- 1.2 To seek the Executive's approval of a revised LDS.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the LDS 2019 (attached as Appendix 1) be approved as the programme for the new Stevenage Borough Local Plan and associated documents, subject to any necessary minor editorial modifications agreed by the Assistant Director of Planning and Regulation having consulted with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration.
- 2.2 That the LDS 2019 is brought into effect from 13 May 2019 and published on the Council's planning web pages.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council is required to prepare a Local Development Scheme under Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). It specifies the local development documents which are to be “Development Plan Documents” and sets out the programme for the preparation of those. It is a statutory requirement to maintain an up-to-date LDS.
- 3.2 Stevenage’s current LDS was approved by the Executive in July 2016 and came into effect on 1 August 2016. This scheduled the adoption of the Local Plan to take place by July 2017.
- 3.3 The Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State in July 2016 and was followed by Examination in January – March 2017.
- 3.4 The Inspector’s Report was issued in October 2017. However, the Secretary of State placed a Holding Direction on the Local Plan in November 2017, which prevented the adoption of the plan.
- 3.5 This intervention has caused a significant delay in the original timetable agreed. The Holding Direction has now been lifted and, an update to the LDS is necessary to set out an updated timetable.
- 3.6 It is not mandatory to include a timetable for the preparation of CIL in the LDS. However, given the close relationship between the Local Plan and CIL, it is often considered good practice to do so. As such, the updated LDS also includes a new timetable for CIL.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

- 4.1 The LDS sets out updated milestones for the examination of the Local Plan (including Proposals Map) and its adoption. It also sets out timeframes for the adoption of CIL and a new Area Action Plan relating to the Railway Station area.
- 4.2 There is a statutory requirement to keep the LDS up-to-date. It currently contains timeframes for planning policy documents, including the Local Plan that are out-of-date, thus it is essential it is revised and a new LDS is adopted as soon as possible.
- 4.3 Not adopting a new LDS would mean we are no longer meeting our statutory requirement.

Stevenage Borough Local Plan

- 4.4 The revised LDS 2019 comprises a brief document and chart, appended to this report. It updates and sets the following timetable for the Local Plan adoption:
 - January – March 2017: Examination in Public

- October 2017: Receipt of Inspectors report
 - Adoption: May 2019
- 4.5 The above timetable represents a slippage of around 22 months on the LDS programme reported in July 2016.
- 4.6 Following submission of the plan in July 2016, as scheduled, the Examination timetable was then set by the Planning Inspectorate. The timetables for public examinations can vary significantly and are dependent on a number of factors including the level of responses received, the availability of Planning Inspectors, holiday periods and any additional work that might be required by the Inspector. The hearing sessions did not begin until January 2017, with the Inspector's Report being received in October 2017, at least 8 months behind schedule. However, a significant element of this revised timeline relates to intervention of the Secretary of State in issuing and maintaining the Holding Direction, as discussed in paragraphs 3.4 and 3.5 of this report.

Area Action Plan – Railway Station

- 4.7 As a consequence of discussions with MHCLG in relation to the Holding Direction on the Stevenage Borough Local Plan, officers indicated that the Council intended to produce an Area Action Plan (AAP) for the Railway Station area (within the TC3 and TC4 Major Opportunity Areas designated in the Local Plan).
- 4.8 The letter sent by the Secretary of State on 25 March 2019 (attached as Appendix B) made clear that the Holding Direction was being lifted on the basis that the Council timetable in its LDS the preparation of an Area Action Plan for the Stevenage 'Station Gateway' area (identified in the Local Plan as site TC4), to be adopted in December 2020 or sooner.
- 4.9 The AAP will provide an opportunity for stakeholders to engage and shape this area and will act as a catalyst for developers interested in supporting this key part of the Local Plan.
- 4.10 The AAP timetable put forward within the LDS is as follows
- November 2019: First consultation
 - April 2020: Second consultation
 - July 2020: Submission
 - September 2020: Examination
 - December 2020: Adoption

Community Infrastructure Levy

- 4.11 Owing largely to a resource focus on the Local Plan, the CIL timetable has also slipped significantly. A Report was taken to Executive in September 2018 (Appendix C) to approve consultation on the Charging Schedules. The first consultation was carried out in October 2018. The remainder of the timetable is set out in the LDS as follows:

4.12

- April 2019: Draft Charging Schedule consultation
- July 2019: Submission
- August/September 2019: Examination
- October/November 2019: Adoption

Statement of Community Involvement

- 4.13 The LDS also includes a programme for reviewing the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The current SCI was adopted in November 2018. There is a statutory requirement for it to be updated every five years.
- 4.14 The SCI sets out how members of the public and other stakeholders will be involved in the planning process. It is shown in the LDS for completeness.

5 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 5.1 The preparation of planning policy documents is funded from within an agreed departmental budget.

Legal Implications

- 5.2 The statutory duty to produce a Local Development Scheme is placed upon LPAs by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as amended by provisions contained within the Localism Act 2011.
- 5.3 The new LDS is considered to be compliant with the statutory requirements.
- 5.4 Preparation of CIL is given effect by the 2008 Planning Act and governed by The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended).

Policy Implications

- 5.5 The statutory Development Plan for the Borough forms part of the Borough Council's over-arching policy framework. It has potentially wide-ranging policy implications beyond the field of spatial planning.
- 5.6 There will be a need for positive interaction between the Plan and other plans and strategies of the Borough Council (and other stakeholders) as they are revised and updated to ensure that a consistent and holistic approach emerges.

Planning Implications

- 5.7 The LDS specifies the Development Plan Documents and sets out the timetable for their production.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- BD1 [Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004](#)
- BD2 [Localism Act 2011](#)
- BD3 [Town and Country Planning \(Local Development\) \(England\) Regulations, 2012](#)
- BD4 [Stevenage Borough Local Development Scheme, 2016](#)

APPENDICES

- A Local Development Scheme, April 2019
- B Letter from the Secretary of State, March 2019
- C September 2018 Executive Report - CIL

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Local Development Scheme

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1 Introduction

Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011 - 2031

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 Section 15, Localism Act 2011 Section 111

Local Development Scheme 2019

What is a Local Development Scheme?

1.1 The Local Development Scheme (LDS) is the timetable for writing the Local Plan for Stevenage. It is approved by Stevenage Borough Council to come into effect on 13 May 2019.

Why have you produced a new Local Development Scheme?

1.2 This document is an update of the LDS approved by the Council in August 2016.

1.3 Following its adoption, the new Local Plan will become a 'material consideration' to help us determine planning applications.

Are you preparing any other documents to support the Local Plan?

1.4 The Council plan to produce an Action Area Plan (AAP) for the Railway Station and this will be a Development Plan Document (DPD) and will be subject to consultation and examination.

1.5 The production of the AAP came about as a result of discussions with MHCLG following the Holding Direction placed on the Stevenage Borough Local Plan. The Council will produce an Area Action Plan for the railway station area (within the TC3 and TC4 MOA's designated in the Local Plan) to detail policies for an extended and regenerated train station and surrounding development opportunities.

1.6 The AAP will provide an opportunity for stakeholders to engage and shape this area. It also acts as a catalyst for developers interested in supporting this key part of the Plan.

1.7 We will keep the need for additional guidance under review. It is not a requirement for Supplementary Planning Documents to be included in the LDS.

What about the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)?

1.8 Our last LDS gave an indication of the timetable for preparing Community Infrastructure Levy following a review of the Council's position.

1.9 It is not a requirement to include any timetable for implementing CIL in the LDS. However, it is shown for completeness.

Why have you changed your mind about CIL?

1.10 Since we considered CIL in 2013, the Government has made significant changes to the ways in which we can collect contributions towards infrastructure from new development. In particular, the use of 'Section 106' agreements has become restricted. We currently use these agreements where we think contributions are required from new development.

1.11 We have also updated our viability evidence which shows that CIL can be supported in the Borough.

What evidence work have you done?

1.12 We have prepared an appropriate and proportionate evidence base to support the new Local Plan. See the Borough Council's website:

www.stevenage.gov.uk/149690/planning-policy/90175/90178/

Where will I find your Local Plan?

1.13 The Local Plan, along with any environmental reports and evidence studies, are on our website:

www.stevenage.gov.uk/149690/planning-policy/

1.14 When consultations are 'live' you will be able to comment online via the Borough Council website:

stevenage-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal

Will the timetable change again?

1.15 The timetable associated with adoption of the Local Plan should not change. However, it may be that the adoption of DPDs, such as the Area Action Plan for the Railway Station, may be subject to change. The timetable for the AAP is dependent on consultation and public examination. We will do our best to comply with the timetable but this is not always within our control.

What if I have other questions?

1.16 If you have questions about the contents of this Stevenage LDS or about the Local Plan, please address them to:

Planning Policy Team

Stevenage Borough Council

SG1 1HN

Or email planningpolicy@stevenage.gov.uk

2 Stevenage Document Profiles

Stevenage Borough Local Plan (including Policies Map)

| | |
|---|---|
| What is the subject of the document? | Sets out the vision, objectives, strategy, planning policies and proposals for the spatial development of Stevenage to 2031 |
| What geographical area does it cover? | Stevenage Borough |
| Is it a Development Plan Document (DPD)? | Yes |
| Key dates | |
| - <i>Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report consultation</i> | February/March 2012 |
| - <i>Preparation consultation</i> | June/July 2013 June/July 2015 |
| - <i>Publication consultation</i> | January/February 2016 |
| - <i>Submission to Government</i> | July 2016 |
| - <i>Examination Hearing Sessions</i> | January - March 2017 |
| - <i>Receipt of Inspector's report</i> | October 2017 |
| - <i>Adoption</i> | May 2019 |
| Monitoring and review | Monitoring will be undertaken through Stevenage Borough Council's Annual Monitoring Reports. The Local Plan will be monitored and any timeline for a review will be published through an update to the LDS or the Council's AMR when appropriate. |

Area Action Plan - Railway Station

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| What is the subject of the document? | The AAP will detail policies for an extended and regenerated train station and surrounding development opportunities covering the western part of TC4 and potentially some of TC3 depending on the final location of the 5th Platform. |
| What geographical area does it cover? | The Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area as set out in Policy TC3 and TC4 in the Stevenage Borough Local Plan and the Proposals Map. |
| Is it a DPD? | Yes |
| Key dates | |
| - <i>First consultation</i> | November 2019 |
| - <i>Second consultation</i> | April 2020 |
| - <i>Submission</i> | July 2020 |
| - <i>Examination</i> | September 2020 |
| - <i>Adoption</i> | December 2020 |
| Monitoring and review | The AAP will be reviewed every five years. Next review commences 2025. |

Stevenage Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule

| | |
|---|--|
| What is the subject of the document? | Sets out the CIL charge(s) that will apply to new development in Stevenage, including any differential rates to be applied |
| What geographical area does it cover? | Stevenage Borough |
| Is it a DPD? | No |
| Key dates | |
| - <i>Preliminary draft charging schedule consultation</i> | September 2018 |
| - <i>Draft charging schedule consultation</i> | April 2019 |
| - <i>Submission to Government</i> | July 2019 |
| - <i>Examination</i> | August/September 2019 |
| - <i>Receipt of Inspector's report</i> | October 2019 |
| - <i>Adoption</i> | October/November 2019 |
| Monitoring and review | CIL will be reviewed within 1 year of initial adoption |

Stevenage Statement of Community Involvement

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| What is the subject of the document? | Set out standards and approaches (including the procedures, processes and timings) that will be used to involve stakeholders and residents with an interest in planning in the production of the Local Plan and development management decisions A Statement of Community Involvement is no longer considered a Development Plan Document and is therefore not subject to examination |
| What geographical area does it cover? | Stevenage Borough |
| Is it a DPD? | No |
| Key dates | |
| - <i>Start of work</i> | March 2017 |
| - <i>Adoption</i> | November 2018 |
| Monitoring and review | Monitored by Stevenage Borough Council every five years. Next review commences Spring 2025 |

3 Local Plan and Community Infrastructure Levy timetable

| Local Plan documents | 2016 | | | | | | | | | | | | 2017 | | | | | | | | | | | | 2018 | | | | | | | | | | | | 2019 | | | | | | | | | | | | 2020 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| District Plan Second Review (as saved) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Stevenage Borough Local Plan | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Policies Map | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Area Action Plan - Railway Station | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Stevenage CIL Charging Schedule | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Statement of Community Involvement | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

| Local Plan documents | 2016 | | | | | | | | | | | | 2017 | | | | | | | | | | | | 2018 | | | | | | | | | | | | 2019 | | | | | | | | | | | | 2020 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| Cont'd | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| District Plan Second Review (as saved) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Stevenage Borough Local Plan | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Policies Map | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Area Action Plan - Railway Station | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Stevenage CIL Charging Schedule | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Statement of Community Involvement | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

KEY: Preparation stages

AAP - Railway Station

Community Infrastructure Levy

Statement of Community involvement

| | | | |
|---|---|---|------------------------------------|
| Resolution to prepare | | Resolution to prepare / review of position | |
| Document / evidence in preparation | | Document / evidence in preparation | Document / evidence in preparation |
| Preparation consultation (Reg. 18) | Preparation consultation (Reg.18) | Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule (Reg. 15) | |
| Publication consultation (Reg. 19) | Publication consultation (Reg. 19) | Draft Charging Schedule (Reg. 16) | |
| Submission to Government (Reg. 22) | Submission to Government (Reg. 22) | Submission for Examination (Reg. 19) | |
| Independent Examination (Regs. 23 and 24) | Independent Examination (Regs. 23 and 24) | Independent Examination (Regs. 20 and 21) | |
| Inspector's Report (Reg. 25) | Inspector's Report (Reg. 25) | Publication of recommendations (Reg. 23) | |
| Adoption (Reg. 26) | Adoption (Reg. 26) | Approval and publication (Reg. 25) | Approval |



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Councillor Sharon Taylor OBE
Leader of Stevenage Borough Council
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Herts
SG1 3AP

Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP
*Secretary of State for Housing, Communities
and Local Government*

**Ministry of Housing, Communities and
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www.gov.uk/mhclg

Dear Sharon

Stevenage Borough Council's Local Plan

A request was received from Mr Stephen McPartland MP to intervene in the Stevenage Local Plan (the "Plan"). The request raised a number of issues including Plan policies and supporting text covering the regeneration of Stevenage train station and town centre.

On the 13 November 2017, Stevenage Borough Council (the "Council"), pursuant to the powers in section 21A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, was directed not to take any step in connection with the adoption of the Plan, while the issues identified above were considered further.

I have now had the opportunity to consider the issues and your Council's representations. In light of recent assurances from your Council on the provision of additional clarity and certainty on matters including community and wider stakeholder engagement, accountability and governance, I have decided to withdraw the holding direction on the Stevenage Local Plan, on the understanding that, your Council will:

- Timetable the preparation a statutory Area Action Plan for the Stevenage 'Station Gateway' area (identified in the Local Plan as site TC4). The timetable will be published in your Local Development Scheme document before or at the same time as the Local Plan is adopted, and the should specify the adoption of the Area Action Plan in December 2020 or sooner.
- Publish for public consultation a Master Plan for the regeneration of the Stevenage Town Centre sites identified in the Local Plan as TC5 and TC2.
- Designate a lead Councillor and lead official to be responsible for progressing the preparation and implementation of the Area Action Plan, and for the implementation of the Local Plan itself,
- Provide monthly updates to MHCLG on preparation of the Area Action Plan,
- Remove references in the Local Plan to a new train station before adoption.

I am committed to supporting Stevenage achieve its full potential and will ensure my department offers you the advice and support needed to facilitate tangible delivery on the ground. I am happy to ask Homes England to provide support, advice and delivery capability to ensure that the regeneration proceeds effectively. And you will have seen the announcement on the Stronger Towns Fund. My officials stand ready to discuss how Stevenage could potentially benefit from this, and what the department can do more broadly to assist Stevenage.

Separate to the above issues, I remain keen to see progress on the regeneration of the town centre. You have agreed that the Council will work with the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and other stakeholders to create a new, independent, unincorporated partnership body to oversee the town centre regeneration. This partnership will have an independent Chair and will replace Stevenage First. To ensure robust scrutiny, local businesses, the local Member of Parliament, and for a limited period a senior MHCLG official, will be invited to join the partnership's board.

Finally, when your Council review its Local Plan, which should be done in line with paragraph 33 of the National Planning Policy Framework, I would take this opportunity to encourage you to bring forward higher density developments on previously developed land within Stevenage's existing built up area.

My officials will be in touch with your officers shortly to discuss next steps.



RT HON JAMES BROKESHIRE

Meeting Executive
Portfolio Area Planning and Regulation
Date 5 September 2018



COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL)

KEY DECISION

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide Members' with an overview of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and the evidence that forms the basis for it.
- 1.2 To seek Members' approval for two rounds of consultation on the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule (PDCS) and subsequently the Draft Charging Schedule (DCS), with delegated powers to the AD: Planning and Regulation, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder: Environment and Regeneration, to make any necessary changes to take into account feedback received.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the updated evidence base for CIL be noted.
- 2.2 That the draft Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule (attached as Appendix 1) be approved.
- 2.3 That public consultation on the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule for a period of six weeks commencing 12 September 2018 be approved.
- 2.4 That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director; Planning and Regulation, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration, to make such amendments as are necessary in the final preparation of the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule.

- 2.5 That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director; Planning and Regulation, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration, to consider consultation responses received in relation to the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule and make such amendments as are necessary to subsequently prepare the Draft Charging Schedule.
- 2.6 That public consultation on the Draft Charging Schedule for a period of four weeks commencing 16 November 2018 be approved.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a planning charge introduced by the Planning Act 2008, as a tool for local authorities to help deliver infrastructure to support the development of their area. It allows local authorities to raise funds from developers undertaking new building projects. The money can be used to fund a wide range of infrastructure, such as transport schemes, schools, community facilities, parks and leisure facilities, which are needed as a result of development taking place.
- 3.2 CIL is fairer, faster and more certain and transparent than the system of planning obligations (S106), which causes delay as a result of lengthy negotiations and is subject to viability. The benefit of CIL is that once it is collected it can be used to deliver any infrastructure that the Council wish – it is not ring-fenced for a specific scheme or type of project and is not subject to the pooling restrictions of S106.
- 3.3 S106 would still be used for site specific mitigation, particularly for the larger schemes i.e. where a whole school is required as part of a specific development (e.g. North Stevenage and West of Stevenage) or where road/cycleway improvements are required within or in close proximity to the development. S106 is only allowed for infrastructure that is directly related to the scheme and is required in order for the development to be acceptable.
- 3.4 The Executive originally resolved to prepare a CIL for Stevenage in September 2012. However, subsequent evidence-gathering led to the conclusion that, at the time, this would not represent the best approach for Stevenage. In May 2013, it was determined that the preparation of a CIL Charging Schedule for Stevenage Borough not be proceeded with during 2013 or 2014. It was agreed that maintaining the status quo – the use of s106 for all contributions - would be the best way forward. It was agreed that the position would be formally reviewed in 2015.
- 3.5 Following the 2013 decision, circumstances changed:
- The role of developer contributions continued to be subject to debate and evolution. The CIL Regulations were first introduced in 2010 and have been updated every year since. The government has made it clear that CIL, as a floorspace charge for infrastructure, is the preferred method of infrastructure funding.
 - The most pressing of the changes are the restrictions to s106 agreements that came into force in April 2015, widely known as the 'rule of 5'. This places significant restrictions on the number of s106 contributions that can be pooled together to fund any given project.

Since April 2015, a maximum of five s106 contributions secured since April 2010 can be pooled together. By contrast, CIL is not subject to any such restrictions.

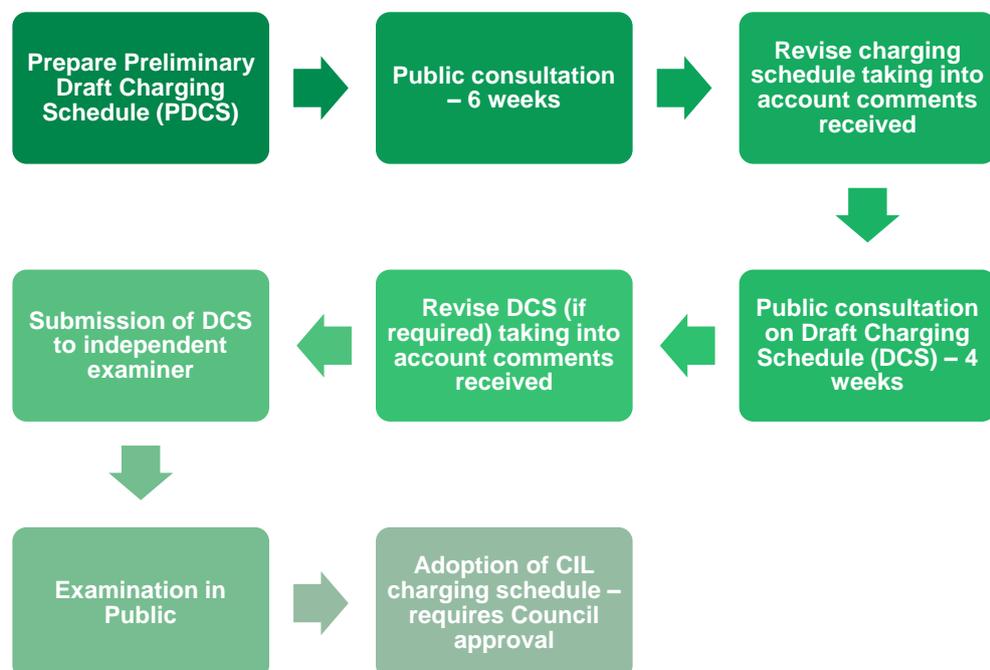
- In addition to this, the council commissioned further evidence to support the Local Plan, which identified that there were significant signs of recovery in the Borough housing market and, as such, both the prospective local plan policies and CIL could be supported in Stevenage.

3.6 Taking these changes in circumstances into account, it was resolved at Executive in Dec 2015, that a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for Stevenage be prepared with a Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule (PDCS) to be reported to the Executive in June 2016 (in line with the submission of the Local Plan).

3.7 The priority has been the Local Plan. However, having reviewed the market, it is considered that now is the time to progress with the implementation of CIL.

3.8 In preparation for this, an update to the Council's 2015 Viability Study was commissioned in December 2017. This takes into account the most up-to-date data to assess viability across the Borough and recommends the levels of CIL that could be charged (whilst not threatening the ability of sites to come forward).

3.9 The steps required to implement CIL are set out below. The PDCS has been drafted for approval. The next stage in the process is to carry out public consultation on the schedule.



4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

Recommendation 2.1: That the updated evidence base for CIL be noted.

- 4.1 It is essential that key decisions are made on an informed basis and in light of the relevant statutory framework(s) and facts.
- 4.2 It is important that rates proposed follow the evidence. The rates set must not threaten the ability to develop viably the sites and scale of development identified in the Local Plan.
- 4.3 Government guidance recommends that the evidence on infrastructure needs should be drawn directly from the infrastructure planning that underpins the Development Plan. The following documents, which were produced to support and inform the Local Plan, provided the evidence base to demonstrate that CIL is viable in principle:
- Stevenage Borough Infrastructure Funding Strategy, Aecom, September 2015
 - Infrastructure Delivery Plan, SBC (rolling document)
 - Whole Plan Viability Study including Community Infrastructure Levy, HDH Planning, September 2015
- 4.4 It was on this basis that Executive approved the preparation of CIL in 2015.
- 4.5 An update to the Whole Plan Viability Study was commissioned in December 2017. This identified improvements in viability across the town, in part due to redevelopments in town centre. The evidence shows house prices have increased by 20% on average, but that new build flats in the town centre have increased significantly more. It increased the recommended levy rates from £0/m² in town centre to £40/m² and the housing rates elsewhere from £40/m² to £100/m². Officers are comfortable that these rates can be justified at Examination using this evidence base.
- 4.6 Charging authorities are also required to demonstrate a funding gap, to show that CIL is required to meet infrastructure needs. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) (last updated in March 2017) identifies the infrastructure required in order to support the delivery of the Local Plan. A Funding Gap Technical Paper (July 2018) has been produced in order to further examination the findings of the IDP and to more accurately assess the funding gap. The assessment excludes certain schemes, such as those that are desirable and not essential/critical, those that are required to meet existing needs and are not as a result of Local Plan growth, and those for which costs are unknown etc. The paper identifies a funding gap of around £89 million (see Appendix 1 of the technical paper for further details on how this has been calculated).
- 4.7 The IDP is a rolling document, so this reflects the situation at a particular point in time. The Council will continue to proactively bid for external funding opportunities and other ways to fill the funding gap, in addition to CIL income.

Table 1: Infrastructure funding gap

| Infrastructure type | Costs (in millions) | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| | Total | Other sources of funding | Funding gap |
| Mobility | £124.8 | £109.3 | £15.5 |
| Education | £62.4 | £28.0 | £34.4 |
| Healthcare | £34.2 | £0.0 | £34.2 |
| Green Infrastructure | £1.6 | £0.0 | £1.6 |
| Community/leisure | £6.7 | £3.0 | £3.7 |
| | £229.7 | £140.3 | £89.4 |

- 4.8 Members are requested to formally note the evidence used to inform the PDCS and particularly the CIL rates proposed within it.

Recommendation 2.2: That the draft Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule (attached as Appendix 1) be approved

- 4.9 Authorities wishing to implement CIL must produce a charging schedule setting out the levy rates for their area(s). The PDCS firstly sets out who is liable to pay CIL. 'Chargeable development' is defined as:
- All new buildings, but excluding those into which people do not usually, or only occasionally, go (e.g. only to inspect machinery or structures such as electricity pylons or substations)
 - Developments of 100m² or more (additional gross internal floorspace)
 - The creation of one or more additional dwellings (even if the gross internal floorspace is less than 100m²)
 - Some developments not requiring planning permission (permitted development) will also be liable for CIL if they do not fall into the exemption criteria.
- 4.10 CIL is not charged on affordable housing, buildings used for charitable purposes, and self-build housing.
- 4.11 The PDCS then goes on to summarise the evidence base used to inform the schedule (as explained further in para's 4.2 to 4.6).
- 4.12 The key piece of evidence being the update to the viability study, which assesses the viability of different types of developments based on current market values and costs, and recommends the CIL rates officers are proposing, as follows:

Table 2: Proposed CIL levy rates

| Development type | CIL rate | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| | Zone1: Stevenage Central | Zone 2: Everywhere else |
| Residential Market housing | £40/m ² | £100/m ² |
| Sheltered Housing | | £100/m ² |
| Extracare housing | | £40/m ² |
| Retail Development | | £60/m ² |
| All Other Development | | £0/m ² |

- 4.13 As explained in para 4.5, updated evidence has allowed officers to increase the proposed residential CIL rates to £40/m² within Stevenage Central and £100/m² elsewhere. The viability evidence is clear that there is no scope to introduce CIL for employment uses at this point in time. This recognises that much of the employment development coming forward in the Borough is ‘user led’ being brought forward by businesses that will use the eventual space for operational uses, rather than for investment purposes. It is clear that employment development is challenging in the current market, but it is improving.
- 4.14 It is important to note that the Council’s CIL income will not be sufficient to fund all infrastructure needed to support the plan. Initial calculation estimates show CIL will bring in around £1.4m per year, so around £18m for the remaining plan period, and will not be at a level to fund the gap of £89m identified (see para 4.6). The Council will still be reliant on external funding to support growth.
- 4.15 It would be a risk to push rates above those which the evidence shows to be viable. There is a need to get the right balance between encouraging housing delivery and regeneration, but also ensuring the Council can provide the infrastructure needed to support this growth.
- 4.16 Officers have compared our proposed rates to those, either consulted upon or adopted, for the rest of Hertfordshire. Whilst the proposed levy rates for residential floorspace are slightly lower than the Hertfordshire average, this does include some areas where the market is better across the authority as a whole (such as St Albans), which pushes up the figures significantly, so this is not unexpected. The CIL rates can be reviewed if viability improves in the future, which is likely, particularly for the town centre.

Table 3: Comparison with other Herts authorities

| Authority | Draft / Adopted? | Date | Residential CIL rates (£/m ²) | | Retail CIL rates (£/m ²) | |
|---|------------------|--------|---|-----------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| | | | Lower Value area | All other areas | floorspace ≥ 280sqm | floorspace < 280sqm |
| Stevenage | n/a | n/a | £40 | £100 | £60 | |
| Broxbourne | n/a | n/a | | | | |
| Dacorum | Adopted | Feb-15 | £0-£100 | £150-£250 | £150 | £0 |
| East Herts | Draft | Sep-15 | £40-£50 | £100-£200 | £80 | |
| Hertsmere | Adopted | Sep-14 | £120 | £180 | £80 | |
| North Herts | Draft | Feb-13 | £80 | £120 | £120 | £60 |
| St Albans | Draft | Feb-14 | £170 | | £125 | |
| Three Rivers | Adopted | Feb-15 | £120 | £180 | £60 | £0 |
| Watford | Adopted | Apr-15 | £120 | | £120 | £55 |
| Welwyn Hatfield | Draft | May-17 | £50-£100 | £230 | £85 | £0 |
| Average across other Herts authorities | | | £97.50 | £168.75 | £89 | £50 |

- 4.17 CIL will provide the Council with an increase in developer contributions, as well as the increased flexibility in spending the money. For a development of two houses outside of the town centre, for example, the Council would charge a CIL contribution of around £17,000 (based on average size property of 85m²). This would be non-negotiable. In general terms, for a site of this size, the Council would not get any S106 contributions at present.
- 4.18 The costs of administering CIL will be funded directly from the levy (up to 5% of total receipts is permitted for this use). A further 15% of CIL is required to be passed to the parish/town council within which the development will take place – as SBC do not have Parishes, the requirement is to consult with the community within the local area on how they wish to see this money spent. The Government has signalled intent to move away from using the council tax base as the way of calculating New Homes Bonus (NHB), and to use the new Housing Delivery Test (HDT) set out in the National Planning Policy Framework instead. This could result in lower NHB income. Local CIL monies could be used to provide alternative funding for the CNM programme. Arrangements for exactly how this might work will require further consideration.
- 4.19 The governance arrangements for spending the remaining CIL money will also require further discussion at a later stage, but it is common for a Member-led Committee to be established, to consider schemes submitted by relevant officers. Decisions on spending should be guided by existing SBC strategies, i.e. the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and our Green Travel Plan, and those of our partners i.e. HCC's Local Transport Plan. But ultimately the responsibility is with SBC to determine how the money is spent.

- 4.20 Further discussions will also be required internally to discuss the processes for administering CIL.
- 4.21 It is proposed that recommendations on these issues are brought to Executive when approval is sought to submit CIL for Examination.

Recommendation 2.3: That public consultation on the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule for a period of six weeks commencing 12 September 2018 be approved.

Recommendation 2.4: That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director; Planning and Regulation, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration, to make such amendments as are necessary in the final preparation of the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule.

- 4.22 Levy rates must be set in consultation with local communities and developers.
- 4.23 It is recommended that public consultation commence on 12 September 2018, for a period of 6 weeks. The consultation would close on 24 October 2018.
- 4.24 The consultation will be publicised by a range of measures. This will include:
- Placing the PDCS and supporting documents on the Council's web-site for the duration of the consultation;
 - Notifying everyone on the local plan consultation database by e-mail or letter;
 - Making hard copies of the PDCS available at the Customer Service Centre and at the town's two libraries;
 - Use of social media, such as the Council's Facebook and Twitter feeds;
- 4.25 The draft PDCS is appended to this report. However, it may be necessary to make minor changes to it during its final preparation. This might incorporate cosmetic adjustments, the correction of any typographical errors and any minor factual changes.
- 4.26 It is recommended that any such amendments be approved via delegated powers.

Recommendation 2.5: That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director; Planning and Regulation, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration, to consider consultation responses received in relation to the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule and make such amendments as are necessary to subsequently prepare the Draft Charging Schedule.

Recommendation 2.6: That public consultation on the Draft Charging Schedule for a period of four weeks commencing 16 November 2018 be approved.

- 4.27 Once the PDCS consultation has been undertaken, the next step is for a Draft Charging Schedule (DCS) to be prepared. This should take into account any comments received.
- 4.28 It is proposed that any responses received in response to the PDCS consultation, be collated and considered by officers in the first instance.
- 4.29 Due to the fact that the charging schedule is a relatively short document and is based entirely on a robust evidence base, and taking into account the experience of other authorities, officers are not expecting huge numbers of responses to the consultation.
- 4.30 As such, it is proposed that the responses are reported to the Assistant Director; Planning and Regulation and the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration, with recommendations on how (if) the charging schedule should be revised to take these comments into account. It is recommended that any such amendments be approved via delegated powers.
- 4.31 It is recommended that public consultation on the DCS commences 16 November 2018, for a period of 4 weeks. The consultation would close on 14 December 2018. The public consultation will be publicised in line with the proposed methods outlined in para 4.23 of this report.
- 4.32 Following this consultation, a report will come back to Executive (scheduled for early 2019) to request approval to submit the final charging schedule to an examiner. The charging schedule must then be examined in public by an independent person appointed by the charging authority.
- 4.33 The decision to adopt CIL will need to be taken at Council following receipt of the Examiner's report. This is likely to be around spring 2019.
- 4.34 CIL will be payable on all eligible development approved following its adoption, so is likely to affect any planning applications submitted from early 2019 onwards.

5 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 5.1 The costs of implementing CIL will be met from the 5% CIL income the Council is allowed to keep for administration purposes in the long term (this

includes the costs of Examination). In the meantime, it is being funded through the agreed departmental budget of the Planning Policy Team.

- 5.2 There will be a requirement to consider how CIL is administrated internally and the governance around how it is to be spent. It is proposed that discussions are held internally and recommendations are brought to Executive when approval is sought to submit CIL for Examination.
- 5.3 Financial implications for the Council as landowner are examined further under 'Other Corporate Implications', paragraphs 5.13 - 5.15.

Legal Implications

- 5.4 The preparation of Community Infrastructure Levy is given effect by the 2008 Planning Act.
- 5.5 Detailed statutory requirements for the preparation of CIL, including consultation requirements, are set out in The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended).

Risk Implications

- 5.6 There are no significant risks associated with carrying out consultation on CIL.
- 5.7 Risks may arise at the next stage, when Executive is asked to approve the submission of the final charging schedule – this will require Examination by an independent inspector. The risks are minimised by proposing CIL rates that align with the viability evidence used to inform the Local Plan (and any subsequent updates).

Policy Implications

- 5.8 Consider whether there are any Policy implications - if none, delete this heading and paragraph

Planning Implications

- 5.9 Once CIL is adopted, it will constitute a new council policy.

Environmental Implications

- 5.10 CIL has the potential to have a positive impact on the environment, as monies can be used towards improving/maintaining/new environmental infrastructure.

Staffing and Accommodation Implications

- 5.11 The Planning Policy Team currently consists of two full-time professional staff, with one vacancy currently being filled via an agency contract. This is sufficient to implement CIL.
- 5.12 Consideration will need to be given as to whether resources within the existing Planning Policy, Development Management Team and Technical Support are sufficient to manage CIL, once adopted. If additional resource is

required, this can be funded through the 5% of CIL monies local authorities are allowed to keep to administer CIL.

Other Corporate Implications

- 5.13 CIL will be payable for all qualifying development, therefore, it has the potential to impact on council-owned land, in terms of being a consideration in sales negotiations and in being levied when developing the Council's own schemes. This includes smaller residential sites (10 or less dwellings), which were previously exempt from making developer contributions (S106). This is an additional cost and has the potential to depress land values for the council's small sites. This is the same for larger sites, and there is a risk that developers will try to use this additional expense to negotiate down land values.
- 5.14 However, the viability evidence undertaken to inform the CIL charging rates, shows that the levy being proposed will be viable for both small and large-scale development. It will be under 3% of GDV on all sites, so very marginal overall. This takes into account land values at an appropriate market rate.
- 5.15 CIL will be payable on all development approved following its adoption, so is likely to affect any planning applications submitted from early 2019 onwards. This may include SG1, if a planning application has not been approved. The levy rates in the central area are much lower than elsewhere to take into account the fact that margins are tighter here.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- BD1 [Executive Report, 11 Sept 2012](#)
- BD2 [Executive Report, 15 Dec 2015](#)
- BD3 [Stevenage Borough Infrastructure Funding Strategy, Aecom, September 2015](#)
- BD4 [Whole Plan Viability Study including Community Infrastructure Levy, HDH Planning, September 2015](#)
- BD5 [Infrastructure Delivery Plan, SBC \(most recent version, March 2017\)](#)
- BD6 [Viability Update, December 2017](#)
- BD7 [Infrastructure Funding Gap – technical paper, July 2018](#)

APPENDICES

- A [Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule \(PDCS\), July 2018](#)

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Meeting EXECUTIVE
Portfolio Area ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION
Date 30 April 2019



STEVENAGE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN: PRE-ADOPTION DRAFT

KEY DECISION

Authors Caroline Danby | 2823

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide an update on progress since the Holding Direction was originally placed on the Stevenage Borough Local Plan (SBLP).
- 1.2 To inform Members of the key outcomes of the Main Modifications consultation.
- 1.3 To inform Members of the content of the Inspector's Report and to report any further changes recommended by the Inspector (over and above the Main Modifications proposed).
- 1.4 To consider initial proposals for recommendation to Council on the adoption of the Local Plan, incorporating main and minor modifications, for consultation with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework rules in the Council's Constitution.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the outcomes of the Main Modifications (and associated Sustainability Appraisal) consultation be noted (responses summary attached as Appendix A).
- 2.2 That the content of the Inspector's Report be noted (attached as Appendix B).
- 2.3 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be informed that the Executive's initial proposal is to recommend to Council to accept the Inspector's recommendation to adopt the Stevenage Borough Local Plan, incorporating main and minor modifications (attached as Appendix C), and associated Proposals Map, and also to revoke the District Plan Second Review 2004 (BD1).

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In September 2012, the Executive authorised the preparation of a new local plan for Stevenage: the Stevenage Borough Local Plan (SBLP).
- 3.2 The new Plan will set out a spatial vision for the town to 2031 and contain detailed land-use policies for the Borough. Once adopted, it will supersede the existing District Plan Second Review (adopted 2004) as the statutory local plan for the Borough and will be used to determine applications for planning permission.
- 3.3 The preparation of local plans is subject to an extensive legal framework, as set out in relevant acts and regulations and interpreted through case law. This is supplemented by national planning policies and guidance which set out the clear principles and expectations of the planning system.
- 3.4 The Council carried out public consultations on the draft Local Plan and its accompanying Sustainability Appraisal, in June 2013, June 2015 and January 2016. The Stevenage Borough Local Plan (BD2) was submitted to the Secretary of State on 21 July 2016, which started the Public Examination process. A series of hearing sessions were held between January and March 2017, during which the Inspector heard evidence from the Local Planning Authority and relevant representors on particular issues and points she felt were fundamental to the soundness of the plan.
- 3.5 In response to issues raised by the Planning Inspector, the Council drafted a series of Main Modifications to the Plan, which were considered necessary to make the plan sound. These Main Modifications (BD3) and accompanying Sustainability Appraisal (BD4) were considered by the Executive in May 2017 and approved for public consultation. A number of minor modifications and changes to the Policies Map (BD5 & 6) were also proposed, but these were not subject to public consultation, being corrections or immaterial changes.
- 3.6 Representations made in response to the consultation were then collated and summarised by officers and passed to the Planning Inspector for her consideration when drafting her report into the Local Plan.

- 3.7 The Inspector's Report was received by the Borough Council on 18 October 2017. The Inspector's overall conclusion and recommendation is cited as follows:
- "I conclude that with the recommended main modifications set out in the Appendix the SBLP satisfies the requirements of Section 20(5) of the 2004 Act and meets the criteria for soundness in the National Planning Policy Framework."*
- 3.8 In accordance with the Council's Budget and Policy Framework rules, the process leading to adoption of the Local Plan began in November 2017, with Executive considering the draft Local Plan at its meeting on 7 November 2017. At that meeting, Executive resolved *"that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be informed that the Executive's initial proposal is to recommend to Council to accept the Inspector's recommendation to adopt the Stevenage Borough Local Plan, incorporating main and minor modifications (attached as Appendix C), and associated Proposals Map, and also to revoke the District Plan Second Review 2004 (BD1)"*.
- 3.9 The matter was due to be considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 13 November 2017, but before it could do so, the Secretary of State issued a temporary Holding Direction to prevent the Council from adopting the Plan, so that he could consider representations from the local MP largely relating to town centre regeneration and green belt issues.
- 3.10 Officers worked closely with MHCLG officials, providing detailed information and answering all of the questions raised by the end of January 2018. Council Officers continued to liaise with MHCLG to request that the Holding Direction be lifted, given the extensive time taken for a decision to be reached. In September 2018 the Council opted to issue a pre-action protocol letter to MHCLG to seek a decision on the Plan. In response MHCLG indicated a decision would be taken by 13 November 2018. Contact was maintained up to and beyond that date to seek a decision.
- 3.11 At the end of January 2019, with no other routes available to resolve the matter at that time, the Council opted to launch Judicial Review proceedings to address the delay and obtain a clear response from Government into the temporary Holding Direction on the Local Plan. The Council maintained it would keep all options open for a positive and constructive resolution.
- 3.12 The Holding Direction was lifted on 25 March 2019 by the Secretary of State, providing a resolution to the issue. The letter from the Secretary of State (Appendix D) withdraws the direction on the understanding that the Council commit to the following actions:
- Update the LDS (to be adopted before or at the same time as the Local Plan is adopted) to include the preparation of an Area Action Plan (AAP) for the Stevenage 'Station Gateway' area (Site TC4 in the Local Plan). The AAP should be timetabled for adoption in December 2020 or sooner.**
- Provide monthly updates to MHCLG on preparation of the Area Action Plan**

The Council was minded to undertake more detailed work on this area in any case, to ensure its aspirations for the railway station and the surrounding area are delivered to their full potential. An Area Action Plan has been scheduled for production, as set out in the LDS Executive Report (elsewhere on this agenda). The Council will provide monthly updates as requested.

Publish for public consultation a Master Plan for the regeneration of the Stevenage Town Centre sites identified in the Local Plan as TC5 and TC2.

MACE will be producing a Master Plan for the regeneration of sites TC2 and TC5 as part of their planning application for the wider town centre regeneration. This is entirely consistent with the Council’s approach to complex planning matters, as Local Plan policy SP8 requires all significant developments to be masterplanned.

Designate a lead Councillor and lead official to be responsible for progressing the preparation and implementation of the Area Action Plan, and for the implementation of the Local Plan itself.

These would automatically be overseen by Councillor John Gardner, as Portfolio-holder for Planning and Regeneration and the Assistant Director for Planning and Regulation (presently Chris Berry covering this role as Interim AD for this service area) as standard council practice for the preparation and implementation of local Development Plan Documents.

Remove references in the Local Plan to a new train station before adoption.

Two Main Modifications (referenced as MM7 & MM23 in the Main Modifications schedule, attached as BD3) were proposed and approved by the Planning Inspector as part of the Examination process. Whilst they did not go to matters of soundness, these amendments (to Policies SP4 and TC4) were welcomed by the Council to provide clarity in terms of how the station is referred to, and to clarify that the Plan encourages and supports an ‘extended and regenerated train station’ rather than proposing a ‘new’ station.

- 3.13 Following discussions with MHCLG, two further references where the word ‘new’ should be replaced or deleted have been identified, as follows:

| Para/Section of Local Plan (reference relates to submission version) | Existing text | Proposed minor modification |
|--|--|--|
| Para 5.33 | ...with a new train station at its heart... | Replace the word ‘new’ with the word ‘regenerated’ |
| Mobility Strategy (added as Appendix B to the Plan). | ...The Local Plan identifies (Policy TC4 iv) a proposal for a radically improved new Stevenage railway station.... | Deletion of ‘new’ |

- 3.14 These are Minor Modifications that do not affect the soundness of the Plan and do not require public consultation. These changes are directly in line with those already proposed.
- 3.15 There are no other changes or updates to the draft Local Plan as a result of the Holding Direction or its release.
- 3.16 Now the Holding Direction has been withdrawn, this Report seeks to initiate the Local Plan adoption process once again.
- 3.17 In accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework rules in the Council’s Constitution, the Executive’s initial proposals are to be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consultation. At the end of the consultation period a further report will be brought to Executive informing it of Overview and Scrutiny Committee’s responses to the consultation and recommending firm proposals to be submitted to Council. The timetable is proposed as follows:

| Date | Meeting | Report |
|----------|---------------------------------|---|
| 30 April | Executive | Draft proposals |
| 30 April | Overview and Scrutiny Committee | Draft proposals |
| 14 May | Executive | Finalised proposals (taking into account feedback from Overview and Scrutiny) |
| 16 May | Overview and Scrutiny Committee | Finalised proposals |
| 22 May | Council | Adoption of the Plan |

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

Recommendation 2.1:
 That the outcomes of the Main Modifications (and associated Sustainability Appraisal) consultation be noted (Appendix A).

- 4.1 Consultation on the Main Modifications, and associated Sustainability Appraisal (“SA”), was held between 12 June 2017 and 24 July 2017.
- 4.2 A total of 56 representations were received to the Main Modifications, from 15 representors. A further 4 representations were made against the SA.
- 4.3 Responses were received from:
 - **Organisations:** Sport England, Friends of Forster Country, Graveley Parish Council, London Luton Airport, Transport for London, East and

North Herts NHS Trust, North Hertfordshire District Council, Historic England, and Environment Agency.

- **Landowners/developers:** Taylor Wimpey/Persimmon (Stevenage West), RPF developments and Bragbury End Sports Ltd. (South East Stevenage), Wyvale Garden Centres Ltd., and Hertfordshire County Council (as landowner of allocated housing site).

- **Four individuals**

4.4 Of these representations, 18 offered clear support for a Modification, 19 representations were objecting to a Modification, and the remaining 23 representations were either general comments, or did not provide a clear overall view either way.

4.5 The key responses raised have been summarised below. A full summary of responses can be found in Appendix A and the full responses can be viewed via our consultation portal (BD5):

- General support and support for specific modifications.
- Objections to modifications relating to modal shift – people will still use cars. Traffic impacts will be significant. Removing funding/capacity for roads and reallocating to sustainable transport modes is unacceptable.
- Objections to the wording relating to the requirement for a Masterplan at Stevenage West (from the prospective developers).
- Welcome the clarity provided, but modifications proposed still do not justify why affordable housing above the HO7 targets should be required if a scheme fails to meet other policy requirements.
- Modifications demonstrate that the Gypsy and Traveller site allocated is not deliverable.
- Modifications do not address the need for some market residential development being required on the hospital site to make a scheme for new staff accommodation viable.
- Modifications are contradicted by the intention to build on Forster Country.
- Further minor wording changes suggested to some of the modifications proposed.

4.6 At this stage, it is not for the Borough Council to respond to these objections. Instead, the Inspector has considered them in making her final report, and has recommended further changes to the modifications, as required.

4.7 Members are requested to formally note the outcome of the public consultation.

Recommendation 2.2:

That the content of the Inspector's Report be noted (Appendix B).

- 4.8 The Inspector's Report into the Local Plan was received by the Borough Council on 18 October 2017.
- 4.9 The report concludes that the Stevenage Borough Local Plan, as currently drafted (Publication version), does not comply with the tests of soundness. However, the Council formally requested that the Inspector recommend any Main Modifications necessary to make the Plan sound, as part of the Examination process.
- 4.10 The Inspector's report concludes that with the Main Modifications proposed (as contained in the Appendix to the Inspector's report (Appendix B of this report), the Stevenage Borough Local Plan can be considered sound, and is therefore recommended for adoption.
- 4.11 The Main Modifications (BD3) all concern matters that were discussed at the examination hearing sessions and were considered necessary to make the plan sound. The Main Modifications and accompanying Sustainability Appraisal (BD4) were considered by the Executive in May 2017 and approved for public consultation. The modifications were subject to public consultation in June/July 2017.
- 4.12 The Inspector's report confirms these modifications and sets out why they are deemed necessary to make the plan sound.
- 4.13 Beyond those modifications already consulted upon, the Inspector only recommends further amendments to the plan in terms of the detailed wording of five of these Main Modifications (in response to the consultation responses received).
- 4.14 These amendments relate to the following issues:
- MM52 – deletion of modification. The modification sought to mitigate against the loss of sports facilities at the former Pin Green School Playing Field. Due to the playing fields not being used for over 10 years and the fact that they would be surplus supply according to the Sports Strategy, mitigation would be unreasonable.
 - MM55 – minor wording change of modification relating to sports provision at Stevenage West, from 'demand' to 'need/insufficient need'.
 - MM71 – correction of a typographical error within the modification relating to Gypsy and Traveller Provision, to replace reference to 'Section 236' with 'Section 226'.

- MM28 and MM7 – insertion of the word ‘comparison’ in addition to the insertion of ‘convenience’ proposed within the modifications relating to retail provision, to provide further clarification.

4.15 Members are requested to formally note the content of the Inspector’s Report.

Recommendation 2.3:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be informed that the Executive's initial proposal is to recommend to Council to accept the Inspector’s recommendation to adopt the Stevenage Borough Local Plan, incorporating main and minor modifications (attached as Appendix C), and associated Proposals Map, and also to revoke the District Plan Second Review 2004 (BD1).

4.16 Upon receipt of the Inspector’s Report, the Council can either adopt the Stevenage Borough Local Plan, with the recommendations proposed, or it must withdraw the Plan completely.

4.17 The final draft version of the Local Plan, incorporating the main modifications recommended by the Inspector, as well as any minor modifications, is attached to this report at Appendix C.

4.18 Once adopted, the Local Plan will replace the existing 2004 District Plan.

5 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

5.1 The preparation of the Local Plan has been funded from within the approved General Fund budgets.

5.2 The delays caused by the Holding Direction had significant resource implications in terms of both legal costs and officer time. It is though likely we will receive a payment from MHCLG to cover some of our direct costs. However this will be a matter of negotiation and at the time of writing the report the final position was not known.

5.3 A legal challenge(s) to the Local Plan following its adoption would have financial implications for the Borough Council. These costs will be dependent upon the nature of the challenge(s).

- 5.4 If the remaining costs of adopting the Local Plan, or any subsequent legal challenges, exceed/are likely to exceed the funds available, an in year budget pressure will be reported as part of the quarterly monitoring process.
- 5.5 Adopting an up-to-date Local Plan will reduce the risk of costs associated with planning appeals and should provide a firm basis for seeking S106 contributions to fund key infrastructure projects.

Legal Implications

- 5.6 Preparation of a local plan is a statutory duty upon every Local Planning Authority. Local plans are prepared within the framework set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (“the Act”), as amended by the Localism Act 2011.
- 5.7 Once adopted, the Local Plan will become part of the statutory Development Plan. Section 38(6) of the Act requires planning decisions to be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.8 An assessment of the likely environmental effects of new local plans is statutorily required by European Directive 2001/42/EC, as translated into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.
- 5.9 The Act requires an appraisal of the sustainability of the plan. This incorporates social and economic impacts alongside environmental effects.
- 5.10 Section 39(2) of that Act imposes a positive duty on the Borough to contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development.
- 5.11 The implementation of these acts, directives and regulations has been tested through the courts. Regard has been had to relevant case law and the Inspector is satisfied that the relevant statutory requirements have been complied with.

Risk Implications

- 5.12 The potential risks to the Council in undertaking the preparation of a new local plan are monitored within the Planning Policy team on an on-going basis. Mitigation measures are identified to alleviate the risks.

Policy Implications

- 5.13 The statutory development plan for the Borough forms a part of the Borough Council’s overarching policy framework. It has potentially wide-ranging policy implications beyond the field of spatial planning.
- 5.14 There will be a need for positive interaction between the Plan, and other plans and strategies of the Borough Council (and other stakeholders) to ensure that a consistent and holistic approach is adopted.

Planning Implications

- 5.15 Once adopted, the new Stevenage Borough Local Plan will replace the Stevenage District Plan Second Review (SDP2R), adopted in 2004 and as

saved with amendments in 2007. The new Stevenage Borough Local Plan will form a part of the statutory development plan for the Borough from its adoption, although it is already being used as a material consideration in the determination of applications.

- 5.16 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.17 By taking these steps, planning decisions will be informed by policies that are up-to-date, relevant and in line with national policy and guidance.

Environmental Implications

- 5.18 There will, inevitably, be considerable environmental implications from the development of a new local plan. These are assessed in the Sustainability Appraisal (BD4), statutorily required by European Directive 2001/42/EC, as translated into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, and the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act.
- 5.19 Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora requires local planning authorities to decide if their plans will affect any protected European Sites. The requirements have been translated into English law by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. The Appropriate Assessment Screening Opinion fulfils these requirements.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 5.20 An Equality Impact Assessment of the Planning Policy service has previously been carried out. It identified that the unit's responsibilities and methods would not discriminate against people on grounds of age; disability; gender; ethnicity; sexual orientation; religion/belief; or by way of financial exclusion.
- 5.21 A further EQIA of the plan has been completed (Background document to this report – BD7).

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- BD1 [District Plan Second Review 2004](#)
- BD2 [Stevenage Borough Local Plan - Publication draft](#)
- BD3 [Schedule of Main Modifications \(as consulted upon\)](#)
- BD4 [Sustainability Appraisal](#)
- BD5 [Schedule of minor modifications](#)
- BD6 [Schedule of modifications to the Proposals and Inset Maps](#)
- BD7 [EqIA of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan](#)

APPENDICES

- A Main Modifications consultation response summary
- B Inspector's Report
- C Stevenage Borough Local Plan – incorporating major and minor modifications
- D Letter from the Secretary of State, March 2019

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| Consultee | | | | | Agent | | | | | ID | Number | Support? | Summary of response |
|-----------|-----------|------------|-------------|--------------------------------------|-----------|-------|------------|-------------|-------------------------|----|-----------------|----------|--|
| Person ID | Title | Given Name | Family Name | Company / Organisation | Person ID | Title | Given Name | Family Name | Company / Organisation | | | | |
| 1029889 | Mr | Thomas | Southgate | Terence O'Rourke Ltd | | | | | | 18 | General comment | | Support references the new development should conform with advice on airport noise. Support HO2. Support minor |
| 763085 | Mr | Richard | Carr | Transport for London | | | | | | 23 | General comment | | No comments made |
| 922051 | Eur Ing | John | Spiers | Friends of Forster Country | | | | | | 10 | Table MM2 | No | Modification is contradicted by intention to build on Forster Country (HO3). |
| 903161 | | Historic | England | | | | | | | 45 | Table MM2 | | Amendment noted |
| 405069 | Mr | Nigel | Smith | North Hertfordshire District Council | | | | | | 56 | Table MM4 | Yes | Welcome modification, which reflects the MoU. |
| 769036 | | | | Wyvale Garden Centres Ltd | 769040 | | Jo | Male | Gregory Gray Associates | 19 | Table MM7 | | Suggest insertion of words ' <i>convenience goods floorspace</i> ' in respect of the net floorspace figure to avoid any future misunderstandings. |
| 405069 | Mr | Nigel | Smith | North Hertfordshire District Council | | | | | | 37 | Table MM11 | | SBC should satisfy themselves that the proposed changes will deliver an appropriate housing mix. A reference to explain boosting the supply of smaller units could free up larger stock would be useful. |
| 405069 | Mr | Nigel | Smith | North Hertfordshire District Council | | | | | | 38 | Table MM12 | | SBC should satisfy themselves that the proposed changes will deliver an appropriate housing mix. A reference to explain boosting the supply of smaller units could free up larger stock would be useful. |
| 405069 | Mr | Nigel | Smith | North Hertfordshire District Council | | | | | | 40 | Table MM17 | | NHDC supports the development of GSK, but seek clarification as to whether the additional capacity referenced impacts upon the agreement with NHDC to provide employment land for Stevenage. |
| 903161 | A.N.Other | Historic | England | | | | | | | 46 | Table MM17 | | Due to additional capacity, supporting text should be included that highlights opportunities for improved design and layout, to improve views out from the Knebworth grade II* registered park and garden. |
| 903161 | A.N.Other | Historic | England | | | | | | | 47 | Table MM19 | Yes | Welcome modification |
| 903161 | A.N.Other | Historic | England | | | | | | | 48 | Table MM20 | Yes | Welcome modification |
| 903161 | A.N.Other | Historic | England | | | | | | | 49 | Table MM23 | Yes | Welcome modification |
| 903161 | A.N.Other | Historic | England | | | | | | | 50 | Table MM25 | Yes | Welcome modification |
| 903161 | A.N.Other | Historic | England | | | | | | | 51 | Table MM27 | Yes | Welcome modification |
| 769036 | | | | Wyvale Garden Centres Ltd | 769040 | | Jo | Male | Gregory Gray Associates | 20 | Table MM28 | | Suggest insertion of words ' <i>convenience goods floorspace</i> ' in respect of the net floorspace figure to avoid any future misunderstandings. |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------|-----|---------|---------|--------------------------------------|--------|----|--------|-------|-------------------------|----|------------|-----|---|
| 769036 | | | | Wyvale Garden Centres Ltd | 769040 | | Jo | Male | Gregory Gray Associates | 21 | Table MM29 | Yes | Welcome modification |
| 769036 | | | | Wyvale Garden Centres Ltd | 769040 | | Jo | Male | Gregory Gray Associates | 22 | Table MM30 | Yes | Welcome modification |
| 1048303 | MR | Michael | Sweeney | | | | | | | 6 | Table MM41 | No | People want to use cars. Removing funding/capacity for roads and reallocating to sustainable transport modes is unacceptable. |
| 405069 | Mr | Nigel | Smith | North Hertfordshire District Council | | | | | | 41 | Table MM41 | | NHDC broadly supportive of mobility strategy (particularly in relation to school journeys) and welcome modifications. However, some observations made: Complex patterns of movement between towns and villages mean sustainable solutions may not always be possible; NHDC should be consulted on any new Parking SPD. |
| 405069 | Mr | Nigel | Smith | North Hertfordshire District Council | | | | | | 42 | Table MM48 | | NHDC broadly supportive of mobility strategy (particularly in relation to school journeys) and welcome modifications. However, some observations made: Complex patterns of movement between towns and villages mean sustainable solutions may not always be possible; NHDC should be consulted on any new Parking SPD. |
| 405069 | Mr | Nigel | Smith | North Hertfordshire District Council | | | | | | 43 | Table MM49 | | NHDC broadly supportive of mobility strategy (particularly in relation to school journeys) and welcome modifications. However, some observations made: Complex patterns of movement between towns and villages mean sustainable solutions may not always be possible; NHDC should be consulted on any new Parking SPD. |
| 773057 | | | | RPF Developments | 983513 | Mr | Stuart | Mills | Iceni Projects Limited | 25 | Table MM50 | Yes | Support deletion of text |
| 976805 | | | | Bragbury End Sports LLP | | | | | | 30 | Table MM51 | Yes | Support proposed deletion of text. |
| 768523 | Mr | Roy | Warren | Sport England | | | | | | 1 | Table MM52 | Yes | Proposed amendment positively reflects consultation response made by Sport England. Will help to ensure qualitative deficiencies are addressed. |
| 1104865 | Mrs | Ailsa | Davis | Hertfordshire County Council | | | | | | 5 | Table MM52 | No | Playing field not used since 2005. Not an existing sports facility. Disposal would not require consent under the Schools Standards and Frameworks Act or the Academies Act as it has been closed for over 10 years. Sport England would not be a statutory consultee. No evidence to suggest loss of field should be mitigated. |
| 768523 | Mr | Roy | Warren | Sport England | | | | | | 2 | Table MM53 | Yes | Proposed amendment positively reflects consultation response made by Sport England. Ensures policy accords with Para. 74 of NPPF and Sport England's playing fields policy. |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------|-----------|-----------|---------|---------------------------|--------|----|--------|-------|------------------------|----|------------|-----|--|
| 636284 | | | | Taylor Wimpey / Persimmon | 960704 | Ms | Alyson | Jones | Barton Wilmore | 54 | Table MM54 | | Support most of the modifications. However, the plan still does not provide clarity as to how a masterplan would be approved. Amend to make clear a masterplan should be approved prior to the 'determination' of detailed proposals. Provision of GP surgery should be on a 'commercial basis'. Additional proposed wording in ED175 at 9.21a-d should be included. |
| 768523 | Mr | Roy | Warren | Sport England | | | | | | 3 | Table MM55 | No | Wording of modification could be improved. Suggest replacement of 'demand' with 'need/insufficient need'. Specific bodies could usefully be referenced with whom pre-app discussions should be required. |
| 636284 | | | | Taylor Wimpey / Persimmon | 960704 | Ms | Alyson | Jones | Barton Wilmore | 55 | Table MM55 | Yes | Welcome modification |
| 636284 | | | | Taylor Wimpey / Persimmon | 960704 | Ms | Alyson | Jones | Barton Wilmore | 57 | Table MM56 | Yes | Welcome modification |
| 903161 | A.N.Other | Historic | England | | | | | | | 53 | Table MM57 | No | Areas outside of the conservation area would also be visible from the heritage assets. Wording should be amended to say ' <i>Building styles and layout visible from the designated heritage assets to the east.....</i> ' |
| 342302 | Mrs | Geraldine | Hackett | | | | | | | 24 | Table MM58 | | Concern around traffic exiting onto North Road from HO3 |
| 773057 | | | | RPF Developments | 983513 | Mr | Stuart | Mills | Iceni Projects Limited | 26 | Table MM60 | Yes | Support modifications. Welcome acknowledgement that GP surgery and sports facilities will be required specifically on southern part of the site. Strongly support deletion of part 'g'. |
| 773057 | | | | RPF Developments | 983513 | Mr | Stuart | Mills | Iceni Projects Limited | 27 | Table MM61 | | No objection to these modifications. |
| 773057 | | | | RPF Developments | 983513 | Mr | Stuart | Mills | Iceni Projects Limited | 28 | Table MM63 | | Welcome deletion of text in first sentence and clarification provided by additional paragraph at the end of the policy. Object to financial appraisal being required if scheme fails to meet 'other Local Plan policies'. No justification as to why affordable housing above the HO7 targets should be required if a scheme fails to meet other policy requirements. |
| 976805 | | | | Bragbury End Sports LLP | | | | | | 31 | Table MM63 | | Support additional text relating to affordable housing thresholds in line with National Policy. Welcome deletion of text in first sentence and clarification provided by additional paragraph at the end of the policy. Object to financial appraisal being required if scheme fails to meet 'other Local Plan policies'. No justification as to why affordable housing above the HO7 targets should be required if a scheme fails to meet other policy requirements. Unclear whether this would introduce requirement for schemes of 10 dwellings or fewer. |

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|---------|----|-------|-------|--------------------------------------|---------|----|--------|-------|-------------------------|----|------------|-----|--|
| 773057 | | | | RPF Developments | 983513 | Mr | Stuart | Mills | Iceni Projects Limited | 29 | Table MM64 | | Welcome amendment meaning financial appraisal is not always required. Object to financial appraisal being required if scheme fails to meet 'other Local Plan policies'. No justification as to why affordable housing above the HO7 targets should be required if a scheme fails to meet other policy requirements. |
| 976805 | | | | Bragbury End Sports LLP | | | | | | 32 | Table MM64 | | Welcome clarification that appraisals are only required if HO7 requirements are not met. Object to financial appraisal being required if scheme fails to meet 'other Local Plan policies'. No justification as to why affordable housing above the HO7 targets should be required if a scheme fails to meet other policy requirements. |
| 976805 | | | | Bragbury End Sports LLP | | | | | | 33 | Table MM65 | Yes | Support proposed amendments, which reflect national policy. |
| 405069 | Mr | Nigel | Smith | North Hertfordshire District Council | | | | | | 39 | Table MM66 | | SBC should satisfy themselves that the proposed changes will deliver an appropriate housing mix. A reference to explain boosting the supply of smaller units could free up larger stock would be useful. |
| 1105399 | Mr | Jack | Rigg | Graveley Parish Council | 1105398 | Mr | Jack | Rigg | Graveley Parish Council | 14 | Table MM71 | No | No CPO power under section 236 of the TCPA 1990. Assumed reference to s.236 should read s.226. Inclusion of this text is recognition that site is not deliverable. Landowner will not sell before 2022. Lack of delivery means policy is unsound. Evidence shows site is needed now. An undeliverable site, coupled with uncertain evidence, means exceptional circumstances are not met. Definition of G&T's is contrary to PPTS. Evidence uses the incorrect definition so is out-of-date and cannot be relied upon. |
| 1105399 | Mr | Jack | Rigg | Graveley Parish Council | 1105398 | Mr | Jack | Rigg | Graveley Parish Council | 15 | Table MM72 | No | No CPO power under section 236 of the TCPA 1990. Assumed reference to s.236 should read s.226. Inclusion of this text is recognition that site is not deliverable. Landowner will not sell before 2022. Lack of delivery means policy is unsound. Evidence shows site is needed now. An undeliverable site, coupled with uncertain evidence, means exceptional circumstances are not met. Definition of G&T's is contrary to PPTS. Evidence uses the incorrect definition so is out-of-date and cannot be relied upon. |

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| 1105399 | Mr | Jack | Rigg | Graveley Parish Council | 1105398 | Mr | Jack | Rigg | Graveley Parish Council | 16 | Table MM73 | No | No CPO power under section 236 of the TCPA 1990. Assumed reference to s.236 should read s.226. Inclusion of this text is recognition that site is not deliverable. Landowner will not sell before 2022. Lack of delivery means policy is unsound. Evidence shows site is needed now. An undeliverable site, coupled with uncertain evidence, means exceptional circumstances are not met. Definition of G&T's is contrary to PPTS. Evidence uses the incorrect definition so is out-of-date and cannot be relied upon. |
| 1105399 | Mr | Jack | Rigg | Graveley Parish Council | 1105398 | Mr | Jack | Rigg | Graveley Parish Council | 17 | Table MM74 | No | No CPO power under section 236 of the TCPA 1990. Assumed reference to s.236 should read s.226. Inclusion of this text is recognition that site is not deliverable. Landowner will not sell before 2022. Lack of delivery means policy is unsound. Evidence shows site is needed now. An undeliverable site, coupled with uncertain evidence, means exceptional circumstances are not met. Definition of G&T's is contrary to PPTS. Evidence uses the incorrect definition so is out-of-date and cannot be relied upon. |
| 1105399 | Mr | Jack | Rigg | Graveley Parish Council | 1105398 | Mr | Jack | Rigg | Graveley Parish Council | 12 | Table MM76 | No | Existing hospital site does not allow sufficient space for successful future operation as suggested. |
| 341380 | Mr | Paul | Foster | (East And North Herts NHS Trust) | 341337 | Mr | Paul | Foster | Barton Willmore LLP | 34 | Table MM76 | No | Modification provides some clarity but does not address the need for some market residential development being required to make a scheme for new staff accommodation viable. |
| 341380 | Mr | Paul | Foster | (East And North Herts NHS Trust) | 341337 | Mr | Paul | Foster | Barton Willmore LLP | 35 | Table MM77 | No | Addition of 'and an element of residential accommodation for non-staff' should be added to the end of the new text being inserted. |
| 1105399 | Mr | Jack | Rigg | Graveley Parish Council | 1105398 | Mr | Jack | Rigg | Graveley Parish Council | 11 | Table MM78 | No | Land allocated for new healthcare uses is not suitable. |
| 341380 | Mr | Paul | Foster | (East And North Herts NHS Trust) | 341337 | Mr | Paul | Foster | Barton Willmore LLP | 36 | Table MM78 | No | Do not agree this site provides a suitable opportunity for additional healthcare uses and the site is too small. Para 11.22 should be deleted. |
| 768523 | Mr | Roy | Warren | Sport England | | | | | | 4 | Table MM79 | Yes | Proposed amendment positively reflects consultation response made by Sport England. |
| 903161 | A.N.Other | Historic | England | | | | | | | 52 | Table MM85 | | Amendment noted |
| 1048303 | MR | Michael | Sweeney | | | | | | | 9 | Table MM87 | No | Response relates to MM88. Residents need to use their cars. Public transport is not 'well used'. Unacceptable to try and prevent people from using cars. |

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|---------|----|---------|---------|--------------------------------------|---------|----|------|------|-------------------------|----|------------|----|---|
| 405069 | Mr | Nigel | Smith | North Hertfordshire District Council | | | | | | 44 | Table MM87 | | NHDC broadly supportive of mobility strategy (particularly in relation to school journeys) and welcome modifications. However, some observations made: Complex patterns of movement between towns and villages mean sustainable solutions may not always be possible; NHDC should be consulted on any new Parking SPD. Need to ensure local housing needs are being met rather than facilitating migration from London. |
| 1048303 | MR | Michael | Sweeney | | | | | | | 8 | Table MM88 | No | No reasons provided |
| 1105399 | Mr | Jack | Rigg | Graveley Parish Council | 1105398 | Mr | Jack | Rigg | Graveley Parish Council | 13 | Table MM88 | No | Mobility Strategy does not take into account impact on existing road network or impact of NHDC's plan. Improving sustainable transport will not deal with reality of increasing congestion. A significant number of people will still need to commute outside of the Borough. This strategy may discourage businesses from locating here. Evidence used is not Stevenage specific. Object to use of traffic lights at North Road/B197 junction instead of new roundabout. Assumptions around reductions is traffic volumes take no account of travel to Stevenage from other areas. |



The Planning Inspectorate

Report to Stevenage Borough Council

by Louise Crosby MA MRTPI

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and
Local Government**

Date 18 October 2017

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended)
Section 20

Report on the Examination of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031

The Plan was submitted for examination on 21 July 2016

The examination hearings were held between 17 January and 31 March 2017

File Ref: PINS/K1935/429/6

Abbreviations used in this report

| | |
|-------|---|
| AA | Appropriate Assessment |
| DCLG | Department for Communities and Local Government |
| DtC | Duty to Co-operate |
| HMA | Housing Market Area |
| HRA | Habitats Regulations Assessment |
| IDP | Infrastructure Delivery Plan |
| LDS | Local Development Scheme |
| LP | Local Plan |
| MM | Main Modification |
| NPPF | National Planning Policy Framework |
| OAN | Objectively assessed need |
| PPG | Planning Practice Guidance |
| PPTS | Planning Policy for Traveller Sites |
| SA | Sustainability Appraisal |
| SCI | Statement of Community Involvement |
| SHLAA | Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment |
| SHMA | Strategic Housing Market Assessment |

Non-Technical Summary

This report concludes that the Stevenage Borough Local Plan provides an appropriate basis for the planning of the Borough provided that a number of main modifications [MMs] are made to it. Stevenage Borough Council has specifically requested me to recommend any MMs necessary to enable the Plan to be adopted.

The MMs all concern matters that were discussed at the examination hearings. Following the hearings, the Council prepared schedules of the proposed modifications and carried out sustainability appraisal of them. The MMs were subject to public consultation over a six-week period. In some cases I have amended their detailed wording. I have recommended their inclusion in the Plan after considering all the representations made in response to consultation on them.

The Main Modifications can be summarised as follows:

- Specific reference to the level of shortfall in employment land;
- Clarification that significant development proposals means 200 dwellings or more;
- A change in emphasis in relation to managing travel, including reducing the need to travel overall and increasing the proportion of journeys made by sustainable modes;
- Introduction of a new appendix entitled 'Mobility Strategy';
- Change in relation to the policy requiring the provision of self-build plots, in the event that they are not taken up;
- Remove reference to 'at least' 30% affordable housing;
- Changes in relation to a general traveller policy to ensure it complies with Planning Policy for Traveller Sites and changes to the traveller allocation to ensure that it is deliverable and not discriminatory.
- Various other changes to the Plan (including its appendices) to ensure that it is up to date, internally consistent, effective, justified and consistent with national planning policy.

Introduction

1. This report contains my assessment of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan (SBLP) in terms of Section 20(5) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). It considers first whether the Plan's preparation has complied with the duty to co-operate. It then considers whether the Plan is sound and whether it is compliant with the legal requirements. The National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 182) makes it clear that in order to be sound, a Local Plan should be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy.
2. The starting point for the examination is the assumption that the local planning authority has submitted what it considers to be a sound plan. The SBLP, submitted in July 2016 is the basis for my examination. It is the same document as was published for consultation in January 2016.

Main Modifications

3. In accordance with section 20(7C) of the 2004 Act the Council requested that I should recommend any main modifications [MMs] necessary to rectify matters that make the Plan unsound and /or not legally compliant and thus incapable of being adopted. My report explains why the recommended MMs, all of which relate to matters that were discussed at the examination hearings, are necessary. The MMs are referenced in bold in the report in the form **MM1**, **MM2**, **MM3** etc, and are set out in full in the Appendix.
4. Following the examination hearings, the Council prepared a schedule of proposed MMs and carried out sustainability appraisal of them. The MM schedule was subject to public consultation for six weeks. I have taken account of the consultation responses in coming to my conclusions in this report and in this light I have made some amendments to the detailed wording of the main modifications. None of the amendments significantly alter the content of the modifications as published for consultation or undermines the participatory processes and sustainability appraisal that has been undertaken. Where necessary I have highlighted these amendments in the report.

Policies Map

5. The Council must maintain an adopted policies map which illustrates geographically the application of the policies in the adopted development plan. When submitting a local plan for examination, the Council is required to provide a submission policies map showing the changes to the adopted policies map that would result from the proposals in the submitted local plan. In this case, the submission policies maps comprise the Stevenage Borough Local Plan Proposals Map 2011-2031 and Stevenage Central and Old Town Inset Maps.
6. The policies map is not defined in statute as a development plan document and so I do not have the power to recommend main modifications to it. However, a number of the published MMs to the Plan's policies require further corresponding changes to be made to the policies map.

7. These further changes to the policies map (ED183) were published for consultation alongside the MMs.
8. When the Plan is adopted, in order to comply with the legislation and give effect to the Plan's policies, the Council will need to update the adopted policies map to include all the changes proposed in Stevenage Borough Local Plan Policies and Inset Map modifications and the further changes published alongside the MMs.

Assessment of Duty to Co-operate

9. Section 20(5)(c) of the 2004 Act requires that I consider whether the Council complied with any duty imposed on it by section 33A in respect of the Plan's preparation.
10. The Council comments on this in its Duty to Co-operate Statement. This describes the activities that it has undertaken with other bodies in order to maximise the effectiveness of Plan preparation. This includes extensive work with North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) and Central Bedfordshire District Council (CBDC), particularly, including joint working to ensure Stevenage's employment needs are met in these districts.
11. The Council has identified, throughout the development of the SBLP, strategic planning priorities with their stakeholders and neighbouring authorities. Through meetings, discussions, memos of understanding and statements of common ground there has been co-operation throughout the plan-making process on these matters. These include: housing; gypsy and traveller accommodation provision; employment; Green Belt; retail; infrastructure and transport; community facilities; climate change, flooding and pollution; the natural environment; and the historic environment.
12. There are memos of understanding in relation to DtC with North Hertfordshire District Council and Central Bedfordshire District Council as well as Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and East Hertfordshire District Council. The Council has also prepared a joint Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) with NHDC. Joint work with neighbouring authorities has also been commissioned, including: the Functional Economic Market Area Study (SBC, NHDC, & CBDC); and Housing Market Areas in Bedfordshire and surrounding areas, (including Central Bedfordshire Council, Bedford Borough Council, Luton Borough Council, Milton Keynes Council, North Hertfordshire District Council, Stevenage Borough Council and Aylesbury Vale District Council).
13. Being a two-tier authority, the Council also works closely with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), particularly in their capacity as Local Highways Authority and Local Education Authority. Again their close collaborative working has been evident to me throughout the examination of the Plan.
14. No objections have been raised in respect of any failure to meet the Duty to Co-operate by any of the bodies prescribed in relevant legislation for the purposes of section 33A(1)(c) of the Act. Overall I am satisfied that where necessary the Council has engaged constructively, actively and on an on-going basis in the preparation of the Plan and that the duty to co-operate has therefore been met.

Assessment of Soundness

Main Issues

15. Based on discussions that took place at the examination hearings I have identified a number of main issues upon which the soundness of the Plan depends. Under these headings my report deals with the main matters of soundness and/or legal compliance rather than responding to every point raised by representors.

Issue 1 – Whether or not the identified objectively assessed need (OAN) for housing in the Borough and the overall distribution of housing is soundly based and whether the Plan makes appropriate provision to meet that need.

16. The objectively assessed need (OAN) for housing in the Plan area has been established through the Council's SHMA, including an update in 2015. The Plan states that the OAN for Stevenage is 7,300 homes over the Plan period (2011-2031).
17. Representors have raised a number of concerns about the OAN figure for housing. Those seeking to have the number reduced seek to argue that this figure should take account of constraints, such as the Green Belt. The NPPF and PPG set out an approach which firstly looks at the need and then whether there are constraints that might prevent that being met in full. The Council has gone through this further stage and I will return to that later in my report.

Housing market area

18. Stevenage is a town and a borough in Hertfordshire. It is situated between Letchworth Garden City to the north and Welwyn Garden City to the south. It is around 30 miles north of London. Stevenage has a high level of self-containment (76.9%). This is based on household movements and is taken from census data. The main destination for those moving out of Stevenage was North Hertfordshire, followed by Central Bedfordshire, Welwyn Hatfield and East Hertfordshire. Travel to work patterns also suggest a relatively high level of self-containment, with 59.7% of residents working within the local authority area.
19. Each authority has some overlap with other local housing markets; however I agree that there is strong evidence to support Stevenage and North Hertfordshire being considered to be a single market.

Starting point to establish housing need

20. The housing needs assessment that underpins the Plan is derived from the joint North Hertfordshire District Council and Stevenage Borough Council Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). The first volume of the SHMA, which was published in 2015, is concerned with overall housing need in the 2 local authority areas. This reviewed key outputs from previous SHMAs undertaken in the area. Volume 2 of the SHMA was published in 2016 and reviews other SHMA aspects, including the need for affordable housing and the housing needs of specific household groups.

21. In terms of the starting point for assessing the OAN for housing, the Council's SHMA uses the DCLG (Department for Communities and Local Government) household projections which is in line with the requirement of the PPG. The SHMA considered the 2008-based household projections as well as the 2011-based interim projections and the 2012-based projections. They establish a starting point estimate of overall housing need of around 21,835 dwellings for the two local authority areas combined, with 7,575 (approx. 380 per annum) in Stevenage over the Plan period (2011-2031) .
22. Account has also been taken of the ONS 2014 Sub National Population Projections (SNPP) and the DCLG 2014-based household projections which were released after the submission on the Plan. The Council's assessment indicates that these projections could result in a difference of an additional 300 dwellings over the Plan period, or around 15 per annum. This is only a very small percentage increase on the baseline projections. In my view the scale of difference is extremely limited, and in this context is not meaningful. As such, the assessment has not been rendered out-of-date and a recalculation of the OAN figure is not required.

Migration assumptions

23. The PPG identifies DCLG household projections as the starting point for establishing housing need, but also recognises that these figures may need sensitivity testing, specific to local circumstances, based on alternative assumptions in relation to the underlying demographic projections and household formation rates, provided they are clearly explained and justified on the basis of established sources of robust evidence.
24. The Council favour the 10 year trend migration scenario because they say it provides a more realistic figure since it captures the highs and lows and does not depend on short term trends that are unlikely to be repeated. I have some sympathy with this view, particularly since the period of 2007-2012 coincided with a period of significant economic downturn. One has to be careful that this does not result in pessimistic assumptions about future growth and thus housing need.
25. In terms of migration trends between the SHMA area and London, the SHMA builds in an adjustment of -2,121 dwellings (for 20 year period), based on 10 year migration trends from 2001-2011. The SHMA explains this difference is due to the underlying population projections. The long-term migration trends suggest lower net migration rates for both Stevenage and North Hertfordshire. These migration rates are partly due to errors in the population estimates over the last 10 years which were corrected following the 2011 Census.
26. The Council's SHMA update 2015 was based on migration trends for the 10-year period 2001-11, when average net migration from London to Stevenage averaged 411 persons each year. This is a higher rate than the average 343 persons assumed by the GLA in the 2013-round figures.
27. The Council met with the GLA to discuss cross-boundary migration and the issue of the "knock-on" consequences of their assumptions. It was agreed that long-term migration trends would provide an appropriate basis for establishing OAN for areas surrounding London.

28. Using a 10 year trend results in a combined figure for Stevenage and North Hertfordshire of 19,714 dwellings (21,835 – 2,121). I am satisfied that this figure has been arrived at based on a method that is robust and is consistent with the latest GLA figures and the assumptions made in the London Plan.
29. As such, I agree that a 10 year trend migration scenario is the most appropriate in this case.

Market signals

30. The SHMA 2015 considers other market signals affecting the HMA. This demonstrates that dwelling growth rates in the HMA have been higher than both the national average and also comparator areas. This does not indicate an under-supply of dwellings. The OAN also incorporates an allowance for concealed families and homeless households who may not have been able to access appropriate affordable housing.
31. House prices in Stevenage and North Hertfordshire are higher than the national average. They are higher than in some comparative areas and lower than in others. Rents are also higher than the national average, but lower than in comparator areas. Affordability indicators were identified in the SHMA as being above the national average, but lower than those in comparative areas. Census data indicates that 7% of households in Stevenage and North Hertfordshire are overcrowded which is less than the rate for England (8.7%) and similar to comparator areas.
32. The SHMA concludes that these indicators show that there is less housing market pressure in Stevenage and North Hertfordshire than other comparable areas; these other areas show greater pressures than the national average, particularly in relation to price.
33. The SHMA provides an analysis of the number of concealed families and homeless households. An adjustment of 317 dwellings is therefore necessary to account for the suppressed household formation rates across the SHMA area.
34. As such a 10% market signals adjustment is suggested as a response to help address market pressures and I agree that this is appropriate. This equates to an additional 1,971 dwellings (including the 317 dwellings necessary to deal with suppressed households) across the SHMA area over the 20 year period.
35. The SHMA 2015 concludes that the evidence about future jobs is roughly consistent with the evidence about likely future workers and therefore there is no need to apply an uplift to OAN as it would appear that there will already be enough workers for the likely increase in jobs in the area.
36. This gives a full objectively assessed need for housing across the SHMA area of 21,685 dwellings. Considering the needs of each local authority the SHMA concludes that the OAN for Stevenage is 7,300 over the 20 year period.

Conclusions on OAN

37. Establishing the future need for housing is not an exact science and this is acknowledged in the PPG. Reaching an OAN figure requires some reasoned

judgments to be made. In my view the Council has followed the approach set out in the PPG and done this. As such I find that the OAN figure of 7,300 (365dpa) is justified.

The housing requirement and meeting the objectively assessed need for housing

38. The Council are relying on a small number of sites to deliver the bulk of the housing in the Borough and they have also identified a need for a significant number of affordable homes, which I shall return to later. In order to address these 2 matters the Council has added 300 dwellings to the OAN. This results in a housing target for the Plan of 7,600, which is set out in policy SP7. I agree that this uplift is necessary to ensure that the OAN is met.
39. Since 2011 the Council has completed 746 new homes and granted planning permission for a further 1,686 homes, giving a total of 2,432 (as at 31 March 2016). This leaves a residual requirement of 5,168 to be planned for. In seeking to meet this requirement, the Council, through their Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment has considered sites in a sequential manner looking first at previously developed land, then greenfield sites within the urban area, then greenfield sites outside of the urban area and then as a last resort, Green Belt sites.
40. Alongside this process the Council has also considered whether sites are constrained by issues such as flood risk and therefore reasonable assessment of potential sites has been made. Stevenage does not contain the same amount of brownfield sites as other urban areas because it is a new town. Older traditional towns generally contain disused employment sites which is not the case here because of the planned nature of the Borough. It is also under-bounded with very little land beyond the built up area of the new town, within the Borough's boundary.
41. On the basis of this assessment the Council are able to demonstrate that they can provide housing sites (excluding Green Belt sites) to accommodate in the region of 4,426 homes which falls far short of the 5,249 required and I accept that this is realistic.
42. Some representors argue that there is a potential supply of office conversions that have not been considered and one site in particular was drawn to my attention at the hearings sessions. There is no certainty that the site will come forward as it appears it would require planning permission. No planning application has been submitted and in considering such an application or indeed others for similar development, the Council would have to consider a number of factors, including the effect of the change of use on employment land provision.
43. Also, providing housing land is not just about 'numbers of homes'; these need to reflect the identified mix, so, houses of different types and sizes as well as apartments etc. There will be a limit on how many apartments are required and they are not a substitute for family housing with gardens. As such I do not find that this source would provide a reliable or comparable source of housing, such that the release of Green Belt land should not be explored.
44. The Council has carried out scenario testing in order to establish how the requirement could be most sustainably and effectively met by releasing any

suitable sites from the Green Belt. They have come to the view that to meet the housing requirement land will need to be released from the Green Belt. As such they have identified 3 sites they consider to be appropriate. I shall return to consider this matter in more detail later in my report, including whether exceptional circumstances exist to justify their release.

Conclusions on the housing requirement and meeting the OAN

45. Having regard to the considerations below about housing supply I conclude that the Plan makes appropriate provision to help ensure that the OAN will be met in full.

Distribution of housing

46. Overall it is estimated that around 2,700 homes will be provided in the large urban extension sites, around 900 on 18 smaller sites, approximately 2,000 on the mixed use town centre regeneration sites and around 200 on windfall sites. The total of all these sites equates to around 5,800 homes, compared to the residual requirement of 5,249 (based on a target of 7,600 homes). While this is a sizable buffer I consider this to be sensible given that the Plan relies on a small number of large strategic sites to deliver most of its housing. It will also provide greater flexibility in meeting the OAN which will require a step change in the rate of house building in the Borough.
47. Policy SP7 sets out the overall distribution of housing across the Borough and allows for at least 2,950 new homes in and around the town centre as part of the planned regeneration programme detailed in the Plan; 1,350 in a new neighbourhood to the west of the town; 1,350 to the north and south-east of the town on land removed from the Green Belt; 1,950 elsewhere in the borough; and 11 new, permanent traveller pitches on a new allocated site. As set out previously this will be a challenging target for the Council, but one that is necessary to meet the housing needs of the Borough.
48. Policy SP7 also sets out the strategy and target for providing homes on brownfield sites and the range of homes required in terms of tenure, type and size. The policy is very prescriptive and recent evidence produced by the Council indicates that the house sizes being sought in the policy are no longer a priority. In light of this, main modifications (**MMs11 & 12**) are necessary to make this element of the policy and the supporting text more flexible and based on up to date evidence.

Conclusions on distribution of housing

49. Having regard to the above and my findings below in relation to the allocation of sites, including those in the Green Belt I find that the distribution of housing is appropriate.

Overall Conclusion

50. Having regard to all of the above and my findings below in relation to the allocation of sites, including those in the Green Belt, I consider that the identified objectively assessed need (OAN) for housing in the Borough, the housing target for the Borough and the overall distribution of housing is

soundly based and that the Plan makes appropriate provision to meet that need.

Issue 2 – Whether the Plan appropriately identifies the overall level of affordable housing need and makes appropriate provision to meet it

51. The SHMA identifies a need for around 3,444 affordable dwellings in Stevenage over the Plan period. This equates to an average of 172 dwellings per year. The SHMA analysis takes account of newly arising needs and the existing backlog. This is the equivalent to around 47% of the full OAN and a real challenge for the Council. Clearly this figure is significantly higher than the amount of affordable housing that is likely to be delivered through the application of Plan policy and other means. The Council has uplifted the overall housing target in order to increase the potential supply of affordable housing.
52. Policy HO7 sets out the affordable housing targets for residential development. The target levels are 25% of new homes on previously developed sites and 30% of new homes elsewhere. Some concerns were raised by representors that the Council would impose the affordable housing targets regardless of whether it made the site financially unviable. This is not the Council's intention and so they have sought to address any concerns by inserting some additional text into the policy and supporting text to cover the matter of viability. This is dealt with by **MMs63 &64** and they are necessary for soundness.
53. The Plan also seeks affordable housing contributions from all residential schemes. However this is contrary to the advice in the PPG which says that: "contributions should not be sought from developments of 10-units or less, and which have a maximum combined gross floorspace of no more than 1,000 square metres (gross internal area)".
54. Analysis carried out by the Council shows that sites of 10 units or less would only be likely to yield around 3 or 4 affordable homes per year. Clearly the loss of any affordable housing has significance, particularly for those people it would have provided a home for.
55. While the Council are able to demonstrate they have an acute need for affordable housing, as do many other local authority areas, this government policy aims to increase housing supply by encouraging development on smaller brownfield sites and help to diversify the house building sector by providing a much needed boost to small and medium-sized developers. A proposed main modification (**MM65**) is necessary to ensure consistency with national policy.

Conclusions on affordable housing

56. Subject to the main modifications Policy HO7 is sound. The application of the policy will help achieve the Plan's objective of meeting the housing needs of the whole community, as far as this is realistic, having regard to viability considerations and national policy.

Issue 3 – Whether or not the plan sets out a strategy for employment land which is positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy

57. An Employment and Economy Baseline Study was commissioned by the Council. The report was published in March 2013 and provides, in my view, an objective assessment of future requirements for employment land within Stevenage Borough. In evaluating future requirements, five different scenarios were developed, Baseline job growth based on 2012 East of England Forecasting Model (EEFM); Higher enterprise job growth; Past take-up (baseline); Past take-up (high); and Labour supply (based on an assumed 300 dwellings per annum).
58. These scenarios generated a range of future job, floorspace and land requirements for B class uses. When compared with an existing supply allowance of 3ha being provided by SBLP policies to redevelop/intensify existing employment uses and through existing planning permissions, the scenarios generate a range of residual requirements ranging from a surplus of 6ha of employment land over the plan period to a shortfall of 47ha. The 6ha surplus scenario seems to arise from the latest EEFM release (2016) generating the lowest land requirement of all releases in the time series. This is partly explained by a potential anomaly relating to employment recorded within the business services sector.
59. The Council considered these two outliers (6ha and 47ha) to be less appropriate as bases for future planning and I agree. This left three scenarios which projected a net requirement for between 20ha and 30ha of employment land over the period 2011-2031. This takes account of an existing supply allowance of 3ha.
60. The Baseline and Higher Enterprise scenarios were underpinned by the autumn 2012 run of the EEFM. The Labour Supply scenario projected a higher requirement for industrial floorspace in the future, in contrast to the other options. These scenarios were considered as a minimum, with the potential to seek a more aspirational approach.
61. Since the Council's 2013 Employment and Economy Baseline Study, three further runs of the EEFM have been released. The Council's 2013 study contains a detailed explanation of the assumptions and ratios used to translate the 2012 EEFM forecasts into the requirements identified in the Council's Employment Topic Paper update. These assumptions have been applied on a broadly consistent basis by the Council to the other, more recent EEFM forecasts to give an indicative comparison of how the projected land requirements for the Borough have changed over time.
62. Using the same approach as the 2015 Employment Technical Paper to calculate estimates of land and jobs requirements arising from this data, the latest 2016 EEFM forecasts produce the lowest land requirement for the Borough of all sets of forecasts reviewed since 2009. Looking across all six years of EEFM estimates, the average gross floorspace requirement equates to just under 32ha, over the 20 year period 2011-2031, and the rolling average over the last 3 years equates to 26ha of land take-up.

63. Given the scope for significant fluctuation in growth assumptions between different EEFM data releases the Council has chosen to maintain a 20 year employment land target of around 30ha, which I agree is appropriate. This also aligns with the Local Enterprise Partnerships' (LEP) strategy for over 30ha of employment land to be delivered in this area. Reducing the target below 30ha would not only risk not meeting the needs of the Borough, but would also not align with Stevenage's ambitions for large-scale regeneration of the town centre.
64. The Framework and planning practice guidance sets out the need to achieve a broad balance between housing and employment growth. As set out above, the objectively assessed need (OAN) is for 7,300 homes over the plan period. The housing target in the Plan is slightly higher at 7,600 homes. The EEFM baseline forecasts include a 'demand for dwellings' measure.
65. The demand for dwellings measure arising from the EEFM has remained fairly consistent across the majority of recent model runs, indicating a requirement for around 6,500 new homes over the plan period (with the exception of the years 2013 and 2016). The methodology of the EEFM is such that low employment growth will effectively 'trigger' increased commuting to better performing areas (and vice versa).
66. The 2016 EEFM demand for dwellings figure is 7,150 (covering the 20 year plan period 2011-2031) which represents the highest figure across the six year time series. All of these demand for dwellings measures fall below the identified OAN of 7,300 or indeed the housing target of 7,600 with the latest 2016 EEFM figure (at 7,150) being closest to this target figure.
67. Taking all of the above into account, for the purposes of the Plan, the Council's approach of a trend-based B-class land requirement of 30ha over the period 2011-2031 seems to me to be a sensible and balanced approach, based on thorough analysis. This should limit the outward commuting of Stevenage residents to other, better performing areas.
68. However, the Council are only able to identify around 18.5ha of employment land within the Borough because of the constraints set out above and in particular the under- bounded nature of the area. Consequently, as a result of close working with North Hertfordshire District Council (an adjoining authority with existing commuting patterns with Stevenage), agreement has been reached that they will provide for the remaining 11.5ha, by allocating additional B1 employment land in their emerging local plan. This land is close to the boundary with Stevenage Borough Council. However, the amount of shortfall resulting from this Plan should be clearly set out and this is remedied by **MM4**.
69. North Hertfordshire District Local Plan is currently being examined and the allocated employment land is being examined as part of that process. It is partly within the Green Belt and so is not a straightforward allocation. Therefore as a precautionary measure the Council also have an agreement with Central Bedfordshire Council that they will provide land in the event that North Hertfordshire are unable to do so.

70. It was originally envisaged that Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council would perform a similar role, but this is no longer the case. Consequently, main modifications (**MM3, 5 & 6**) are required to remove references to Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council from Policy SP3 of the Plan and the supporting text.
71. The Plan allocates a number of employment sites, some of which are extensions and intensifications of existing sites, there is a site at North Road, and others are within the town centre and will be delivered as part of the town centre regeneration programme. I am satisfied that these sites are appropriate. There is also a relatively small site close to junction 8 of the A1(M) that is currently within the Green Belt. I shall deal with the Green Belt matter later in my report.
72. Site EC1/1 relates to an extension to the GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) site to allow for future phases to be developed. Planning permission has already been granted for some of this and includes B1(b) uses, as well as B1(a) uses. This needs reflecting in policy EC1 and is rectified though **MM16**. In addition, GSK have also provided evidence to show that more than the target floorspace provision of 50,000m² set out in policy EC1 may be achievable on the site. However, this would need to be tested through a formal planning application. A main modification (**MM17**) is necessary to ensure that this information is set out in the supporting text.

Conclusions on employment land

73. I find that the Council has made provision for an appropriate level of employment land over the Plan period and overall the Plan provides an effective and sound strategy in this regard subject to the main modifications which are necessary for the Plan to be effective.

Issue 4 –Whether or not exceptional circumstances exist to justify the plan's proposed revisions of the Green Belt boundary.

74. Policy SP10 endorses the Green Belt principles set out in the NPPF. It makes reference to the Green Belt Review carried out by the Council which informs this Plan. The Plan establishes defensible long term Green Belt boundaries within the Borough. These allow scope for the continued growth of Stevenage to at least the end of the Plan period (2031).
75. The Plan removes five areas of land from the Green Belt for different types of development, a total of around 90ha. Dealing first with housing sites, these are land to the North of Stevenage (HO3); land to the South East of Stevenage (HO4); and land to the north of Graveley Road for a traveller site (HO12). In terms of sites for other uses, a site for employment use close to Junction 8 of the A1 (EC1/7) would be removed and also an existing garden centre site in the Green Belt is allocated for a major new food store of up to 7,900m² (gross), post-2023 (TC11). A small site at Norton Green is put into the Green Belt.
76. Stevenage is a very small Borough. In places, the town is built right up to the Borough boundary, and to the north-east already spreads across it into the neighbouring North Hertfordshire district. The Green Belt boundary is, with the exception of the west of the A1(M), drawn tightly around the edge of the

urban area which is also, for much of its length, the administrative boundary with neighbouring districts. Previous releases from the inner Green Belt boundary have been made to allow for the development of Great Ashby/Burleigh Park and Stevenage West.

77. The Council's Green Belt review provides an assessment of the extent to which the land around the urban edge of Stevenage still fulfils the five purposes of Green Belt policy, as defined in the NPPF. It then evaluates the sensitivity of the land to any development and/or change and identifies broad areas for potential compensatory Green Belt provision, in the event that Green Belt releases are required around Stevenage. Finally it considers these broad areas in more detail as to their potential for release in light of their contribution to Green Belt purposes and recommends sites which could be released from the Green Belt or safeguarded for future development beyond the Plan period.
78. For the reasons I have already set out, accommodating future development needs within Stevenage Borough is far more difficult than in other areas where land is more readily available. It is also the case that because the town is relatively new (built post-war) there are few opportunities for redevelopment, other than on a small scale. Consequently the capacity of Stevenage is extremely limited. Moreover neighbouring authorities are also reviewing their Green Belt boundaries to meet their own needs. Therefore, it would be unlikely that Stevenage's needs could reasonably be met in neighbouring authorities on land outside the Green Belt.

Green Belt Housing Allocations (HO3 & HO4)

79. As referred to above, the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for housing in Stevenage is 7,300 dwellings over the period 2011-2031, with the Plan setting a target of 7,600 homes to be developed within this period.
80. Some representors suggest that the need should be met by a Garden City, beyond the Stevenage Borough boundary, but no specific area has been identified. Therefore it is very unlikely such a scheme could deliver housing in the short term and debatable whether it would provide any during the plan period at all and this might also involve Green Belt land.
81. The only way that Stevenage can meet its current identified housing need is to release any suitable land from the Green Belt. Through their extensive and thorough Green Belt review the Council have identified site HO3 (north of Stevenage), in the Plan as being suitable for housing development. In the assessment of defined areas of land against Green Belt purposes this site is considered (as part of a larger parcel of land – N4) to make a limited contribution to Green Belt purposes in all regards, with the exception of preventing merger where it is identified as making a significant contribution.
82. That said this site is only part of the area of land that was categorised in this way and importantly open land would remain beyond HO3 that would maintain separation from the nearest large settlement. I realise that some of this land is identified in North Hertfordshire's emerging Plan as housing land, but that will be examined separately. While that site would join with site HO3, along the border between Stevenage and North Hertfordshire, there is a gap

between the allocated site in North Hertfordshire's emerging Plan and the nearest village of Graveley such that it would prevent the coalescence of this village with Stevenage or indeed any other settlement.

83. Part 2 of the Council's Green Belt review identifies site HO3 as parcel N4(iii) and says that "notwithstanding its open aspect, this parcel could be released within the local plan period given its current containment by strong boundaries and opportunities to substantiate these through further landscaping" and I agree.
84. In summary, there is a pressing need for housing within the Borough that cannot be met outside of the Green Belt. The value of the Green Belt has been thoroughly assessed by the Council and although it found that here a significant contribution comes from preventing the merging of settlements, there would still be a gap between settlements, even if the site in North Hertfordshire is allocated in their Plan and subsequently developed. Taking into account all of these factors I find that this site would be the most suitable, along with others, to meet the housing need in Stevenage. As such, exceptional circumstances exist to justify the release of this site from the Green Belt.
85. Turning to consider site HO4 (south east Stevenage), this is part of the large parcel identified as E7 in the Council's Green Belt review. It is identified as making a contribution to Green Belt purposes in all regards, except for the purpose of preserving the setting and special character of historic towns. Part 2 of the review identifies the specific site HO4 as E7(i) and E7(ii). These parcels are described as well contained land that currently helps to contain the south eastern edge of Stevenage, but their release would not damage the overall function of the Green Belt in this location. I concur with this assessment.
86. As set out above the review that has taken place is robust and I agree with the results which indicate that these sites are best placed to accommodate some of the housing identified as being required in Stevenage.
87. Overall, in terms of site HO4, again there is a need for housing that cannot be met outside of the Green Belt. The value of the Green Belt has been thoroughly assessed by the Council, as set out above. So having regard to these matters I find that this site would be the most suitable, along with others, to meet the housing need in Stevenage. As such, exceptional circumstances exist to justify the release of this site from the Green Belt.

Green Belt Traveller Site (HO12/1)

88. As set out above there is a demonstrable need for gypsy and traveller pitches within the Borough that cannot be accommodated on the existing Dyes Lane site. The Council have therefore had to look for a new site to accommodate this need. The Council have explored various alternatives, but because of the constrained nature of the Borough, with very little undeveloped non-Green Belt land remaining, no suitable, available sites were identified outside of the Green Belt.

89. The Plan allocates a site that is currently within the Green Belt as a traveller site. It forms part of the parcel of land identified in the Council's Green Belt review as N8(ii). The site as a whole is identified as making a contribution to all of the purposes of the Green Belt, with the exception of the setting and special character of historic towns. It also finds that the wider parcel is "visually well contained by a mature tree belt to the north and woodland on the majority of the parcel and at this local scale is distinct in character from the open landscape immediately to the north towards Graveley. Given the extent of containment, in principle, development could take place within the parcel without undue damage to the strategic function of the Green Belt". I am satisfied that this would be the case.
90. To conclude on this site, there is a clearly demonstrated need for additional pitches in the Borough that cannot be met on sites outside of the Green Belt. The Green Belt review has shown that the removal of this parcel of land from the Green Belt would not undermine its strategic function. As such, I find that this is the most suitable site to meet the gypsy and traveller needs of the Borough. I find that exceptional circumstances exist to justify the release of this site from the Green Belt.

Green Belt Employment Site

91. The Council has always been committed to ensuring sufficient jobs are provided to meet the needs of its residents. Self-containment was a key feature of the original Masterplan when Stevenage was established as a New Town, and this has been carried forward, not only through the plan making process, but also corporately, as a key objective of the Council. As such, to ensure a sustainable approach, it is preferable for employment land to be provided within the Borough boundary, where possible.
92. This also reduces the amount of travel required and reduces reliance on motorised vehicles. Moreover, neighbouring authorities are also reliant on releasing land from the Green Belt to meet their employment needs. Stevenage is already dependant on neighbouring authorities to meet the shortfall of employment land provision in their Green Belt. It would be unreasonable to require them to provide any more than they already are planning to provide when they clearly have their own development pressures, resulting in the need to release Green Belt land.
93. Through the Green Belt Review, the Council identified a parcel (W2(i)) of land that is described as being a "tightly enclosed parcel bounded by the A1(M), A602 and railway line, physically separated from wider parcel to the west". It concludes that the "overall function of the Green Belt in this location would not be harmed" if this parcel were to be released for development. So, while the larger W2 parcel is described as making a significant contribution to Green Belt purposes, with the exception of preserving the setting and special character of historic towns where it is deemed to make a limited contribution, the finer grain analysis has identified this modest sized site as being suitable for release from the Green Belt for employment purposes and I agree.
94. There is an identified need for additional employment land in Stevenage. As I have already discussed above, this need cannot be met in full in the Borough, even with the release of Green Belt land in Stevenage. The release of this,

modest sized site would not undermine the purpose of the Green Belt here and reduces the amount of land that may need to be removed from the Green Belt in North Hertfordshire district. As such, exceptional circumstances exist to justify the release of this site from the Green Belt.

Green Belt Retail Site

95. The Council's evidence base demonstrates a need for 7,600m² (net) new convenience retail floorspace provision, towards the end of the plan period. Around 20% of this need will be provided as extensions to existing convenience stores and small-scale provision across the town in line with the retail hierarchy. However, a new site is required to accommodate the remaining 4,600m² (net) in a single new superstore. No alternative site of this size is available and the allocated site, whilst in the Green Belt, is already in A1 retail use as a garden centre. It is identified in the Council's Green Belt review as parcel N8(i) and is found to make a limited contribution to all of the purposes of the Green Belt.
96. The site is also identified as a site of small scale with a strongly enclosed character whose overall Green Belt function is limited. This seems to me to be an ideal location to meet the identified retail need given its current use as a garden centre, its location close to existing large housing developments as well as housing allocation HO3, the hospital and the strategic road network. As such, exceptional circumstances exist to justify the release of this site from the Green Belt.

Site to be put into the Green Belt (Land at Norton Green)

97. The Green Belt review identifies 3 sites that could be put back into the Green Belt. However two of these are beyond the Borough's boundary, in North Hertfordshire and East Hertfordshire Districts and so are not a matter for this Plan. Within Stevenage a very small area of land surrounding the hamlet of Norton Green is proposed to be put back in. Norton Green is a small settlement with a rural-village like character. Putting this parcel of land back into the Green Belt will help to protect it as such. It would address an anomaly relating to removal of land from the Green Belt in the past and appears eminently sensible and would strengthen the purpose of the existing Green Belt land adjacent to it. I consider that these amount to the exceptional circumstances required for this addition.

Conclusions on revisions to the Green Belt boundary

98. In summary, for the reasons I have set out in relation to the particular identified needs of the Borough, the extensive work that has been carried out to try to identify sites outside of the Green Belt and the findings of the Green Belt Review, I conclude that the exceptional circumstances exist to justify all of the Plan's proposed revisions to the Green Belt boundary.

Issue 5 – Whether the Plan deals adequately with Strategic Transport and other infrastructure services to support new development

Transport

99. The Council's most recent Transport Strategy is based on the reasonable assumption that building more roads and increasing highway capacity can encourage the use of cars and other vehicles. This in turn discourages a shift to public transport, walking and cycling.
100. To date the roads in Stevenage have been relatively uncongested compared to many other towns and cities and this may have discouraged a modal shift. The new strategy therefore represents a change of approach with an emphasis on encouraging the use of public transport, cycling and walking in preference to increasing highway capacity. It has been informed and refined through the use of traffic modelling and is supported by HCC, as Highway Authority. The spatial approach to the distribution of new development in the Local Plan is broadly consistent with this approach. However, a number of detailed changes are necessary to ensure consistency with the new strategy and to ensure that the approach taken in the plan is fully supportive of it. These are explained below.
101. To ensure that this approach is made clear the updated Transport Strategy will need to form an Appendix to the Local Plan. During the course of the examination of the Plan the Council has updated their Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), so that it reflects the aspirations of the Transport Strategy.
102. As such £3.5m is identified in the IDP for cycleway improvements, behaviour management and a monitor and manage fund. This has been taken from the fund set aside in the previous version of the IDP for highway junction changes and this reflects the shift in emphasis in the Transport Strategy to one that it is predicated on mobility. It focusses most on growing a healthy, active and pleasant community throughout Stevenage, using the Plan, and the associated development growth, as the catalyst for achieving that. This is needed to ensure that the scale of development set out in the Plan can be achieved in a sustainable and cost effective way.
103. This includes Virtual Mobility (for instance working from home, or shopping online), walking and cycling and shared transport, including buses and car share. The emphasis will be on designing for, and encouraging, increased use of the higher capacity and more environmentally and socially sustainable transport networks. This is where investment will be prioritised. The highest capacity networks are active travel (walking and cycling) followed by shared transport, including buses and car share. It is likely that this will be achievable as it is estimated that many of the cars on the Stevenage network in the commuter peak are for trips of 2km or less.
104. Such an approach accords with the NPPF (chapter 4, para 29 onwards), and is realistic in terms of evidence of what is observed elsewhere, the focus of investment through the updated IDP and the fact that people act to minimise their inconvenience.

105. There will be a shift away from prioritising investment in highway capacity improvements, designed for the convenience of the car commuter, above investments in more sustainable and socially inclusive mobility. As a result, for the purpose of assessment, the Council's highway consultants left the highway network as it is, except for some minor modelling adjustments, and the Lytton Road closure which enables relocation of the bus station next to the railway station and an expansion of the town centre towards this new transport interchange i.e. no major highway capacity changes other than Lytton Way.
106. In this scenario, there is a general increase in journey times across the network of up to one and a half minutes during the commuter peak periods. This will be less if there is a greater shift, and more if the shift is less. I agree that this order of magnitude is not significant in the context of the NPPF, the need for social and economic growth and in particular given the potentially exemplar alternative mobility options.
107. Some people will choose private travel such as walking, cycling or driving a car. Stevenage has some of the very best high capacity private travel networks in the UK. It has a Dutch style cycle network, which the Council say is suffering as a result of a lack of investment over many years. However, this could be made excellent again with the investment that is planned. The proposal is for an investment of £3m in this network over the Plan period, in accordance with the emerging cycle strategy. The figure of £3m is an extrapolation of costs estimated for a good quality upgrade of a part of the cycle network. Importantly, the IDP also makes an allowance of £0.5m for an education, monitor and manage fund.
108. The change in emphasis from increasing road capacity to deal with peak commuter demand by car users, to a strategy that will lead to the creation of more attractive choice in movement than already exists, such as physical improvements to the cycle network, is a positive step. This shift in approach is also necessary to allow for the scale of development envisaged by the Plan to be achieved in a manner that does not require significant changes to the highway capacity. Consequently it is necessary to insert a new appendix into the Plan, entitled 'Mobility Strategy'. This shift in approach requires a number of main modifications (**MMs40,41,42,43,44,47,48,49 & 88**), to ensure consistency with the NPPF advice and these are necessary for soundness.
109. The Plan includes an appendix on residential car parking standards. This will require review, to ensure it aligns with the Mobility Strategy. This is a soundness issue that needs resolving. The Council will be reviewing the standards for car and cycle parking to take account of the shift in approach to transport matters in the Borough. So, for this reason and to provide the ability to respond to changes in the future, main modifications to policies and supporting text (**MMs10,45,46 & 89**) are necessary to reflect the Council's intention to set out its detailed policy in this regard within a review of the Parking Provision Supplementary Planning Document and this is clearly justified.
110. Some main modifications to the transport related policies are necessary. Policy IT1 is currently inflexible in terms of when alternative access points and solutions are permissible. This is remedied by main modifications (**MMs37 &**

38). Policy IT3 covers 'significant development proposals', but does not say how 'significant' is defined. **MM39** satisfactorily resolves this.

Drainage and water infrastructure

111. In terms of drainage the Plan advises that the capacity in the wastewater system to Rye Meads Sewage Treatment Works (RMSTW) is constrained in the long-term, but is currently adequate to meet needs up to 2026 and that new works are planned to deliver a sustainable long-term solution. Indeed the 2015 Rye Meads Water Cycle Strategy Review concluded that Rye Meads should now have capacity to treat all wastewater arising from within its catchment over the period to 2026, with a reasonable prospect of being able to accommodate demand to 2031. For precautionary reasons a main modification (**MM9**) to Policy SP5 is required to make clear that new development post 2026 will only be permitted if the required capacity is available at RMSTW, including any associated sewer connections.
112. A Main Modification (**MM1**) is required to make developers aware of the need to contribute towards the Water Framework Directive actions on sites adjacent to watercourses and to improve the quality of water that enters groundwater aquifers across the Borough.
113. Flooding related issues are dealt with under the section on development management policies later in my report.

Green Infrastructure

114. In terms of natural environment and landscape the Plan deals with this in general terms and where necessary in individual allocations policies. A main modification (**MM2**) to the general wording is necessary to provide a commitment to protecting and enhancing the natural environment and landscape of the Borough through a number of means. Policy SP11 needs to include a reference to the provision of green space and this is remedied by (**MM13**). Changes to Policy SP12 and supporting text are also necessary to ensure reference is made to the landscape, wildlife sites and the influence development in the Borough could have on Knebworth Woods SSSI, Rye Meads SSSI, Chilterns AONB and Lee Valley SPA. This is resolved through (**MM14 & 15**). These are necessary to ensure that the Plan accords with the NPPF.

Conclusions strategic transport and infrastructure

115. In summary, the Plan deals adequately with Strategic Transport and other infrastructure services to support new development subject to the main modifications I have referred to that are necessary for soundness.

Issue 6 – Whether or not the housing allocations are soundly based

116. A number of the same main modifications are necessary in relation to the allocations policies for the urban extensions (HO2, HO3 & HO4). Firstly the reference to 'at least' 30% affordable housing is to be removed as this implies that potentially more will be sought even though this has not been adequately viability tested and it is out of step with the wording in Policy HO7. The

testing that took place looked at 30%, as per policy HO7 which I have discussed above. This lack of consistency across the Plan is a soundness issue.

117. Secondly, an additional criterion is required to ensure that electrical car charging points are provided within the sites to support a reduction in CO2 emissions and support Government proposals for electric cars and therefore ensure consistency with National policy; and thirdly an explanation in the supporting text that if self-build plots are not taken up by the public after being marketed for at least 2 years, they can revert to conventional build plots. This will ensure that allocated land is not left undeveloped. All of these changes (**MMs 54, 56, 57, 59, 60 & 62**) are required to make the Plan sound.

Policy HO1/2 - Bragbury End sports ground car park

118. This is a parcel of land that forms the car park of Bragbury End Sports Ground, which is covered by Policy HO4. This small site is expected to be able to accommodate around 8 dwellings. A main modification (**MM51**) is necessary to remove the requirement for the mitigation against the loss of sports facilities as the car park does not itself provide sports facilities.

Policy HO1/6 - Former Pin Green school playing field

119. This is a former school playing field that is identified as being suitable to accommodate around 42 dwellings. The Council considered there was a need to mitigate against the loss of the sports facilities here and sought to deal with this through **MM52**. However, it has come to light that the school playing field has not been used as a sports facility and is not needed as a playing field. This requirement would therefore be unreasonable and so this main modification is not necessary for soundness.

Policy HO1/11 – Land west of North Road (Rugby Club)

120. This site is allocated as being suitable to accommodate 149 dwellings. Table 3 in the Plan sets out a number of criteria that will need to be taken into account when developing the site. One of the criteria relates to the relocation/re-provision of the existing sports facilities. This however lacks sufficient detail and does not suitably reflect the advice in paragraph 74 of the NPPF. This omission is resolved through **MM53**.

Policy HO2 – Stevenage West

121. The adopted District Plan for Stevenage already allocates this site for residential development. This Plan allocates it for approximately 1,350 dwellings. The western boundary of the site borders North Hertfordshire District and land within the neighbouring district may also be developed in the future.

122. This is likely to be a complex site to deliver given the site is in multiple ownership and there are access issues. For these reasons, the Council is not relying on it to meet its 5 year housing land supply.

123. Given the complexity of the site and in particular its delivery some main modifications (**MMs54, 55 & 56**), are necessary to increase the flexibility of the policy and thus increase the likelihood of it being developed in the Plan period. **MM55** makes reference to demand. I have changed this to need/insufficient need as this more accurately reflects what it intended.

Policy HO3 – North of Stevenage

124. This is a large site on the northern edge of Stevenage which is within the Green Belt and partly within the St Nicholas and Rectory Lane Conservation Area. My findings in relation to the exceptional circumstances that exist to justify the release of this land from the Green Belt are set out above.

125. In addition, there are a number of listed buildings in the surrounding area (outside of the site, but also in the Conservation Area). The Plan allocates the site for around 800 dwellings. The intention is that it will be integrated with a proposed residential development on an adjacent site that is beyond the Borough boundary, in North Hertfordshire. That site is allocated within the emerging North Hertfordshire Local Plan. The site in this Plan is of such a size that it will incorporate a range of services and facilities and not be dependent on the other site being developed.

126. Access to the site is from North Road and so there would be no traffic impacts on the conservation area or listed buildings. Policy HO3 requires that the larger houses, with a maximum height of 2 storeys, set in more spacious plots are located within the conservation area and that development within this area should be heavily landscaped. The Council conclude that the development of this site will have some impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area, but that this will not be significant and it will be outweighed by the social and economic benefits of the residential use of the site. Indeed, the Council's 2005 conservation area review found that the land within this housing allocation contributed only to distant views of the heritage assets, and into the conservation area.

127. One of the listed buildings, Rooks Nest House Howards, which is listed Grade I, was home to EM Forster for a period of time. Hence the site and the surrounding area is known locally as 'Forster Country'.

128. Moreover, EM Forster took inspiration from the landscape here in writing his book Howards End and hence the name of the property. The other key listed building is St Nicholas Church, which is also listed grade I. The Council has undertaken an exercise to understand what contribution the site makes to the significance of the heritage assets and this forms part of the evidence base for the Plan.

129. There is no doubt that the landscape contributes to the setting of the listed buildings to some degree. However taking the listed buildings in turn, St Nicholas Church has a sizeable churchyard that is heavily wooded and contains numerous monuments. When walking around the churchyard, one gets a sense of enclosure within the well planted churchyard. There are glimpsed views of the fields to the north of the Church through the trees, but in terms of views of the wider landscape these are only achieved by leaving the churchyard.

130. The Church building and in particular its tall spire are visible from a wide area, and the appreciation of its contained, heavily wooded churchyard reflect its central role within the Parish. However, the setting of the building that is experienced from the allocated site is that of a confined, wooded churchyard, with glimpsed views to land outside the churchyard. The wider landscape is within the setting of the Church, but due to the nature of the churchyard, site HO3 contributes little to its significance, compared to the land immediately north of the churchyard. Additionally, built development on the site would be located some distance from the Church and churchyard and would certainly not hinder the ability to appreciate it or its setting. Indeed there is modern built development much closer to the Church than this proposed development would be.
131. Rooks Nest House Howards is located on Weston Road, a narrow lane. It is set back from the road within maturely landscaped gardens which enclose it and significantly limit views of it. To the west of Rooks Nest House Howards and the adjacent Rooks Nest Farm (listed grade II) are agricultural fields. Nevertheless, this is an agricultural landscape of open fields as a result of modern farming practices. Consequently, much of the historic character of these fields has been lost, with the removal of field boundaries and hedges and so it appears different to how it would have done when EM Forster resided here. Also visible in this landscape is the housing development to the south of the allocated site, the extensive Lister Hospital complex to the west and numerous tall electricity pylons that straddle the fields.
132. A detailed heritage assessment will need to be undertaken at the master planning and planning application stage, once a detailed scheme has been prepared. Also, the policy advises of the need for development proposals to preserve or enhance the conservation area, including the setting of adjacent listed buildings. To this end, it also sets out a number of mitigation measures designed to help achieve this. An area of land adjacent to site HO3 is allocated as a country park (policy NH8). This is closer to the listed buildings than the housing site, is within the conservation area and would be retained within the Green Belt. This area is covered by policy NH8 which designates it as North Stevenage Country Park. One of the aims of this policy is to protect the openness and accessibility of this area. The supporting text to this policy does not clarify the point that the open space provision arising from the development allocated under HO3 will be provided by this country park. This omission is remedied by **MM85**.
133. There is currently no vehicular access to the site. The main access route will be from North Road, but an additional access point is likely to be required for phases of development beyond 300 units, or equivalent traffic generating uses. It is important that the policy is clear about this threshold for it to be effective. This is remedied through **MM58**.
134. Overall, whilst built development here would increase significantly, I am confident that the site could be developed in a manner that protects the significance of the designated heritage assets. Also, for the reasons set out above, exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated to justify the release of this site from the Green Belt.

Policy HO4 – South East Stevenage

135. This site is currently within the Green Belt and would accommodate in the region of 550 homes. My findings in relation to the exceptional circumstances that exist to justify the release of this land from the Green Belt are set out above.
136. The site is split into 2 parts, that to the south of the A602 is the larger of the 2 sites and will take around 400 of the homes. Erroneously the Plan currently refers to part of this site within table 3, below Policy HO1. This is corrected by a main modification (**MM50**). There is also a need for a reference in the supporting text to the Hertfordshire Minerals Plan as both parts of this site are within the Sand and Gravel Belt. This is remedied by **MM61**.
137. It would appear that this site may contain badgers. There is currently conflicting evidence on this matter. However, if, at the planning application stage, evidence emerges of protected species this would need to be considered against Policy GD1 of this Plan which seeks, among other things, to create, enhance or improve biodiversity. Moreover, badgers and their setts are protected species and so there are a number of layers of protection should they be present at the time the site is progressed to development stage. This would ensure that they are not harmed, but instead accommodated as part of the development. In addition, as set out above, exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated to justify the release of this site from the Green Belt.

Conclusions on housing allocations

138. I conclude on this issue that all of the housing allocations in the Plan are soundly based, subject to the main modifications I have referred to. These are necessary for the policies to be justified and effective. Where necessary, exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated to justify the release of land from the Green Belt to meet housing need in the Borough.

Issue 7 – Whether or not the Plan is likely to provide for a rolling 5 year supply of housing land throughout the Plan period

139. The Council's reliance on a small number of large strategic sites makes early delivery of a large quantum of housing very challenging. This is because of the lead in time for housing to be built on these sites, following the adoption of the Plan and the rate at which the developers can build. Using the Sedgefield approach to dealing with previous shortfall would require the delivery of around 700 homes per year for the first 5 years. This is wholly unrealistic when considering previous delivery rates. Spreading the delivery of the previous shortfall over the Plan period is not ideal as it delays providing the shortfall over an even longer period. However, in this case there are a particular set of circumstances that mean it is the only sensible option.
140. The NPPF requires Councils to identify a rolling 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites. It also requires them to have an additional buffer of 5%, or 20% (moved forward from later in the Plan period, depending on the level of previous level of under delivery) to provide a realistic prospect of achieving the planned supply and to ensure choice and competition in the market for land.

141. The past under-supply of housing in Stevenage is significant due to a combination of factors, including an ambitious housing target, the large areas of Green Belt land which cannot be developed unless released through the local plan process and the lack of an up to date local Plan which has caused uncertainty in the market. Consequently, the Council readily accept that they have a record of persistent under delivery and therefore need to have a buffer of 20% and I agree.
142. The Council's housing target is set at 7,600 homes in the Plan, which equates to 380 homes per year. For the first five years, this equates to 1,900 homes. The previous shortfall (from 2011) amounts to a deficit of 1,154 homes, when measured against the annualised housing target. The deficit divided over the remaining plan period (16 years), amounts to 72 homes per year. So this provides a 5 year requirement of 2,260 (1,900 + 360). When a 20% buffer is added to this a five year requirement a figure of 2,712 is reached and this is planned for by the Council in their trajectory using their committed supply of deliverable housing sites and those allocated within the Plan and identified as being able to deliver housing within the following 5 years.
143. It seems likely that more than the number of houses set out in the trajectory will come forward in the next 5 years as the Council has been suitably cautious in their approach, particularly with regards to windfall estimates and also projecting the delivery of housing from the town centre regeneration sites. On the basis of the evidence before me I am content that the Council has been very thorough in their consideration of every site in the trajectory and particularly those in the first 5 years following adoption of the plan, having regard to the likelihood of the sites coming forward, when this will happen and at what rate they will deliver.
144. The Council can demonstrate exactly a 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites when a 20% buffer is applied to reflect the persistent under-supply of housing land (in accordance with the NPPF) and based on the Liverpool calculation method i.e. dealing with the previous shortfall over the Plan period.

Conclusions on housing land supply

145. To summarise, I am satisfied that the Plan provides sufficient sites and a robust strategy such that it is likely to provide a rolling 5 year supply of deliverable housing land available throughout the Plan period.

Issue 8 – Whether the plan makes adequate provision to meet the needs of gypsies and travellers and travelling showpeople.

Need

146. The Council's Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) 2013 finds that there is a need for 3 additional new pitches for the period 2013 to 2018. This is derived from 2 factors. Firstly, at the time of the assessment there was a waiting list need for 4 pitches in Stevenage from households who do not currently live in the Borough. Secondly, the need arising from household formation from households on the Dyes Lane site (County Council traveller site in Stevenage) is estimated as being 4 pitches in the period up to 2018. On the basis of previous experience, there will be some turnover on

the Dyes Lane site which will be around 1 vacant pitch per year, so 5 pitches over 5 years.

147. An attempt is made in the GTAA to forecast beyond 2018, but it acknowledges that this is difficult. It estimates that there will be a need for 3 to 5 pitches in each 5 year period and so a need for 6 to 10 pitches in total by 2028.
148. In my view at least this number will be required given the waiting list for Dyes Lane has grown significantly since the 2013 GTAA, as has the number of unauthorised encampments. These are both clear signs of under-provision. While there was evidence provided at the hearing sessions from both the Council and representors about what the current situation in terms of need is, this need will be assessed in a methodical and balanced manner through an updated GTAA next year (2018).
149. The Council has committed to beginning work on a new GTAA in 2018. This is particularly important given that the 2013 GTAA is based on the advice and definition of gypsies and travellers in the superseded Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) (March 2012). The latest version of PPTS (August 2015) includes a definition in annex 1 that excludes some gypsies and travellers (compared to the March 2012 version). Nevertheless, the need for caravan accommodation is unlikely to dissipate and the Council will need to address this and how the needs of residents identifying as travellers are met following the completion of its new GTAA.
150. I find that the OAN figure of 3 pitches up to 2018 and then 3 to 5 pitches every five years thereafter is sound. To clarify this gives a total for the Plan period of between 11 and 16 pitches.

Supply

151. The Plan allocates a site HO12/1 – Land north of Graveley Road for traveller provision and is clear that any other uses will be refused planning permission. This is important to ensure that the site remains available for travellers, since PPTS requires Councils “in producing their Local Plan to identify and update annually, a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide 5 years’ worth of sites against their locally set targets”. The provision in the Plan is based on the current GTAA, which is still up to date at the present time, but will need updating shortly. Moreover, the allocated site is large enough to accommodate more than the current identified requirement for 11-16 pitches over the plan period.
152. It appears from the evidence before me that this site may not be easy to deliver in the short term. Nevertheless, I am satisfied that this site is the Council’s best option in this regard and the Council are unequivocal that they will see this site developed as they propose in the Plan. It may be that for this to happen the Council have to compulsorily purchase the site and this is reflected in main modification **MM71**. I have corrected a typographical error in this MM. It erroneously referred to ‘section 236’ of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, but it should have said ‘section 226’. As such, I am satisfied that the gypsy and traveller need will be met.
153. Also, as referred to above, the Council’s current GTAA pre-dates the most up-to-date PPTS. Consequently, the GTAA was undertaken on the basis of the

gypsy and traveller definition in the superseded PPTS which included those members of the community that have ceased to travel permanently. It is widely recognised that the sector of the gypsy and traveller community who have ceased travelling permanently will still require a pitch on a site, as they are unlikely to move to bricks and mortar housing.

154. Moreover these people will not have been included in the Council's objectively assessed housing need assessment. In order to overcome this issue, until a revised GTAA is prepared and the Council determine how they are going to deal with the effects of the change in definition of gypsies and travellers, a change to Policy HO12 and the supporting text is necessary. **MMs71 & 72** introduce changes to the wording which seeks to clarify that until the review of the GTAA in 2018 they will effectively use the 'old' PPTS definition.

Conclusions on the needs of gypsies and travellers

155. Subject to the recommended MMs, I find that the Plan makes adequate provision to meet the needs of gypsies and travellers and that the Council have demonstrated that exceptional circumstances exist to justify the release of land from the Green Belt to meet these needs.

Issue 9 – Whether or not the development management policies in the Plan are soundly based

156. Policy HO9 seeks to ensure that a range of house types and sizes are provided in the Borough and builds upon policy SP7 which I have already covered briefly, above. As with SP7, this policy needs amending as a result of up to date evidence on the types of homes people require in this Borough. This is dealt with through **MMs66, 67 & 68**.
157. Policy HO11 seeks to ensure that 50% of new dwellings are 'category 2: wheelchair accessible and adaptable dwellings'. However, wheelchair accessibility has not been viability tested and the cost of such provision would be very high. The Council has proposed main modifications (**MMs69 & 70**), which remove reference to wheelchair accessibility and thus overcomes this soundness issue. Notwithstanding this deletion, the Plan makes sufficient provision for inclusive design and accessible environments in accordance with paragraphs 57, 58, 61 and 69 of the NPPF. Also Policy SP8 of the Plan says that the Government's optional Technical Standards will be implemented to ensure that schemes deliver, among other things, accessibility. In reaching these conclusions I have had due regard to my public sector equality duty.
158. The Plan contains some generic retail policies relating to new convenience provision, new comparison retail provision and retail impact assessments. I am content with them, subject to a number of main modifications being promoted by the Council. Changes to Policy TC11 and the supporting text (**MMs28, 29 & 30**) provides greater clarity about the level of identified future need for additional convenience retail floorspace, where is it expected to be provided and when. I have amended **MM28** to ensure that the split between comparison and convenience goods floorspace in policy TC11 is clear.
159. A correction to the amount of new comparison retail floorspace expected to be required is needed in policy TC12 and the supporting text and this is remedied through **MMs31 & 32**.

160. I turn now to traveller sites and policy HO13 that will be used by the Council in dealing with and assessing planning applications for traveller accommodation on unallocated sites. The policy requires applicants to demonstrate a local need for accommodation, which is at odds with the advice in PPTS. This is remedied through **MM73**.
161. Also, because the GTAA is based on the superseded version of PPTS, which included a different definition of 'gypsies and travellers', a main modification (**MM74**) is included to cover this until a revised GTAA is prepared in 2018. It effectively says that until the GTAA is reviewed – when assessing the need for additional pitches the Council will define gypsies and travellers as per the superseded PPTS. This provides a short term solution to this issue which will need to be resolved fully in the near future. It is likely the Council will eventually need to provide accommodation for travellers meeting the definition in the most up to date GTAA as well as ethnic gypsies and travellers who do not meet the definition but are in need of caravan accommodation.
162. In line with the NPPF, the Plan, through various policies, including GD1 contains generic design requirements that will be applied to all developments. For consistency throughout the Plan a change of wording is needed in relation to the reference to parking and access standards. It is also necessary to remove the reference to 'exceeding where possible' the nationally described space standards as this would conflict with the advice in the PPG. These matters are resolved through **MM75**.
163. Policy TC13 and the supporting text, which deals with retail impact assessments, erroneously requires an impact assessment for town centre uses in the town centre. This is corrected by **MMs33, 34 & 36** which include a threshold which will require an impact assessment for any proposals in excess of 300m² for main town centre uses outside the town centre as set out in the NPPF. The threshold is based on a robust and up to date assessment. In addition, **MM35** is necessary to the supporting text to take account of the Council's policy shift towards reducing dependency on the use of motorised vehicles and towards other multi-modal means.
164. A number of changes are needed to policy HC3 which covers The Lister Hospital Health Campus to take account of the staff residential accommodation and other ancillary accommodation within the hospital site. A reference is also needed to confirm that a small parcel of undeveloped land within the campus could provide the opportunity for additional healthcare uses. These are resolved through **MMs76, 77 & 78**.
165. Policy HC7 covers new and refurbished leisure and cultural facilities. A main modification (**MM79**) is necessary to clarify that a sequential approach to site selection does not relate to schemes for sports facilities as these may be suitable away from identified centres i.e. in areas of open space.
166. The Council are intending to introduce Community Infrastructure Levy in the future and so this necessitates a change to some of the supporting text to policy HC8 which covers commuted sums in relation to the provision of sports facilities in new developments. This is dealt with through **MM80**.
167. Additional educational capacity is proposed through policy HC9 to be provided at the former Barnwell East Secondary School, that was previously used as a

school. Some flexibility is needed in terms of the type of agreement that will be required to ensure the sports hall is available for use by the public. This is remedied through **MM81**.

168. The Plan contains a number of policies related to flood risk. Policy FP2 deals with development in flood zone 1. A change (**MM82**) to this policy is required to reflect the Planning Practice Guidance.
169. Policy FP3 deals with flood zones 2 and 3 and among other things requires an appropriate fluvial flood risk assessment is submitted which demonstrates a number of points. These requirements need to be made more robust and this is done through **MM83**.
170. Pollution control is dealt with by policy FP7, but it omits a reference to water pollution. Main Modification **MM84** remedies this.
171. As set out above there are a number of development management style employment related policies. Policy E2 relates to Gunnel Wood employment area and edge of centre zone. These are 2 distinct areas and so they need to be covered separately within the policy. This is resolved through **MM18**.

Conclusions on development management policies

172. Subject to the main modifications identified above, which are necessary for soundness, the development management policies in the Plan are soundly based.

Issue 10 – Whether the town centre regeneration plans are soundly based

173. A key part of the strategy of this Plan is the regeneration of the town centre. When it was constructed it was the UK's first wholly pedestrianised shopping centre. The original phase 1 of the town centre development now forms the core of the Town Square Conservation Area. The centre currently appears tired and in need of regeneration to bring it up to modern standards and thus a desirable place for businesses to locate and for people to live and shop. There is clear evidence that the town centre is under-performing, uses land inefficiently and is not an attractive prospect for investors.
174. In 2015 Stevenage First partnership commissioned a new vision for the town centre from a team of consultants who specialise in master planning. This covers a larger area than just the shopping streets in the core of the town centre. It also encompasses the bus and train station, the arts and leisure centre and a number of surface car parks. Recent evidence indicates that housing prices are rising in this area, developer interest is growing in the town centre and also the land is mainly in public sector ownership, with some belonging to the Homes and Communities Agency. This should prevent delays in development commencing as a result of land ownership issues and negate the need for any compulsory purchase orders or land assembly.
175. Moreover a significant amount of funding has been made available by the Government under the 'Growth Deal' initiatives to help fund these ambitious regeneration proposals and this will be administered by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). This will need to be supplemented by a significant amount

of private sector funding and, taking account of all the evidence, I have every reason to believe this will happen.

176. In general terms the town centre has been split into six different areas (major opportunity areas) and each of these will be guided by a specific policy in the Plan. Overall these will help deliver the relocation of the bus station and the closure of part of Lytton Way to enable a better interface between the railway station and the current leisure park beyond it to the town centre.
177. Car parking will be provided in a less hungry manner, the arts and leisure facilities which are in need of updating will be re-provided on new sites. A new platform is planned at the railway station and further non-essential works are planned for the station subject to funding and agreements with Network Rail. In addition, provision is made for new residential apartments to be provided, along with new office space, hotels, leisure facilities, bars and restaurants, new cultural and civic buildings and retail units.
178. The specific policies and overall vision for the town centre are well thought out and have the potential to improve the town centre significantly in a number of ways.
179. While a number of respondents are dissatisfied with the town centre proposals, it is principally the closure of part of Lytton Way that concerns people most. However this partial road closure will be of great benefit to the overall regeneration programme planned here and importantly provide an additional development site that will provide new offices and housing close to the station. It will also allow a new frontage to be inserted on the eastern side of the train station. I have not been presented with any alternative solutions to providing the much needed regeneration here. There are concerns that some facilities will not be replaced, such as the theatre, but there are specific policy requirements in policies TC4 and TC5 to ensure that the replacement happens.
180. A number of main modifications are required to update and clarify sections of policies and text relating to the town centre as a result of further work and the passage of time. These include **MMs7 & 8** which relate to policy SP4 and the supporting text. I have amended **MM7** slightly to ensure it is clear in the policy what floor space amounts relate to convenience and comparison goods. **MMs19, 24 & 25** provide some word changes necessary to bring the text in policies TC2, TC5 and TC7 relating to the conservation area in line with the policy advice in the NPPF.
181. Policy TC3 and the supporting text needs amendment to correct some errors and alter the emphasis in terms of the changes that will definitely take place to the rail station. It is also necessary to make developers aware of the need to consider noise attenuation in new residential properties close to the rail station. These are addressed by main modifications **MMs20, 21 & 22**.
182. A change to policy TC4 is necessary to clarify the railway station will be extended as well as regenerated and this is resolved by **MM23**.
183. The Plan contains a number of policies within the 'Vital Town Centre' section that are development management policies seeking to protect the vitality and viability of the new town shopping area and the old town High Street. There

are some errors in the lists of premises covered by policy TC8 and these are corrected through **MM26**. Policy TC9 needs additional text to ensure that the protection to designated heritage assets that it seeks to provide will also extend to the setting of those assets. This is dealt with through **MM27**.

Conclusions on town centre regeneration plans

184. To summarise on this issue, I conclude that that town centre regeneration plans are soundly based, subject to the inclusion of the main modifications set out above.

Issue 11 – Whether or not the Plan is soundly-based in terms of economic viability issues and its delivery and monitoring arrangements

185. A whole Plan viability assessment was carried out by the Council in line with the advice in the NPPF. This has led to some changes, such as the reduction in the affordable housing target. The assessment has also been scrutinised as part of this examination in relation to other policy matters, as set out above. I am satisfied that a robust assessment of viability has been undertaken such that scale of obligations and policy burdens will not prevent development being delivered in a timely manner.

186. The Plan commits to monitoring the policies in it. The Council will do this through their annual monitoring report.

187. Given that the IDP is a 'living document' that is reviewed and updated on a regular basis it is unwise to have this within the Plan. It is merely a snapshot in time and could be misleading. This is remedied by main modifications (**MMs86 & 87**) to remove the entire table from the delivery and monitoring chapter and amend the preceding text which refers to it being within the Plan.

Conclusions on economic viability, delivery and monitoring

188. Subject to the inclusion of **MMs 86 & 87**. I find that the Plan is soundly-based in terms of economic viability issues and its delivery, monitoring and contingency arrangements.

Climate Change

189. For the avoidance of doubt I am satisfied that the Plan's policies, taken as a whole, will help to ensure that development and use of land in the borough contributes to the mitigation of, and adaptation to climate change.

Assessment of Legal Compliance

190. My examination of the compliance of the Plan with the legal requirements is summarised in the table below. I conclude that the Plan meets them all.

| LEGAL REQUIREMENTS | |
|---|---|
| Local Development Scheme (LDS) | The Stevenage Borough Local Plan has been prepared in accordance with the Council's LDS June 2016. |
| Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and relevant regulations | The SCI was adopted in May 2012. Consultation on the Local Plan and the MMs has complied with its requirements. |
| Sustainability Appraisal (SA) | SA has been carried out and is adequate. |
| Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) | The Habitats Regulations AA Screening Report (May 2016) sets out why AA is not necessary. Natural England support this. |
| National Policy | The Stevenage Borough Local Plan is consistent with national policy except where indicated and MMs are recommended. |
| 2004 Act (as amended) and 2012 Regulations. | The Stevenage Borough Local Plan complies with the Act and the Regulations. |

Overall Conclusion and Recommendation

191. The Council has requested that I recommend MMs to make the Plan sound and capable of adoption. I conclude that with the recommended main modifications set out in the Appendix the SBLP satisfies the requirements of Section 20(5) of the 2004 Act and meets the criteria for soundness in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Louise Crosby

Inspector

This report is accompanied by an Appendix containing the Main Modifications.

Appendix 1:

Main modifications proposed by the Council to make the local plan sound

These Changes are proposed by the Council in response to points raised and suggestions discussed during the Examination and the Council consider that they are required to make the plan sound.

The changes below are expressed either in the conventional form of ~~strikethrough~~ for deletions and underlining for additions of text, or by specifying the change in words in *italics*.

The page numbers and paragraph numbering below refer to the submission local plan, and do not take account of the subsequent proposed deletion and / or addition of text.

Page 94

| Ref | Page | Policy / Para | Proposed Change |
|-----|------|---------------------|---|
| MM1 | 22 | New Para after 4.26 | <p><i>Add new paragraph after 4.26</i></p> <p><u>We will require developers to contribute towards Water Framework Directive (WFD) actions on sites adjacent to watercourses and improve the quality of water that enters groundwater aquifers across the Borough.</u></p> <p><i>Update subsequent paragraph numbers.</i></p> |
| MM2 | 22 | 4.28 | <p><u>We recognise that we cannot meet our homes target without investment in infrastructure. We will work within the environmental and infrastructural limits to development. We recognise that we cannot meet our homes target without investment in infrastructure. We will work to commit to protect and enhance the natural environment and landscape of the Borough by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>protecting existing open space and areas designated for environmental purposes;</u> • <u>requiring new developments to include open space to meet locally defined targets;</u> • <u>requiring developments to make links to the surrounding countryside;</u> • <u>seeking to create an ecological network; and</u> • <u>protecting and enhancing our heritage assets.</u> |

| Ref | Page | Policy / Para | Proposed Change |
|-----|------|---------------|---|
| MM3 | 29 | Policy SP3 | <p>.....</p> <p>e. Work with Central Bedfordshire Council <u>and</u> North Hertfordshire District Council and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council to ensure an appropriate level of employment provision within the wider A1(M) / A1 corridor over the plan period. The Borough Council will support, as required:</p> <p>i. A new, strategic employment allocation at Baldock to be delivered through North Hertfordshire's local plan; <u>and/or</u></p> <p>ii. The continued development of the Stratton Farm Business Park at Biggleswade through Central Bedfordshire's local plan; and / or</p> <p>iii. The retention of key employment areas within Welwyn Garden City through Welwyn Hatfield's local plan.</p> |
| MM4 | 31 | 5.23 | <p>These responses will deliver a significant amount of new employment in Stevenage by 2031, but will not meet all of the identified needs. <u>A shortfall of around 11.5ha has been identified by the most up-to-date evidence on employment needs.</u> (include footnote reference to <i>Employment Technical Paper</i>)</p> <p><i>Remainder of existing para. 5.23 text to become new para. 5.24 as follows:</i></p> <p>5.24 However, economic activity is not contained by the Borough boundary.....</p> <p><i>Update all subsequent paragraph numbers accordingly.</i></p> |
| MM5 | 32 | 5.25 | <p>Emerging plans and evidence show sufficient employment potential in this wider area to be capable of meeting demand. We will continue to support relevant proposals in the plans of Central Bedfordshire; <u>and</u> North Hertfordshire and Welwyn Hatfield councils while recognising that they will make the final decision on the amount and type of employment provision in their own areas.</p> |
| MM6 | 32 | 5.26 | <p>.....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new strategic allocation at Royston Road, Baldock in North Hertfordshire. This is a key opportunity to provide new employment land close to the Borough. This site falls within the Stevenage and Letchworth sub-area where it would be appropriate to make a full range of B-class |

| Ref | Page | Policy / Para | Proposed Change |
|-----|------|---------------|---|
| | | | <p>provision to meet any unmet needs; <u>and</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The continued development of Stratton Farm Business Park, Biggleswade. This lies beyond Stevenage's immediate sub-market but within the wider FEMA in both commercial property and labour market terms. This is considered suitable to assist in accommodating unmet industrial and distribution (B1(c), B2 and B8) requirements; <u>and</u> • The retention of appropriate areas and premises in Welwyn Garden City. Welwyn Hatfield's emerging plan and evidence base identifies a small surplus of employment land over the plan period, though also recognises the need to flexibly respond to 'real world' demand(22). Welwyn Garden City lies outside of our defined FEMA area. However, such boundaries are never concrete and our evidence recognises there are strong commuting flows between Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City and also an element of property market overlap between the two towns, particularly for office space(23). |
| MM7 | 33 | Policy SP4 | <p>.....</p> <p>b. Promote the comprehensive and co-ordinated regeneration of Stevenage Central (Town Centre plus adjoining sites). This will provide for in the order of <u>4,700m²</u> 4,600m² of additional comparison retail floorspace, 3,000 new homes and an improved range of shopping, bars, restaurants, leisure, community, civic and cultural facilities. <u>An extended and regenerated new</u> train station will be the focus of an enlarged Stevenage Central area, within which six Major Opportunity Areas will be designated to promote distinct mixed use redevelopment schemes.</p> <p>c. Retain the primary retail frontages in both the Town Centre Shopping Area and the High Street <u>Shopping Area</u> as the focus of major comparison shopping</p> <p>.....</p> <p>d. Support the provision of up to 7,600 m² net of additional convenience floorspace within the Borough boundary by 2031 to meet the needs of the expanded town. This will include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. <u>1,500m²</u> for eExtensions to existing centres in the retail hierarchy, then other stores in accordance with the sequential test; ii. A Local Centre in the west of Stevenage development <u>in</u> with an anchor store of the order of 500m² and related small scale Use Class A1 shops sufficient to meet the day-to-day needs of the residents |

| Ref | Page | Policy / Para | Proposed Change |
|------|------|---------------|---|
| | | | <p>of the new neighbourhood;</p> <p>iii. A Local Centre in the north of Stevenage development in with an anchor store of the order of 500m² and related small scale Use Class A1 shops sufficient to meet the day-to-day needs of the residents of the new neighbourhood;</p> <p>iv. A Neighbourhood Centre in the south-east of Stevenage development of no more than the order of 500m² with a convenience store and other related small-scale Use Class A1 shops sufficient to meet the day-to-day needs of the residents of the new neighbourhood;</p> <p>v. A new allocation for a large new store, <u>in the order of 4,600m² net convenience goods floorspace and 920m² net comparison goods floorspace,</u> at Graveley Road to meet identified needs post-2023.</p> <p>.....</p> |
| MM8 | 34 | 5.34 | Our evidence studies show that there is a projected need for 4,600m² <u>4,700m²</u> of additional comparison retail floorspace during the lifetime of this plan. |
| MM9 | 36 | Policy SP5 | <p><i>Add additional criteria to the end of the Policy.....</i></p> <p><u>f. Ensure new development does not have an adverse effect on the Lee Valley Special Protection Area (SPA). New development post 2026 will only be permitted if the required capacity is available at Rye Meads STW, including any associated sewer connections.</u></p> |
| MM10 | 39 | Policy SP6 | <p>.....</p> <p>e. Assess proposals against the car and cycle parking standards set out in this Plan and the Supplementary Planning Documents; and.....</p> |
| MM11 | 42 | Policy SP7 | <p>.....</p> <p>f. Build a full range of homes in terms of tenure, type and size. This plan positively addresses housing needs and existing imbalances in the housing stock by setting targets for:</p> <p>i. At least 20% of all new homes over the plan period to be Affordable Housing with an aspiration to deliver up to 40% affordable housing where viability permits;</p> |

| Ref | Page | Policy / Para | Proposed Change |
|------|------|---------------|---|
| | | | <p>ii. Approximately 60% of new homes to be 1- or 2-bed, to be measured and reviewed on a rolling basis <u>An appropriate mix of housing sizes, in line with the most up-to-date evidence of need; and</u> </p> |
| MM12 | 46 | 5.86 | <p>Diversifying the Borough's housing stock <u>in terms of housing types and sizes</u>away from the 3-bed terraced homes that typified the Development Corporation is another key priority. In particular, wWe need to ensure the provision of homes <u>is in line with the most up-to-date assessment of need, including at the small / entry level and also for the large / family market homes, referred to in this plan as aspirational homes.</u></p> |
| MM13 | 57 | Policy SP11 | <p>..... a. ensure new development minimises and mitigates its impact on the environment and climate change by considering matters relating (but not necessarily limited) to <u>the provision of green space</u>, renewable energy, energy efficiency, water consumption, drainage, waste, pollution, contamination and sustainable construction techniques;</p> |
| MM14 | 59 | Policy SP12 | <p>The green infrastructure, and natural environment <u>and landscape</u> of Stevenage will be protected, and enhanced <u>and managed</u>, <u>and we will positively acknowledge its influence on Knebworth Woods SSSI and Lee Valley SPA.</u> We will:</p> <p>a. Identify, and ensure the ongoing protection of, <u>Create, protect and enhance</u> key areas of open space and biodiversity value including: </p> <p>b. Preserve, <u>create, protect</u> and enhance locally important linear features including: </p> <p>c. Provide <u>Create and protect</u> multi-functional green space and sports facilities as an integral part of new developments in accordance with the latest standards and permit the creation of other new open spaces where they will meet an identified deficit; and</p> <p>d. Only allow <u>Mitigate or, as a last resort, compensate</u> for the loss of green infrastructure or assets of biodiversity importance where they meet the detailed criteria set out in this plan <u>resulting from development; and</u></p> |

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| | | | e. <u>Only grant planning permission if an adequate assessment of priority habitats and species has been undertaken. Any identified impact on these habitats and/or species will need to be avoided, mitigated or compensated.</u> |
| MM15 | 60 | 5.149 | As well as sites specifically designed for public use, we will preserve important natural habitats. <u>The plan recognises 45 sites in Stevenage for their wildlife value and local importance.</u> Although There are no European or nationally designated sites in the Borough, <u>however</u> , there are a significant number of <u>locally important sites outside the Borough boundary including Knebworth Woods SSSI, Rye Meads SSSI, Chilterns AONB and the Lee Valley SPA.</u> This plan recognises 45 sites in Stevenage for their wildlife value. |
| MM16 | 64 | Policy EC1 | <i>Amended wording for Use Class of EC1/1, as follows:</i> B1(b), <u>B1(c)</u> with ancillary uses |
| MM17 | 64 | 6.2 | The future phase of the Bioscience Catalyst will ‘drawn-down’ on existing permissions that exist across the site. These allow for more than 50,000m² of new floorspace. The significant majority of this is for research and development (B1(b) uses). <u>In relation to the Stevenage GSK and Bioscience Catalyst Campus, initial master planning undertaken by GSK suggests that this site may have capacity for a significantly greater level of B1(b) and B1(c) floorspace than has previously been consented on the site. Any floorspace beyond the previously consented floorspace would need to be the subject of a fresh planning application.</u> Other B-Class uses will be allowed where they are ancillary to this <u>these uses</u> and help to nurture the continued growth of this international facility. |
| MM18 | 65 | Policy EC2 | <i>Split Policy EC2 into two separate policies, EC2a and EC2b, as follows:</i> <u>Policy EC2a: Gunnels Wood Employment Area</u> The spatial extent of the Gunnels Wood Employment Area is defined on the Proposals Map. <u>Policy EC2b: Gunnels Wood Edge-of-Centre Zone</u> |

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| | | | Within the Edge-of-Centre Zone, as shown on the proposals map, planning permission will be granted where or essential to the continued operation of an established B-class use. |
| MM19 | 76 | Policy TC2 | viii. Heritage assessment and design work to mitigate the impact on <u>preserve and enhance the significance of the Town Square Conservation Area and the contribution made by its setting.</u> |
| MM20 | 77 | Policy TC3 | f. A new Use Class C1 hotel, with <u>ancillary</u> conference facilities, close to the train station; g. A replacement main train station -taxi rank; and ii. Landmark <u>High quality place-defining</u> buildings should be located in appropriate, prominent locations; v. Residential uses to be focused to the west and south <u>the east of the site will only be permitted above first floor level and will require appropriate noise mitigation due to its proximity to,</u> away from the East Coast Main Line; vi. Provision for the main train station <u>a</u> taxi rank in proximity to the train station; |
| MM21 | 78 | 7.33 | It is anticipated that the replacement commercial and leisure uses will be focused to the east of the site, close to the train station, along with the new hotel, conference and office buildings. The residential uses are best focused to the west and south of the site, away from the noise of the East Coast Main Line. <u>Any residential use to the east will require noise mitigation.</u> |
| MM22 | 78 | 7.34 | As a part of the intention to create a train station that genuinely has two faces, it is intended to provide a replacement station -taxi rank on the Centre West site. |
| MM23 | 79 | Policy TC4 | a. <u>An extended and</u> regenerated train station; |

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| MM24 | 80 | Policy TC5 | <p>.....</p> <p>xi. Heritage assessment and design work to mitigate the impact on <u>preserve and enhance the significance of the Town Square Conservation Area and the contribution made by its setting.</u></p> |
| MM25 | 83 | Policy TC7 | <p>.....</p> <p>vii. Heritage assessment and design work to mitigate the impact on <u>preserve and enhance the significance of the Town Square Conservation Area and the contribution made by its setting.</u></p> |
| MM26 | 85 | Policy TC8 | <p>.....</p> <p>Within the TCSA, the following premises and areas are identified as Primary Frontages at ground floor level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 4-8 (even) Town Square • b. 2427-29 (odd) Town Square • c. 40- 50 and 66 - 96-98 (even) Queensway • d. 39-103 <u>41 – 73 and 79 – 101</u> (odd) Queensway • 6 – 22 (even) The Forum; • 1 – 11 (odd) The Forum; and • e. The Westgate Centre. <p>.....</p> <p>a. The proposal is for use class A3 (restaurants & cafes) at the following locations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 52, 54, 56, 60, 64, 75 & 77 <u>50 – 56, 60 – 64 & 75</u> Queensway • 1-4 <u>2 – 6 & 20 – 22</u> The Forum and 98 & 103 Queensway;..... |
| MM27 | 86 | Policy TC9 | <p>.....</p> <p>b. Would not cause harm to the significance of any designated heritage asset(s) <u>including through harm to their setting;</u></p> |

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| MM28 | 88 | Policy TC11 | <p>New Class A1 convenience retail floorspace provision will be expected to follow the sequential test and the town's <u>Borough's</u> retail hierarchy.</p> <p>At least 1,500m² floorspace is reserved to be provided as extensions to existing stores in the retail hierarchy, then other stores in accordance with the sequential test.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>New Local Centres will be permitted in each of the Stevenage West and North of Stevenage new neighbourhoods, each with an anchor convenience store of <u>in</u> the order of 500m², together with related small-scale Use Class A1 shops, to meet the day-to-day needs of the residents of the respective new developments.</p> <p>A Neighbourhood Centre will be permitted in the South-East of Stevenage development <u>of no more than</u> in the order of 500m² with a convenience store and other related small-scale Use Class A1 shops, sufficient to meet the day-to-day need of the new neighbourhood.</p> <p>These new Local Centres and the Neighbourhood Centre will become a part of the town's <u>Borough's</u> retail hierarchy. They should, wherever possible, be co-located with other community uses such as schools and/or health or community facilities, where such facilities are being provided.</p> <p>A site for a major new foodstore of up to 7,600m², <u>in the order of 4,600m² net convenience goods floorspace and 920m² net comparison goods floorspace</u> to serve Borough-wide needs post-2023 is identified on the policies map at Graveley Road. A retail impact assessment will be required, particularly focusing upon the impact on Local Centres and Neighbourhood Centres.</p> |
| MM29 | 89 | 7.69 | <p>Our evidence suggests that there is currently a small surplus of <u>need for</u> convenience floorspace in the town <u>Borough</u>. Only towards the middle of the plan period will a significant need for additional floorspace arise. This projected Borough-wide need is 7,000m², rising to 9,100m² of trading floorspace allowing for up to 20% of floorspace being devoted to ancillary comparison goods. <u>7,600m² net of convenience trading floorspace.</u></p> |

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| MM30 | 89 | 7.70 | <p>At least 20% of the need (1,500m²) <u>1,500m² of the total need is reserved to allow for extensions to existing centres in the retail hierarchy, then other stores in accordance with the sequential test.</u></p> <p>convenience stores, particularly in the Town Centre, the Old Town Major Centre, Poplars District Centre and Neighbourhood Centres, to preserve and strengthen their role. A further 1,500m² is reserved to the new Local Centres at Stevenage West and North of Stevenage, and the new Neighbourhood Centre at South East Stevenage. This will reduce the maximum size of a single new superstore to 7,600m², of which no more than 1,500m² of trading floorspace should be devoted to ancillary comparison goods. An allocation for a large new store post 2023 will address the remaining 4,600m² net of identified need for convenience floorspace. Allowing for up to 20% (920m²) of additional net floorspace within the store to be devoted to ancillary comparison goods, the total floorspace increases to 5,520m². Assuming a 70% gross to net floorspace ratio, the maximum floorspace of the new superstore would be 7,900m² gross.</p> |
| MM31 | 89 | Policy TC12 | <p>Planning permission will be granted for additional comparison retail floorspace of the order of 4,600m² <u>4,700m²</u> within one or more of the Town Centre Shopping Area, the Marshgate MOA, the Central Core MOA, the Station Gateway MOA or the Northgate MOA.</p> |
| MM32 | 90 | 7.73 | <p>Our evidence studies show that there is a projected need for 4,600m² <u>4,700m²</u> of additional comparison retail floorspace during the lifetime of this plan.</p> |
| MM33 | 90 | Policy TC13 | <p>Applications for main T<u>own C</u>entre uses should be located in the Town Centre, then in edge-of-centre locations and only if suitable sites are not available will out-of-centre sites be considered. When considering edge-of-centre and out-of-centre sites, preference will be given to accessible sites that are well connected (preferably by multi-modal means) to the t<u>own e</u>ntre.</p> <p>An impact assessment will be required for <u>any proposals in excess of 300m² for main town centre uses outside the Town Centre which exceeds the following floorspace thresholds:</u></p> <p>a. _____ Town Centre: 2,500m²</p> <p>b. _____ High Street Shopping Area: 1,000m²</p> |

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| | | | <p>c. District Centre and Local Centres: 750m² d. Neighbourhood Centres: 500m² e. Elsewhere: 300m² The assessment This should include an assessment of:</p> <p>ii. The impact of the proposal on town centre vitality and viability, including local consumer choice and trade in the the Town Centre and wider area, up to five years from the time that the application is made. For major schemes, where the full impact will not be realised in five years, the impact should also be assessed up to ten years from the time that the application is made;</p> <p>iii. Proposals will be permitted unless they fail the sequential test, or are likely to have a significant adverse impact on one or both of the above factors.</p> |
| MM34 | 91 | 7.77 | <p>We will follow the guidance in the NPPF (paragraphs 24 - 26) that we should apply a sequential test to planning applications for major Town Centre uses (as defined in Annex 2 to the NPPF) that are not in an existing centre outside of the Town Centre. We have set our own a local thresholds for centres <u>an impact assessment for proposals</u> outside the the Town Centre, as the alternative would be that applications should be are assessed against the national threshold (of 2,500m²), which our evidence suggests <u>could be potentially harmful to centres.</u></p> |
| MM35 | 91 | 7.78 | <p>..... When considering edge-of-centre and out-of-centre sites, preference will be given to accessible sites that are well connected (preferably by multi-modal means) to the Town Centre. </p> |
| MM36 | 91 | 7.79 | <p><i>Delete entire paragraph.</i></p> <p>When assessing applications for main town centre uses outside of the town Centre, the Borough Council will require an impact assessment if the development is over the thresholds set in Policy TC13 above, which are indicated as being necessary by our evidence studies.</p> |

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| MM37 | 92 | Policy IT1 |Alternative access points and solutions will only be permitted where they are demonstrably preferable in highways terms. |
| MM38 | 93 | 8.10 |Alternative proposals will only be considered where they are robustly demonstrated to be preferable in terms of: |
| MM39 | 94 | Policy IT3 | Planning permission for significant development proposals <u>sites of 200 dwellings or more, including smaller sites being brought forward in phases that will cumulatively exceed this threshold</u> , will be granted where applicants satisfactorily demonstrate how infrastructure needs arising from their proposals will be met. |
| MM40 | 95 - 96 | Policy IT4 | Planning permission will be granted where: a. Development would not have an adverse impact upon highway safety; <u>b. Development reflects the principles of the Stevenage Mobility Strategy;</u> b. c. Schemes exceeding the relevant thresholds are accompanied by a satisfactory Transport Statement or Assessment, which demonstrates that <u>the residual cumulative impacts of development are not severe; and</u> i. no significant adverse impacts will result; or ii. steps can be taken to mitigate any adverse impacts to an acceptable level <u>c. d. Residential Developments exceeding the Transport Assessment threshold are accompanied by an acceptable (green) travel plan.</u> |
| MM41 | 96 | New para's. Insert before 8.21 | <i>Add new paragraphs before para 8.21:</i> <u>8.21 The Stevenage Borough Council strategy is to support and encourage increasing Mobility by sustainable and inclusive modes. It is to support a mode shift over time from car driver to more space efficient, socially inclusive and less polluting forms of Mobility, and not simply to supply extra road capacity for the benefit of car borne commuters in peak periods.</u> <u>8.22 Stevenage is a Sustainable Travel Town and the Mobility Strategy focuses on reducing the need to travel overall and increasing the proportion of journeys made by sustainable modes (on foot, by bicycle,</u> |

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| | | | <p><u>by public transport, or via schemes such as cycle hire and car clubs). The initiatives include walking, cycling and shared mobility infrastructure and enhancements, together with behaviour schemes.</u></p> <p><u>8.23 The Strategy expects a step change in uptake of sustainable modes. It also advises that it is likely that some highway capacity would need to be reallocated for use by pedestrians, cyclists and bus users.</u></p> <p><u>8.24 A Mobility Steering Group formed of Hertfordshire County Council, Stevenage Borough Council and invited stakeholders will monitor progress of the delivery of the Stevenage Mobility Strategy.</u></p> <p><i>Update subsequent paragraph numbers accordingly.</i></p> |
| MM42 | 96 | 8.21 | Maintaining safe and effective access to homes, facilities, jobs and schools is essential to ensuring good quality of life and a prosperous economy. Development proposals will not be supported where <u>the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe.</u> they will have an unacceptable adverse impact on the highway |
| MM43 | 96 | 8.23 | Transport modelling has been carried out to inform the production of this plan. Developers are encouraged to <u>agree the most appropriate approach to transport modelling with the highway authority and Stevenage Borough Council.</u> make use of this model when preparing their development proposals. |
| MM44 | 96 | 8.24 | Travel plans set out measures that will be adopted by developers or businesses to encourage residents or staff to use more sustainable modes of transport for their journeys. Initiatives can include, <u>but are not limited to,</u> car sharing, cycle storage, showers, dedicated bus services, and <u>homeworking, smart technology, cycle training, personalised travel planning and education and behavioural change measures.</u> |
| MM45 | 97 | Policy IT5 | Planning permission will be granted where proposals comply with the parking standards set out in this plan and have regard to the requirements of the Parking Provision Standards Supplementary Planning Document. |

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| MM46 | 97 | 8.26 | As such, it is important to ensure that new development provides appropriate levels of car parking to prevent existing problems being exacerbated. This is particularly true of new residential development. Residential car parking standards are contained in Appendix B of this plan <u>within the Parking Provision SPD</u> . These include the discounts that will be applied in more accessible locations. Relevant applications will be required to meet these standards. |
| MM47 | 98 | Policy IT6 | 6. New or improved <u>bus</u> services and facilities within 400 metres of major developments. |
| MM48 | 100 | Policy IT7 | Planning permission will be granted where proposals maintain, enhance, reasonably provide or reasonably contribute towards these routes : <u>Routes</u> <u>The following schemes are identified as priority new and improved links for pedestrians and cyclists:</u> <i>Retain existing list of routes.</i> <u>Cycle Parking</u> <u>The Stevenage Cycle Strategy identifies improvements to cycle parking provision available to the public in Stevenage in terms of gaps in provision at appropriate locations as well as the quality of existing cycle parking.</u> <u>Wayfinding</u> <u>The Stevenage Cycle Strategy identifies improvements to wayfinding for pedestrians and cyclists in and around Stevenage, which includes signage and maps.</u> |
| MM49 | 101 | New Para | <i>Insertion of additional paragraph after 8.44</i> |

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| | | after 8.44 | <u>The Stevenage Cycle Strategy will be regularly reviewed and updated over the plan period to ensure that it is up to date in terms of the infrastructure needs for active travel.</u> |
| MM50 | 105 | Table 3 | <i>Delete row 2 relating to Bragbury End Sports Ground (This is covered by Policy HO4).</i> |
| MM51 | 105 | Table 3 | <i>Delete the third bullet point of row 3 relating to Bragbury End sports ground car park:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The loss of sports facilities will need to be mitigated against. |
| MM52 | 106 | Table 3 | <i>Amendment to row 7 relating to Former Pin Green School playing field:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific measures identified NB. Main modification to be deleted. |
| MM53 | 106 | Table 3 | <i>Amendment to row 12 relating to Land West of North Road (Rugby Club):</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfactory relocation/reprovision of existing sports facilities. <u>Replacement sports facilities in a suitable location, and of equivalent, or better, quantity and quality will be required, prior to development.</u> |
| MM54 | 107-108 | Policy HO2 | Land to the west of Stevenage, as defined by the proposals map, is allocated for the development of approximately 1,350 dwellings. A Masterplan for the whole site will be required as part of any outline planning application. The Masterplan must be approved prior to the submission of detailed development proposals for the site. Development proposals will be permitted where the following criteria are met:..... h. At least 30% affordable housing is provided in line with Policy HO7; |

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| | | | <p>.....</p> <p>k. Local facilities to serve the community are incorporated, including a GP surgery, <u>subject to demand</u>;</p> <p>l. Sports facilities are provided on-site, in line with Policy HC8, including, <u>but not limited to</u>:</p> <p>i. A skate park or MUGA for children; and</p> <p>ii. <u>Land to accommodate a</u> new cricket pitch facility;</p> <p>.....</p> <p>r. <u>Electric car charging points are provided at an easily accessible location within the site.</u></p> <p><i>Additional text added to end of Policy HO2, as follows:</i></p> <p><u>It is recognised that the site may be delivered by a number of different developers. In this case, any phase of development would be required to demonstrate that it would enable the delivery of the policy objectives for the development as a whole and those relevant to that phase, and enable an expanded scheme within North Hertfordshire District Council. Community facilities should be provided in a location that allows them to be expanded to meet the needs of the site as a whole.</u></p> |
| MM55 | 109 | 9.18 | <p>Sports facilities will also be required, in line with policy HC8. <u>As part of this requirement, our evidence identifies a need for an additional cricket pitch facility to be provided within the town, towards the end of the plan period. It recommends Stevenage West as the preferred location for this provision to be made. Subject to an up-to-date assessment of demand, the masterplan will be expected to show how this facility can be accommodated within the site. It is likely that additional (external) sources of funding will be required to deliver this facility. This will require further discussion at pre-application stage. In the event that no demand need/insufficient need is shown for the proposed facility by an operator, equivalent quantitative sports pitch provision will be required in accordance with Policy HC8. A skate park / alternative youth facilities will also be required.</u></p> |
| MM56 | 109 | 9.21 | <p><i>Add to end of paragraph 9.21...</i></p> <p><u>If self-build plots are not taken up by the public after being marketed for at least two years, we will allow these to revert to conventional build plots.</u></p> |

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| MM57 | 109-111 | Policy HO3 | <p>.....</p> <p>f. At least 30% affordable housing is provided in line with policy HO7;</p> <p>.....</p> <p>h. Local facilities to serve the community are incorporated, including a GP surgery, <u>subject to demand</u>;</p> <p>.....</p> <p>v. Existing Public Rights of Way are retained and designed into the development, where possible, <u>and diverted where necessary</u>; and</p> <p>vi. Building styles and layout <u>within the conservation area</u> to the east of the site should reflect the key features of the conservation area.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>p. <u>Electric car charging points are provided at an easily accessible location within the site.</u></p> |
| MM58 | 111 | 9.24 | <p>There is currently no vehicular access to the site. The primary access route can be taken from North Road. An additional access point is likely to be required <u>for phases of development beyond 300 units (or equivalent traffic generating uses)</u>. The developer will need to work with the Highways Authority to ensure any required improvements to the road network are undertaken.</p> |
| MM59 | 111 | 9.29 | <p><i>Add to end of para 9.29.....</i></p> <p><u>If self-build plots are not taken up by the public after being marketed for at least two years, we will allow these to revert to conventional build plots.</u></p> |
| MM60 | 112-113 | Policy HO4 | <p>.....</p> <p>e. At least 30% affordable housing is provided in line with policy HO7;</p> <p>.....</p> <p>g. The loss of sports facilities to the north of the A602 will need to be mitigated against;</p> <p>h. Local facilities to serve the community are incorporated, including a GP surgery;</p> |

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| | | | <p><i>Update all subsequent criteria numbering following the deletions above.</i></p> <p><i>Add the following text to the end of the Policy:</i></p> <p><u>n. Electric car charging points are provided at an easily accessible location within the site.</u></p> <p><u>The following will also be required to be provided within the parcel south of A602, unless demonstrated that these facilities are more satisfactorily accommodated on the northern part of the site:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. <u>Local facilities to serve the community, including a GP surgery, subject to demand; and</u> ii. <u>On-site sports facilities in line with Policy HC8, including, but not limited to, the provision of a MUGA or Skate Park for children.</u> |
| MM61 | 113 | 9.36 / 9.37 | <p><i>Add new para after 9.36.....</i></p> <p><u>Applicants for planning permission will need to address the requirements of the Development Plan as a whole. In this instance, this will include the Hertfordshire Minerals Plan which contains these sites within the Sand and Gravel Belt. Further advice can be obtained from either the Borough or County Councils on the practical implications of this designation</u></p> <p><i>Update subsequent paragraph numbers accordingly.</i></p> <p><i>Add to end of following para (currently 9.37)...</i></p> <p><u>.....However, developers' contributions will be required towards improvements to existing public playing field sites in Stevenage, as part of the requirement for sports provision arising from Policy HC8. A skate park or MUGA for children will also be required.</u></p> |
| MM62 | 114 | 9.41 | <p><i>Add to end of para 9.41.....</i></p> |

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| | | | <u>If self-build plots are not taken up by the public after being marketed for at least two years, we will allow these to revert to conventional build plots.</u> |
| MM63 | 116 | Policy HO7 | <p>Planning permission will be granted for residential developments that maximise affordable housing provision based on agreed values and viability at the time of application. The following target levels of affordable housing provision will apply <u>to schemes that meet the thresholds set out in national guidance:.....</u></p> <p><i>Add to end of Policy.....</i></p> <p><u>Residential or mixed use schemes, that are not compliant with the above targets, or fail to meet other Local Plan policies, must be accompanied by a financial appraisal, based on agreed costs and development values at the time of the application. Where an appraisal shows that affordable housing provision in excess of the relevant target level can be supported, a higher level of provision will be encouraged.</u></p> |
| MM64 | 116 | Para 9.53 | <p>All major <u>Residential or mixed use schemes, that are not target compliant or fail to meet other key Local Plan Policies (those that were inputs into the whole plan viability assessment), must be accompanied by a financial appraisal, based on current costs and development values at the time of the application. All appraisals will be subject to scrutiny and review by the Council's Housing team. It is our expectation that affordable housing provision will be maximised once reasonable costs and returns and other policy requirements have been taken into account. Where an appraisal shows that affordable housing provision in excess of the relevant target level can be supported, this a higher level of provision will apply be encouraged.</u></p> |
| MM65 | 117 | 9.57 | <p>At present, there is no national (or other, externally set)<u>The NPPG sets thresholds for sites on which affordable housing provision can be required and it will be sought on all sites. Currently, affordable housing can only be sought on sites of over 10 dwellings. Should these thresholds be adopted withdrawn in the future, the targets set out in Policy HO7 will apply to all schemes either by the council in response to a review of viability evidence, or by Government – these will apply.</u></p> |

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| MM66 | 119 | 9.66 | Alongside this, the requirements suggested by up-to-date housing and population projections and other relevant demographic evidence will be taken into account. Recent trends suggest <u>a significant need for houses over flats</u> . that the number of people living on their own will increase over time. We need to increase the number of flats and smaller houses that are available to provide a responsive range of accommodation, and also to provide greater opportunities for first time buyers. At the opposite end of the scale, Particularly, there are very few large family homes. Only 1 in 100 homes in Stevenage are in the highest Council Tax brackets ⁽⁹³⁾ . |
| MM67 | 119 | 9.67 | <i>Delete paragraph 9.67.</i> Taking these issues into account, schemes will be assessed against an overall ambition that new development will deliver a 60:40 split between small (defined as studio, 1- and 2-bed) and large (3- or more bed) market units. <i>Update subsequent paragraph numbers accordingly.</i> |
| MM68 | 119 | 9.68 | This small unit need supports the requirement for higher densities in more accessible locations. The original masterplan for Stevenage involved building at relatively low densities of 25-30 dwellings per hectare. |
| MM69 | 122 | Policy HO11 | Planning permission for major residential schemes will generally be conditioned to ensure at least 50% of all new dwellings are Category 2: wheelchair accessible and adaptable <u>dwellings</u> |
| MM70 | 123 | 9.86 |As a result there needs to be an increase in the overall percentage of new homes built over the plan period that will be required to meet wheelchair accessible <u>and adaptable dwellings</u> standards. |
| MM71 | 123 | Policy HO12 | The following site, as shown on the policies <u>proposals</u> map, is allocated for permanent <u>accommodation</u> for Gypsies and Travellers <u>(including those who have ceased to travel permanently)</u> <u>accommodation</u> : |

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| | | | <p><i>Add to end of Policy...</i></p> <p><u>The council is willing, if necessary, to consider using its Compulsory Purchase Order powers under section 2236 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, if it appears that the site is not otherwise going to be delivered.</u></p> |
| MM72 | 125 | 9.93 | <p><i>Add to end of para 9.93:</i></p> <p><u>Until the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Study is reviewed (anticipated in 2018), in assessing the need for additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches the Council will define Gypsies and Travellers as: <i>Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin including persons who, on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependent's educational or health needs or old age, have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently.</i></u></p> |
| MM73 | 125 | Policy HO13 | <p>Planning permission for accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers (<u>including those who have ceased to travel permanently</u>) or Travelling Showpeople on unallocated sites will only be granted where the proposal:</p> <p>a. Satisfies a demonstrated local need for accommodation and follows a sequential approach to site selection;</p> |
| MM74 | 126 | 9.96 | <p><i>Add to end of para 9.96:</i></p> <p><u>Until the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Study is reviewed (anticipated in 2018), in assessing the need for additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches the Council will define Gypsies and Travellers as: <i>Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin including persons who, on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependent's educational or health needs or old age, have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently.</i></u></p> |
| MM75 | 127 | Policy GD1 | <p>.....</p> <p>ii. The car parking <u>and access</u> standards in Policy IT5 and the Parking Provision SPD;</p> |

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| | | | j. Meets, and where possible exceeds , the nationally described space standards;..... |
| MM76 | 132 | 11.20 | Policy HC3 safeguards the existing hospital site, <u>including the main hospital buildings, residential accommodation for hospital employees to the east, offices, training facilities and parking provision</u> . This will allow the Lister Hospital to operate successfully throughout the plan period to 2031. |
| MM77 | 132 | New para after 11.21 | <i>Add new para after 11.21. Update subsequent paragraph numbers.</i> <u>Planning permission for appropriate healthcare related uses within this area will be granted, including ancillary facilities (the definition of which includes residential accommodation for staff).</u> |
| MM78 | 132 | 11.22 | There is a A small parcel of undeveloped land within this campus, adjacent to the A602 provides the opportunity for additional healthcare related uses, including the expansion of the Lister Hospital. Development here will be restricted to healthcare related uses, which complement the existing facilities. |
| MM79 | 135 | Policy HC7 | c. <u>With the exception of sports facilities, a A</u> -sequential approach to site selection has been followed |
| MM80 | 137 | 11.43 | <i>Add to end of para 11.43.....</i> <u>As detailed in paragraph 5.42, we are looking to implement CIL in Stevenage. Once implemented, standard charges will, instead, be collected to fund projects across the Borough.</u> |
| MM81 | 138 | Policy HC9 | The school will be required to provide a sports hall, at least 4 courts in size, which offers public access through a Community Use Agreement, <u>or a similar arrangement.</u> |
| MM82 | 143 | Policy FP2 | Planning permission for <u>all major</u> development sites that are one hectare or more will be granted where: |

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| MM83 | 145 | Policy FP3 | <p>.....</p> <p>ii. That the development will not Whether it will increase flood risk elsewhere;</p> <p>iii. That Whether the measures proposed to deal with these effects and risks are appropriate;</p> <p>iv. The evidence for us, as the local planning authority, to apply (if necessary) the Sequential Test; and</p> <p>v. That Whether the development will be safe and pass the Exception Test, if applicable.</p> <p>.....</p> |
| MM84 | 149 | Policy FP7 | All development proposals should minimise, and where possible, reduce air, <u>water</u> , light and noise pollution..... |
| MM85 | 163 | 14.52 | The provision of new public open space in this area <u>will comprise the open space provision for the North of Stevenage development allocated under HO3, but</u> could also allow for some offsetting of open space requirements arising from other developments in the plan period, or from the town as a whole, and any proposals will be viewed in this context. |
| MM86 | 168 | 15.4 | The amount of new development being planned for is significant. It cannot occur without significant investment in infrastructure and supporting facilities. Key items and facilities are <u>set out summarised</u> in the <u>Infrastructure Delivery Plan table on the following page</u> . Key delivery bodies are identified and costs are provided where known. This is based on the requirements identified in the IDP (137). The delivery of these schemes will be monitored on an on-going basis in our Authority Monitoring Reports. |
| MM87 | 169-179 | Chapter 15 | <i>Remove entire table at the end of chapter 15, which replicates the IDP schedule.</i> |
| MM88 | 195 | Appendix B: Mobility Strategy | <p>Insertion of a new appendix after Appendix A, entitled Mobility Strategy and consisting of the Stevenage Mobility Strategy as set out in ED127, Transport Technical Paper, chapter 4.</p> <p><u>This Mobility Strategy for Stevenage makes commitments to tried, tested and innovative initiatives in Mobility and Behaviour, that do not just mitigate the demands from the Local Plan growth but will accelerate the more efficient use of transport infrastructure within the town. It enables growth, not just for this Local Plan but beyond, with a reduced reliance on the car and more active and integrated communities.</u></p> |

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| | | | <p><u>It steers away from the historic, and now contra-policy, predict and provide car commuter peak as a proxy for transport and Mobility. Instead of prioritising road building schemes to satisfy a theoretical short lived car commuter demand, the strategy is to design for and prioritise Mobility as a whole. It is to create even more attractive choice in movement than already exists, committing funds to physical improvements to the higher capacity cycle network, which can be up to seven times more effective in terms of unit road space compared with car use, invest in public transport and make huge inroads in influencing behaviour by significant funding of new measures to promote and use the mobility options that already exist and will improve.</u></p> <p><u>The commuter peak periods are the times of the day when the highway network is under the most pressure. The National Travel Survey (NTS) shows that in the AM peak hour (08:00- 09:00), 25% of all movement is for commuting and business purposes and 50% is associated with education¹. Therefore, three quarters of all movement in the AM peak hour are focussed on just these two activities. In the PM peak hour (17:00-18:00), over 40% of all movement is associated with these purposes.</u></p> <p><u>In addition to this, Stevenage has a high level of internalisation of jobs, with many local residents taking up available jobs in Stevenage. Therefore, commuting distances will be short for many residents. A high proportion of all trips, not just commuter trips, are less than 5 miles.</u></p> <p><u>Figure 4.1 – Propensity to Increase Active Travel for Short Trips (as ED127, page 15)</u></p> <p><u>Given this, the strategy is to be cognisant of these trip purposes and to target in particular short trips made by car that could easily be made by active travel and public transport instead.</u></p> <p><u>Active Travel Strategy</u></p> <p><u>Existing Situation</u></p> |

¹ National Travel Survey Table NTSS0502 Trip Start Time by Trip Purpose (Monday to Friday) England

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| | | | <p><u>Stevenage's cycle network was modelled on Dutch infrastructure and by the 1970s, when the network was finalised, Stevenage was held up as proof that the UK could build a Dutch-style cycle network.</u></p> <p><u>Stevenage's good active travel infrastructure can easily become excellent with further investment. The cycle routes have the capacity to accommodate significant movement by bicycle, becoming material economic conduits for movement. Appendix i is the cycle map of the whole Stevenage network. (Stevenage Cycle Route Network map to be inserted at the end of the Mobility Strategy, as ED127, final page).</u></p> <p><u>Proposed Strategy</u></p> <p><u>Stevenage Borough Council will place a high priority on active travel. For the purposes of this Local Plan and beyond, it will plan on the basis that the proportion of travel by active travel will increase, that commuter peak car demand will remain broadly static and therefore that the proportion of travel by car driver will decrease.</u></p> <p><u>The strategy is to further encourage this shift through the creation of an active travel /car differential whereby it is more attractive to cycle for short journeys than drive.</u></p> <p><u>The existence of the extensive, segregated cycle infrastructure means that Stevenage is better equipped than many towns to facilitate safe and convenient cycling and encourage this change in emphasis.</u></p> <p><u>In Hertfordshire, it has been estimated that 63% of all journeys are less than 5 miles. Not only has Stevenage been designed with cycling in mind, but the majority of trips are of a distance that can comfortably be accommodated by a choice of means of mobility.</u></p> <p><u>The strategy will focus on the following aspects:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cycle Strategy: an up to date cycling strategy will be prepared for Stevenage that will set out the |

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| | | | <p><u>strategy, measures and timescales for implementation. The strategy will consider all potential cycle trip purposes, including commuting, cycling to school and recreational cycling.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An upgraded cycle network: <u>the highest priority for investment will be the upgrade of the existing cycle network, which has suffered from a historic lack of investment. This will include improved surfacing, improved lighting, addressing missing links in the network and changes to priority where cycleways meet the highway in order to create continuous routes. In accordance with Policy IT5 of the Local Plan, developers will be required to provide safe, direct and convenient routes within the development, and link to existing cycleway and pedestrian networks.</u> • Wayfinding: <u>the former active travel Wayfinding Strategy that was developed, but not implemented, will be reviewed and updated where necessary. An Action Plan for its implementation will be included in the updated Cycle Strategy.</u> • Cycle Storage: <u>a review of existing cycle parking available to the public within Stevenage will be undertaken. The review will identify any gaps in existing cycle parking provision in terms of appropriate locations at trip ends as well as the quality of cycle parking. In addition, in accordance with Policy IT5 of the Local Plan, developers will be required to provide secure cycle parking as part of any development coming forward.</u> • Cycle Training: <u>Positive actions to influence behaviour are education in, and awareness of, opportunities, including the opportunity to make best use of the active travel infrastructure. Cycle training, including for those of an early age, will help to broaden horizons and provide confidence.</u> <p><u>Public Transport Strategy</u></p> <p><u>Existing Situation</u></p> <p><u>Public transport (buses and trains) is well used in Stevenage. Approximately 6% of travel to work is by bus, and 7% by train. However, the existing bus and railway station have been underinvested for some time and require an upgrade in provision. The bus-rail transfer is currently relatively poor as the existing bus station is not located adjacent to the railway station to provide a seamless interchange.</u></p> <p><u>Proposed Strategy</u></p> |

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| | | | <p><u>As part of the regeneration of the Town Centre it is proposed to close the existing bus station and replace it with new bus interchange at the railway station. It is also proposed to significantly improve bus connections into and through Stevenage, which will enable more employees in the town centre and Gunnels Wood employment area easily access their place of work.</u></p> <p><u>Through the Thameslink expansion, Stevenage will be directly connected, by fast services, to the heart of central London and a variety of destinations south of London, including Gatwick Airport. Services will also stop at Farringdon for easy connections onto the Elizabeth Line (i.e. Crossrail) to Heathrow, Canary Wharf and beyond. With new trains on both commuter and intercity services, by 2018 there will be a step change in the accessibility and attractiveness of travel by rail to/from Stevenage. The Local Plan identifies (Policy TC4 iv) a proposal for a radically improved new Stevenage railway station, with National Rail having plans for a 5th platform, as part of a broader central area regeneration scheme. This will also help to drive a shift in travel onto rail.</u></p> <p><u>Car Parking Strategy</u></p> <p><u>Proposed Strategy</u></p> <p><u>Parking is no longer a stand-alone issue, but has become a key aspect of both transport and land use planning. Control over the availability of parking spaces is a key policy instrument in influencing car trips. The supply and pricing of car parking has a fundamental influence on the way people travel. Research has shown that even where good alternatives to the car exist, if cheap and convenient car parking is available then people with access to a car will tend to choose this mode of travel.</u></p> <p><u>The 2004 Parking Strategy will be updated as part of the development of the Stevenage Mobility Strategy as a tool for encouraging greater activity in the town centre whilst minimising the demand for commuter car parking.</u></p> <p><u>Stevenage Borough Council will take the lead in this by critically reviewing and managing its own staff</u></p> |

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| | | | <p><u>car parking strategy.</u></p> <p><u>Car Sharing</u></p> <p><u>Existing Situation</u></p> <p><u>Hertfordshire County Council currently operates a Liftshare car-pooling scheme, which has over 1,000 members.</u></p> <p><u>Proposed Strategy</u></p> <p><u>Stevenage Borough Council will develop car-pooling within the Stevenage community, and expect new development, where appropriate, to invest in the development and encouragement of this type of mobility. It will stay abreast of the significant emerging European research in this field, and seek the implementation of the most effective elements of this growing, and particularly socially inclusive, method of mobility.</u></p> <p><u>Workplace Travel Planning</u></p> <p><u>Existing Situation</u></p> <p><u>2011 Census data provides an insight into the main modes of travel for people working in Stevenage. This shows that 69% of people who work in Stevenage drive a car, 11% travel by public transport and 13% walk or cycle.</u></p> <p><u>Figure 4.2 – Mode of Travel to Work for People Working in Stevenage (2011 Census) (as ED127, page 19)</u></p> <p><u>The Hertfordshire 2015 Household Survey provides a useful insight into how far people travel to work and by which mode. Of particular interest are those trips that are under 3 miles, and therefore have the</u></p> |

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| | | | <p><u>easiest potential to be made by sustainable modes. Figure 4.3 illustrates the mode share of journeys to work under 3 miles.</u></p> <p><u>Figure 4.3 – Mode of Travel for Journey to Work Trips under 3 miles (as ED127, page 19)</u></p> <p><u>The survey showed that 22% of journeys to work in Hertfordshire are within 3 miles and that over half (52%) of these journeys are made by car. There is a significant potential for mode shift for these short trips to be made by active travel, public transport or more efficient use of the car.</u></p> <p><u>Proposed Strategy</u></p> <p><u>Gunnels Wood, between the A1(M) and the town centre, is by far the largest employment site in Stevenage. The area is made up of a large range of businesses, from small and medium businesses through to some very large employers including GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) and MBDA. Around 19,000 employees work on the estate for approximately 300 different businesses and it is set to intensify as part of the Local Plan.</u></p> <p><u>The concentration of this many people, makes it an ideal area to target travel behaviour change through a range of travel planning measures. Major employers in this area, including GSK, are already part of the SmartGo Stevenage scheme, which offers a range of travel benefits and services to help make travel cheaper and easier for employees.</u></p> <p><u>The strategy is to concentrate infrastructure and behavioural influence initiatives in these concentrated areas of employment, which include the Council office in Stevenage. There are some significant mobility benefits to be had in this way, and a strong evidential basis already in the UK for the effectiveness of this.</u></p> <p><u>Education Travel Planning</u></p> <p><u>Existing Situation</u></p> |

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| | | | <p><u>With regards to education trips, the Hertfordshire 2015 Household Survey shows that 40% of trips (all school ages) are made by car and the remaining 60% by non-car modes.</u></p> <p><u>Figure 4.4 – Mode of Travel for Education Trips (All School Ages) (as ED127, page 20)</u></p> <p><u>Short car trips have the greatest propensity to change to active travel. The short educational trips (under 3 miles) make up the vast majority of education related trips (over 70%) and, 30% of these are currently made by car. Therefore, any shift away from the car for these trips would have a positive effect on travel, particularly in the morning peak period.</u></p> <p><u>Figure 4.5 - Mode of Travel for Education Trips under 3 miles (as ED127, page 21)</u></p> <p><u>Proposed Strategy</u></p> <p><u>The Transport Strategy for Stevenage will focus on encouraging a change in behaviour away from the car for education trips. There is a good evidential base² for the effectiveness and benefits of education related interventions on school related travel, to the extent that positive behavioural initiatives can have a substantial effect on the propensity to travel to school by healthy and sustainable means. The strategy is to promote a plethora of measures, including:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Development and enforcement of School Travel Plans;</u> • <u>Bikeability cycle training in schools; and</u> • <u>Continued development of education facilities within easy access by non-car modes.</u> <p><u>Highway Network Management</u></p> <p><u>Proposed Strategy</u></p> |

² DfT Modeshift STARS; NICE Guidance “What can local authorities achieve by encouraging walking and cycling”; Living Streets “Making the Case for Investment in the Walking Environment, A Review of the Evidence”

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| | | | <p><u>For car travel in Stevenage to be sustainable, many people will need to travel by other means. It is unrealistic to expect traffic to flow unimpeded at peak times, or to design to accommodate that desire.</u></p> <p><u>The strategy is to prioritise delivery of the overall mobility network. In some cases, that might mean reallocation of road space between modes, and this may include junction or road improvements.</u></p> <p><u>In terms of traffic capacity, the Council will identify pinch points on the network in the first instance, and prioritise funding for road capacity improvements to relieve those pinch points in the context of the overarching mobility strategy. The IDP identifies the pinch points currently forecast by the traffic modelling exercise and assigns costs and priorities to those measures.</u></p> |
| MM89 | 195 | Appendix B | <i>Delete Appendix B Residential car parking standards.</i> |



Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031

Adopted 22 May 2019

Part I: Introduction and context

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Contents

1 Introduction

What is planning and the local plan?

1.1 Planning is about making sure that development happens in the right place at the right time.

1.2 Most new development in Britain needs planning permission before it can be built. We use planning policies to help us decide if we should grant planning permission for new development. Policies might say which sites can be built on and which sites should be protected. They can also say what types of uses developments must contain, or what they should look like.

1.3 The Local Plan identifies the main issues that are likely to affect Stevenage and sets policies to deal with them. It provides the answers to some important questions:

- How much housing and employment will be needed in the future and where will this be built?
- Is any new land needed for important services like schools and hospitals?
- How will we protect the environment and make sure that everyone can use open spaces near their home?
- How do we reduce our impact on climate change and make people think about the way in which they travel?

1.4 By considering all of these issues at the same time, we have produced a plan to meet the future needs of Stevenage. We have also set out who is responsible for making sure that the ideas in the plan actually happen and how we will measure if our policies are working.

1.5 This plan contains three main sections:

- **Part I: Introduction and context** ~ This section explains how the planning system works and why the Local Plan is important. It provides background information about Stevenage and the wider area. It sets a vision for the future of the town.
- **Part II: Strategic policies** ~ These provide guidance on the main issues that the plan addresses. It sets out our overall approach to topics such as housing and employment. It sets the key targets that the plan will meet. These are the policies that any neighbourhood plans will need to follow.
- **Part III: Detailed policies and delivery** ~ These are the detailed requirements that we will apply to individual planning applications to make sure that our vision and strategic policies can be achieved.

Why have we prepared a new plan?

1.6 Our last Local Plan was adopted in 2004⁽¹⁾. Since this time, there have been a lot of important changes. These include:

- **Legislation:** This refers to Acts (or laws) that are passed by Parliament and regulations that are written by the Government and tell us the things that we legally have to do. The 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act changed the way we have to prepare and adopt our

1 Stevenage District Plan Second Review (Stevenage Borough Council (SBC), 2004)

plans. The 2011 Localism Act introduced more new requirements. Our last Local Plan was written before these came fully into force. The Government has recently stated that all authorities must produce a local plan by early 2017.

- **National planning advice:** A new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012. This replaced all previous advice into one, much shorter, document. We have to take the NPPF into account when we write our new Plan. Detailed National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) was released in March 2014. This provides more information on how we should achieve the aims of the NPPF.
- **Neighbourhood Planning:** The 2011 Localism Act introduced Neighbourhood Plans. This is a new type of plan that has to be taken into account when we decide planning applications.
- **Local evidence:** We have carried out a large number of evidence studies. These have provided us with important and up-to-date information. This includes things like the type of homes that should be built in the future, what facilities are provided in the town's neighbourhood centres and the likely effect of our policies on the environment.

1.7 The legislation and national planning advice above say that all local authorities should have an up-to-date local plan. This new Plan takes these matters into account and will help us make the best decisions when we are deciding planning applications.

What is the National Planning Policy Framework and why is it important?

1.8 The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and must be taken into account when we prepare this plan or decide if we should grant planning permission for new developments. It says that we should try to meet the development needs of our area. We should identify future housing, business and other requirements and then use our plan to say where and when these will be met.

1.9 The NPPF provides advice on a wide range of matters. It says we should:

- Do everything we can to support sustainable economic growth;
- Recognise the importance of our town centres and other shopping areas;
- Minimise the need to travel, support reductions in greenhouse gases and reduce congestion;
- Build enough market and affordable housing to meet identified needs;
- Plan positively for high quality and inclusive design;
- Deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities needed by the community;
- Protect Green Belts and only alter them in exceptional circumstances;
- Say how we will meet the challenges of climate change. We should consider issues such as flood risk and water supply and demand;
- Contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment;
- Make sure we can conserve and enjoy the historic environment;
- Base our plans on up-to-date and relevant evidence; and
- Work together on planning issues that go beyond our administrative boundaries. This includes deciding whether we should work with other authorities to meet development needs across a wider area. This is known as the Duty to Co-operate.

1.10 NPPG provides more detailed information and says how we can meet the requirements of the NPPF. NPPG sets out how we should work out how much new development is required and explains how the Duty to Co-operate works.

1.11 We have considered all of these matters in writing this plan. Throughout this document we have highlighted relevant guidance in the NPPF and NPPG and shown how this has been taken into account.

What is neighbourhood planning?

1.12 This Local Plan covers the whole of Stevenage Borough. But local groups can now also draw up Neighbourhood Plans for smaller areas in which they have an interest. Any adopted Neighbourhood Plans would have the same legal status as the Local Plan. Both would be used to determine planning applications.

1.13 Any Neighbourhood Plan must be in conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan (see Part II). But beyond this requirement, the Neighbourhood Plan can set the policies that it thinks are appropriate. A Neighbourhood Plan takes priority if it says something different to the detailed policies of the Local Plan (see Part III of this document).

1.14 There are currently no Neighbourhood Plans in Stevenage, but this may change over the lifetime of this Local Plan.

What is environmental assessment?

1.15 The Local Plan must go through two different processes while it is being written. The first of these is called Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). This is required by European Law. It makes us consider the likely effect of our plan on the environment.

1.16 The second process is called Sustainability Appraisal (SA). This is required by UK law. This makes us think about how our policies might affect our society and economy as well as the environment.

1.17 We have carried out both of these assessments when writing this plan. When we talk about SA, we are referring to both processes and all of the documents we have written. This is to avoid any confusion. A SA report accompanies this plan. This has helped us to understand the most important issues facing Stevenage and the likely effects of our different policies and allocations⁽²⁾.

1.18 We tell you about the most important findings of the SA report in this plan.

1.19 A third process, called Appropriate Assessment (AA), says if our plan will harm certain types of wildlife habitat known as European Sites. We have carried out an AA screening exercise. This concludes that, with the measures and safeguards included in this draft plan, the scale and type of development being proposed is unlikely to have a significant effect upon any European sites⁽³⁾.

2 Stevenage Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (Stevenage Borough Council (SBC), 2013); Sustainability Appraisal Report (SBC, 2015)

3 Appropriate Assessment Screening Opinion (SBC, 2015)

2 A picture of Stevenage

History

2.1 The history of Stevenage goes back to prehistoric times. Stevenage grew around what is now the Old Town High Street because of its position on the Great North Road. Small villages developed at Shephall, Letchmore Green, Fishers Green and Symonds Green. Stevenage became an important coaching stop on the road to London.

2.2 The railway arrived in 1850. By the time the Second World War started in 1939, Stevenage had a population of about 6,000. Most people lived in what is now called the Old Town.

2.3 Stevenage was designated as England's first New Town in 1946. It was followed by a series of New Towns across the country so that people could move out from damaged or deprived cities⁽⁴⁾. Lewis Silkin, the Minister for Town and Country Planning, said that:

“Stevenage will in a short time become world famous. People from all over the world will come to see how we in this country are building for the new way of life.”



Old Town High Street; New town centre

2.4 From 1946 until 1980, the planning and growth of Stevenage was overseen by a Development Corporation. The first masterplan was for a town of 60,000 people. The first new homes were built in 1951. Major residential development followed throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The first new factory opened in 1953. The new town centre, to the south of the original High Street, was opened by Queen Elizabeth II in 1959.

2.5 The Lister Hospital opened in the north-west of the town in 1972. The new town centre railway station opened a year later. Residential development during this decade was focused to the north of the town.

2.6 In more recent times, the town has continued to grow, mainly to the east and north-east. This has seen the town expand into the neighbouring district of North Hertfordshire.

4 As well as Stevenage, the first wave of New Towns around London included Basildon, Bracknell, Crawley, Harlow, Hatfield and Hemel Hempstead.

2.7 Stevenage is divided into distinct land use areas. The town centre, Old Town and railway station are the core of the town. They are surrounded by individual residential neighbourhoods containing around 38,000 homes. 4,500 of these have been built in, or on the edge of, the town since the turn of the century⁽⁵⁾.

2.8 Local neighbourhood centres provide shops and community facilities for residents. There are two main employment areas, one to the west of the town centre at Gunnels Wood and one to the north-east at Pin Green.

2.9 There are a range of leisure facilities, retail parks and supermarkets. Open spaces and play areas are well spread throughout the town. Wide roads and a cycle and pedestrian network link all parts of the town. Stevenage's railway station is on the East Coast Main Line. There are long distance rail links between London and the north. Commuter services connect the town to Kings Cross, Cambridge and Peterborough as well as nearby towns including Hitchin, Letchworth and Welwyn Garden City. There are also trains to London Moorgate and Hertford via a branch line.

2.10 The town is connected to Junctions 7 and 8 of the A1(M) which links London, the midlands and the north. The A602 connects Stevenage to Hitchin and Ware while the nearby A505 provides connections between Luton Airport and Cambridgeshire. The urban road network of Stevenage comprises three main north-south routes and four main east-west routes.

2.11 There is an extensive commercial bus network. Most homes are within 400 metres of a bus stop. It is a short walk from the bus station to the train station.

2.12 Stevenage is surrounded by the districts of North Hertfordshire and East Hertfordshire. Beyond the edge of the town is open countryside and villages such as Aston, Codicote, Datchworth, Graveley, Knebworth, Walkern, Weston and Wymondley.

Main challenges

2.13 Stevenage does many things well. Gunnels Wood is the largest employment area in Hertfordshire. All of our neighbourhoods have local shopping and community facilities. There are large areas of open space while the cycle network is as good as anything you might find in a European town. However, there are also areas where the Borough could do better. Through our evidence gathering, monitoring and environmental assessments we have identified the key challenges that this plan should address:

Geography and population

- Stevenage Borough is 'underbounded' and surrounded by Green Belt. The urban area already extends beyond the local authority boundary.
- There are not the types or amount of brownfield land to build on that you might find in other areas. This is because most of the town was built in the last 50 years.
- Stevenage is the most deprived local authority area in Hertfordshire. There are some areas of serious deprivation, particularly in the Bedwell neighbourhood.

5 These figures include homes in North Hertfordshire District at Great Ashby. These form part of the urban area but they are outside of the Borough Council's administrative control.

Housing

- There is a lack of affordable homes. Entry-level housing costs seven times more than salaries. Affordable housing completions barely keep pace with sales through Right to Buy.
- The Development Corporation mainly built homes for 'blue collar' working families. More than half of our housing stock is terraced homes.
- Only one in every eight homes are detached. There is a lack of more expensive homes to attract higher earners.

Employment and retail

- People living in Stevenage earn less than people living elsewhere in Hertfordshire and are employed in lower grade jobs.
- There is a lack of high quality office space in or around the town centre while our employment areas face competition from other land uses.
- The town centre badly needs investment. It struggles to compete with surrounding towns and must adapt to meet the needs of the 21st Century.
- The amount of shopping floorspace outside of the town centre is larger than the amount inside. There is pressure to allow traditional 'high street' retailers to move out of centre.
- Many neighbourhood centres require regeneration and renewal.



Uniform housing in Chells; Canterbury Park is mainly laid out for sports and recreation

Design

- Some development designs and layouts that were innovative and exciting in the 1950s are now criticised for encouraging crime, anti-social behaviour and other problems.
- Many people opposed the creation of a New Town at Stevenage. This negative perception of the town still persists among parts of the population today.
- Most of the buildings in the town were built between the 1950s and 1970s and are coming to the end of their useful life.

Health, education and skills

- Life expectancy is lower than the Hertfordshire average. There are higher than average levels of smoking, obesity, physical inactivity and premature deaths from heart disease and cancer.
- Stevenage residents have fewer qualifications than the Hertfordshire average. Less than one in every four Stevenage residents is qualified to NVQ Level 4 or above⁽⁶⁾. This compares to one in three across the rest of Hertfordshire.
- There is a mismatch between skills and jobs. Residents earn less than people who work in the town. Higher paid jobs are held by people who commute in from elsewhere.
- Aspirations are low. Many pupils leave school at 16. There are low levels of progression into higher education or higher earning jobs.

Environment and transport

- There are many open spaces in the town but some urban spaces are of poor quality and are not well used by the public. Many of our designated parks are in fact recreation or sports grounds.
- There is a Site of Special Scientific Interest immediately adjacent to the Borough boundary at Knebworth Woods.
- The A1(M) narrows to two lanes between junctions 6 and 8. There are frequent peak hour tailbacks.
- Trains are full at peak times while the cycle and pedestrian network is underused.

2.14 Overall Stevenage is less prosperous, less successful and is regarded as less desirable than other Hertfordshire towns.

Drivers of change

2.15 As well as local issues, the plan needs to respond to the things happening in the wider world that influence how we solve our problems. It is difficult to predict all future drivers of change. For example, 20 years ago fewer people had personal computers or the internet. 10 years ago it was much easier to buy a house. The best we can do is to make sure that our plans respond to the things that we know about and are flexible enough to deal with any unexpected changes.

2.16 Some of the drivers of change that we need to think about are identified below.

Population

- The population is getting older because people are living longer.
- The average household size has been falling as more people live alone.
- More houses would be needed even if the population stayed the same.

Housing

- The Government sees the provision of new homes as a key priority.
- Access to mortgages has become increasingly difficult. More people are now renting homes instead of buying. The average age of people buying their first house is rising.

6 NVQ Level 4 is equivalent to a HNC qualification **Page 137**

Employment and retail

- The type of work we do and the way we work is changing. Manufacturing is being replaced by technology and services. Working hours are more flexible.
- We are close to London. Changes in the City affect commuters that live in this area.
- The number of people shopping through the internet is growing while a number of high street chains and stores have disappeared over the last decade.

Health, education and skills

- The health system is subject to frequent change. Recently, doctors have become more responsible for commissioning the services they need.
- Emergency strategic health services for north and east Hertfordshire have been centralised onto the Lister Hospital site in north Stevenage.
- The Government has been making changes to school curricula to equip children with the skills they say are needed in the 21st century.



Our town centre has changed; Major investment at Lister Hospital

Environment and transport

- People are becoming more aware of the threat of climate change. We will need to find ways of addressing this. One option is to use renewable energy such as the sun or wind.
- The number of people who own a car is much higher than it was twenty years ago.
- Congestion on the roads, rising fuel costs or schemes such as road charging may change how people make their journeys.

Political

- Political change may result in new planning policies or priorities. This could be at the national, county or local level because of elections.

3 Strategic context

Strategic context

3.1 This is a Local Plan for Stevenage Borough. But we also need to consider how it relates to, and affects, the wider area and the plans of other local authorities and agencies.

3.2 Stevenage is around 30 miles to the north of central London in the county of Hertfordshire. It lies in an area which is one of the major drivers of the national economy.

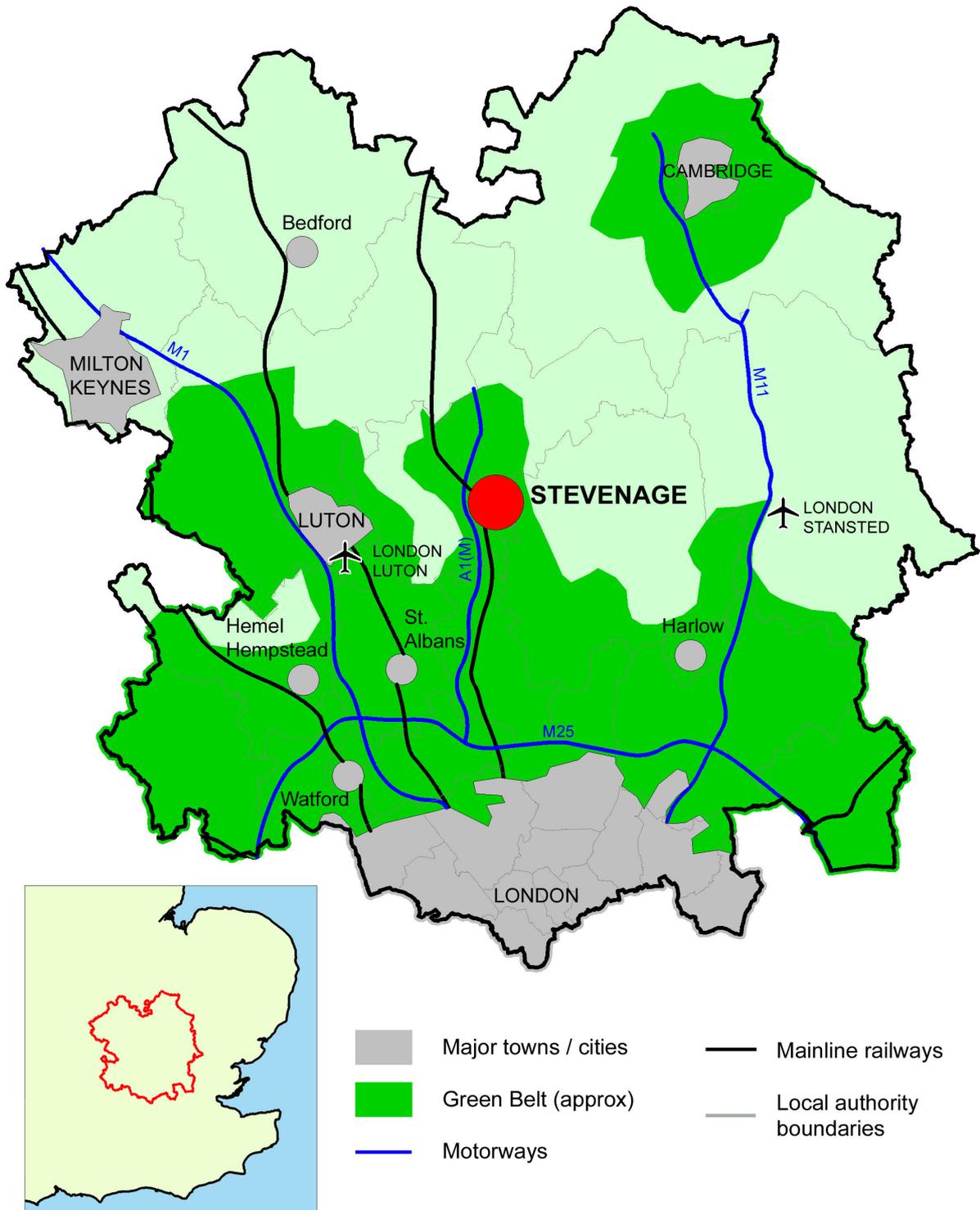
3.3 Nearly six million people live within 25 miles of the Borough. This area covers the northern boroughs of London and all of Hertfordshire. It also includes parts of Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, and Essex. The map on the following page shows Stevenage in this strategic context.

3.4 Hertfordshire itself does not have one, dominant population centre. Instead there are a number of historic market towns, garden cities and new towns. Larger urban areas such as Milton Keynes, Luton and Cambridge lie outside of the county but within this area of influence.

3.5 This area shares a number of common characteristics:

- Average house prices are high. People generally move from the south of the area to the north in a 'ripple effect' that starts in the centre of London.
- House prices are high but get lower further away from the capital.
- Homes cost many times more than average wages. Most authorities have a significant demand for affordable housing.
- The amount of money that people earn, along with the levels of qualification they have, is higher than the national average.
- There is an emphasis on service industries along with clusters of 'high-end' sectors. These include pharmaceuticals and advanced manufacturing.
- Commuting patterns generally run in the opposite direction to home moves. People live further north and travel south. All areas see significant commuting flows to central London. Certain towns and cities, such as Cambridge and Milton Keynes, provide a strong local 'pull' from their surrounding area.
- Transport connections from north to south are strong. This is because the main road and rail routes radiate out from the capital. Links from east to west are generally less well developed.
- There are good connections to mainland Europe and beyond. There are two major airports at London Stansted and London Luton. Continental train services run from St Pancras International in central London.
- Transport connections, particularly by road, to international entry and exit points outside of this area are reasonable. This includes links to Heathrow Airport and the major east coast ports at Felixstowe and Harwich.

- 
- The supply of easily developable land is constrained. This is due in part to the Metropolitan Green Belt around London. This extends from the northern suburbs of the capital beyond Luton, Stevenage and Harlow. There is a smaller Green Belt around Cambridge.
 - Although this picture is generally affluent, there are areas of deprivation and under-performance. This is particularly the case in centres such as Harlow, Luton and Milton Keynes. Areas of suburban London are among the most deprived in the country.



Stevenage's strategic context

Strategic planning

3.6 Strategic planning refers to some of the most important decisions that need to be made through the planning system. This includes saying how many new homes must be built in a given area. It is setting out which towns or cities should take the greatest share of development in the future. To make these decisions, we should look across a wide area and decide on the best solutions.

3.7 Historically, strategic planning for Stevenage was not carried out by the Borough Council. However, changes to the planning system mean that this Local Plan now makes the decisions about these issues.

3.8 The plan has been developed in consultation with nearby councils and other bodies to discharge the Duty to Co-operate. This is the legal requirement that ensures strategic matters are properly considered. Many important matters cross administrative boundaries. People may live in one authority but work in another. They may go to school in one place but spend their leisure time somewhere else. The Duty to Co-operate means working together to consider how best to meet the needs that this creates.

3.9 We have long-established and important relationships with the nine other local planning authorities in Hertfordshire as well as the County Council. This plan also looks beyond traditional county groupings to other areas and organisations with whom we have links such as authorities in Bedfordshire and Essex.

What does this mean for Stevenage?

3.10 In preparing this plan, the following issues have proved particularly important:

- Ensuring our plan helps to meet development requirements in markets areas that cross authority boundaries;
- Balancing these needs against guidance in the NPPF that seeks to maintain the Green Belt and ensuring co-ordinated boundaries that will endure in the long term;
- Providing sufficient capacity on key transport routes. This includes the A1(M) and the East Coast Main Line; and
- Considering how new development will impact on water infrastructure including both supply and waste water.

3.11 National policy is clear that development should be co-ordinated across wider 'market areas' for both housing and employment. These are zones that share similar characteristics in terms of house prices, commuting patterns or the costs of business premises. They will not necessarily follow administrative boundaries and authorities should work together to try and meet development needs across these areas⁽⁷⁾.

3.12 The evidence work that supports this Local Plan has defined both the Housing Market Area and Functional Economic Market Area in which Stevenage sits.

changing employment choose to stay. These areas should not be constrained by local authority boundaries in order that their full extent can be understood; while

- **'Best fit' HMAs** are a pragmatic solution that constrain functional areas to local planning authority boundaries for the purposes of collecting evidence or drafting policy.

3.14 Our evidence shows that the whole of Stevenage is located within a single functional HMA. This stretches from Welwyn Garden City in the south to Sandy in the north and broadly follows the A1(M) / A1 corridor. It ranges from the edges of Luton in the west to Royston in the east. The HMA covers the significant majority of North Hertfordshire's administrative area, smaller parts of Welwyn Hatfield, Central Bedfordshire and East Hertfordshire and a minimal area within South Cambridgeshire. This functional HMA has a population of around 350,000. This area is shown green in the map on the previous page.

3.15 However, it is recognised that boundaries straddling local authorities can be impractical. Planning policy is mostly made at the local authority level while data can be limited at lower levels. Our evidence identifies a best fit HMA covering the administrative areas of Stevenage and North Hertfordshire. This analysis complements best fit groupings suggested for surrounding authorities including Central Bedfordshire and East Hertfordshire. Housing needs have been assessed, in the first instance, for these best fit groupings.

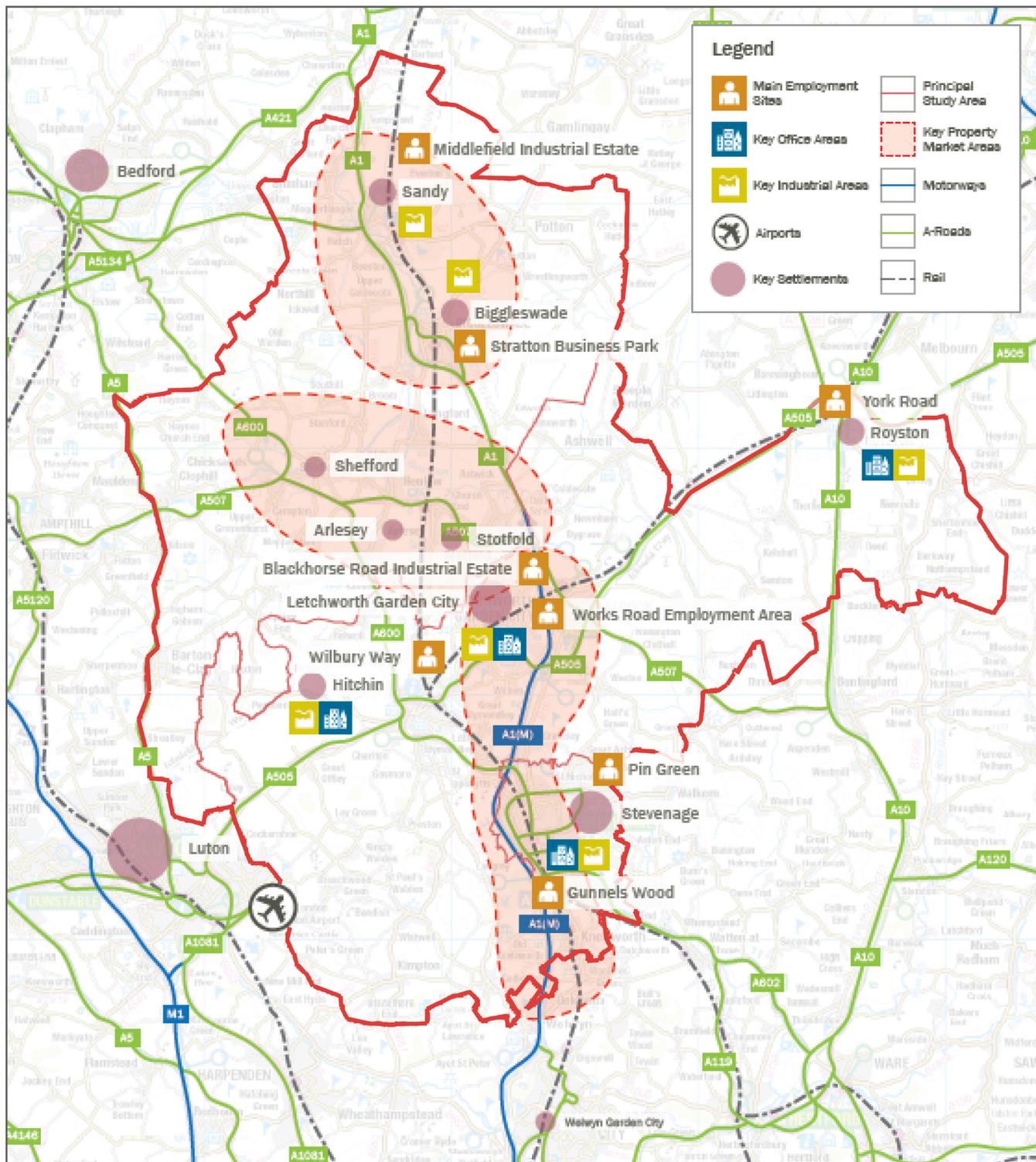
3.16 The Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA) covers a similar area. Our evidence shows that Stevenage, North Hertfordshire and the eastern half of Central Bedfordshire form a clearly defined FEMA. 70% of people that work in this area, also live here. The economic profiles of the three areas are complementary while commercial property market data does not suggest that nearby commercial property markets, such as Luton, Bedford or Watford, extend this far⁽¹⁰⁾. The FEMA is shown in the map on the following page.

3.17 Both functional market areas are broadly consistent with the Office for National Statistics' Travel to Work Areas.

3.18 Stevenage Borough is small. It is completely surrounded by North Hertfordshire and East Hertfordshire. This means that the decisions we make and the decisions our immediate neighbours make are particularly closely related. Our three authorities will have to ensure that our respective Local Plans complement one another and provide a coherent vision for the future of the town.

3.19 Any development proposed by North Hertfordshire or East Hertfordshire around, or close to, Stevenage will provide benefits to the town. These includes new homes for people that want to work and spend time (and money) in Stevenage. It will support schemes within the town, growth and regeneration. However, it will also lead to more pressure for facilities and infrastructure within the Borough. This includes schools, open spaces and roads.

3.20 The tight administrative boundaries have required us to work together to consider the future of the Green Belt and apply a consistent approach.



Stevenage is part of a 'FEMA' which stretches along the A1 corridor (source: NLP)

3.21 It is important to be clear that we cannot make plans for any areas outside of our own boundary. Any decisions that affect land immediately to the north, south and west of the Borough will be made by North Hertfordshire District Council. Any decisions that affect land immediately to the east of the Borough will be made by East Hertfordshire District Council.

3.22 We have also identified the issues that extend beyond our immediate neighbours and market areas that need to be taken into account. Both our functional HMA and our FEMA include a substantial part of Central Bedfordshire.

3.23 Within Hertfordshire we have a strong relationship with our near neighbours of Welwyn Hatfield District Council due to shared transport and utilities infrastructure. The way in which water and wastewater treatment are provided mean our Local Plan also interacts with other authorities outside of Hertfordshire, such as Harlow.

3.24 We have worked closely to make sure all these matters have been addressed. We have worked with other bodies including Highways England and the Hertfordshire Local Economic Partnership (LEP). We have considered how our existing and future plans might work together to provide the homes, jobs, facilities and infrastructure that are required.

3.25 More information on the elements of our strategy that could be affected by our neighbours or other organisations, or require their co-operation, is included throughout the Local Plan. Our evidence base will include a statement setting out who we have talked to, and what we have agreed⁽¹¹⁾. We will continue to talk with our neighbours and other relevant bodies as the proposals in this plan are implemented.

Other relevant plans and programmes

3.26 The Local Plan does not stand alone. It is influenced by, and reflects the priorities of, a range of other plans, programmes and strategies. The Local Plan sets out the land use implications of these, identifying the sites or areas within Stevenage Borough that are necessary for them to succeed. These strategies are produced at a range of spatial levels, ranging from documents produced by the Borough Council to directives issued at the European level.

3.27 A range of these key documents and their aims is set out below. This list is not exhaustive. The SA of this plan provides a more comprehensive overview.

3.28 Stevenage's **Community Strategy** is one of the key influences on the plan. This document is produced by SoStevenage, a partnership between the Borough Council and a wide range of public, private, voluntary and community organisations. The third community strategy for Stevenage was produced in 2013 and identifies nine priorities arranged under three themes.

3.29 The Local Plan can impact, directly or indirectly on a number of these. Those key priorities with which the Local Plan is most able to assist are highlighted in the following table. The Community Strategy identifies a number of key aspirations and actions which are directly relevant:

- Maximise opportunities for economic growth within the town by supporting businesses, as well as working with partners to deliver housing growth;
- Explore opportunities to increase footfall in the town centre;

11 Case Law establishes that the Duty to Co-operate runs until the point a plan is submitted. Paragraph 181 of the NPPF expects local authorities to demonstrate evidence of effective co-operation when the Local Plan is submitted for examination. A Duty to Co-operate statement will be prepared following the completion of this consultation and prior to submission of the plan to reflect these requirements, the outcomes and any relevant agreements. The submission version of the plan will suggest a minor amendment to this paragraph and footnote to reflect this.

- Provide new and affordable housing and thereby increase the supply of decent social housing;
- Tackle any negative misconceptions of Stevenage;
- Promote active lifestyles;
- Maintain the high quality spaces we have, and promote their use for a variety of activities, including exercise; and
- Raise the profile of the climate change agenda and the impact of climate change on the town

| Healthy Economy | Healthy Communities | Healthy People |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Improve the local economy and housing | Encourage healthy lifestyle choices | Ensure clean and green spaces |
| Increase skills and employability | Support good mental health | Help people feel safe |
| Help residents manage their money | | Support and encourage volunteering |
| Understand and address child poverty | | |

3.30 A number of these objectives are expanded upon in the Council's **Corporate Plan** which sets out a rolling five-year programme of priorities. These include laying the foundations for the regeneration of the town and neighbourhood centres and a reiterated commitment to the delivery of affordable homes and housing growth in general. Actions include the preparation of this Local Plan to guide development and change.

3.31 A key step towards the provision of a revitalised and regenerated town centre lies in the production of the Council's **Town Centre Framework**. This provides an overarching vision for 'Stevenage Central' and was adopted as a basis for the development of planning policy and as a blueprint for regeneration in 2015.

3.32 Other subsidiary plans which flow from the Community Strategy and Corporate Plan include the Council's **Housing Revenue Account Business Plan** and **Green Space Strategy**. The first of these sets out this Council's ambition to build up to 1,900 new homes over a thirty-year period. The latter sets out how the Council will maintain and enhance key recreational spaces across the Borough. It has a close relationship with the open space policies of this plan while future iterations of the strategy will reflect the updated evidence work which has been carried out to support this plan.

3.33 A number of key plans and strategies are produced at a county-level. Key amongst these is the **Strategic Economic Plan** and **Growth Deal** of the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). This sets out an ambitious programme to deliver economic growth and reinforce Hertfordshire's position as one of the key drivers of the national economy outside of London.

3.34 The plan focuses on three key growth corridors. Stevenage lies within the A1(M) corridor and a range of projects and funding are identified to accelerate housing delivery and jobs growth. These include support for:

- Future phases of the Bioscience Catalyst at the southern end of Gunnels Wood;
- Accelerated delivery of town centre regeneration;
- Additional capacity on the A1(M); and
- Infrastructure that unlocks reinvestment in the County's New Towns.

3.35 As a two-tier authority, Hertfordshire County Council retain responsibility for producing the **Waste Local Plan** and the **Minerals Local Plan**. Key proposals from these documents are reflected in the Local Plan and / or on the policies map to ensure conformity between the documents.

3.36 The County Council are also the highway authority with responsibility for transport matters. Although work on the public highway, and other operational development by the County Council and other statutory transport providers, does not require planning permission, this plan supports key priorities and proposals from the **Local Transport Plan** and its subsidiary plans including those relating to rail, walking and cycling.

3.37 As set out above, the **North Hertfordshire Local Plan** and **East Hertfordshire District Plan** will be of particular relevance due to the 'underbounded' nature of the Borough and the potential for these authorities to include proposals around the edge of the existing town.

3.38 At the national level, the Local Plan needs to take account of Government priorities. The **NPPF** sets out overarching requirements for, and expectations of, the planning system. Alongside this, the Government has sought to simplify and deregulate parts of the planning system and it is important that the Local Plan reflects this context. Extended **permitted development rights** and the recent **Standards Review**, which streamlines the range of design and sustainability measures that Councils might seek to include in local plans, are of particular importance.

3.39 The investment plans of key infrastructure and utilities providers including **Network Rail**, **Highways England** and **Thames Water** have also been taken into account.

3.40 Finally, relevant European directives and requirements need to be incorporated. Of particular relevance to this Plan is the **Water Framework Directive**, which seeks to improve the quality of all water bodies as well as those directives relating to the protection of key species and the environmental assessment of relevant plans and strategies.

4 Vision and objectives

A vision for the future

4.1 The spatial strategy explains the most important elements of our plan for Stevenage. It sets out our overall approach to the delivery of homes, infrastructure, jobs, services and the natural and historic environment.

4.2 The period to 2031 will be the next step in the evolution of the New Town. Our spatial strategy recognises the importance of three key elements that are needed to deliver this: regeneration, housing provision, and employment growth. These are linked to the extent that no single element can succeed without the other two.

- 4.3** Our plan will guide the future regeneration, development, and growth of Stevenage. We will take advantage of our position between, and good links to, London and Cambridge.
- 4.4** The strategy is to deliver a new vision for Stevenage: a vision that has been evolved with our partners, particularly the Hertfordshire LEP. We plan to deliver transformational physical, social and economic regeneration of the original new town. This will be twinned with housing and employment growth, necessarily rolling back the inner Green Belt boundary. Regeneration and growth will bring benefits to all. Together, these will help to break the cycle of low aspirations, low skills and deprivation that characterise parts of the town.
- 4.5** Achieving this strategy will create a virtuous circle. Regeneration will address concerns about lack of investment. Significant housing growth will drive the demand for jobs and new employment. In turn, this will create a demand for new facilities which will support our ambitious regeneration programme.
- 4.6** Our strategy sets out how 7,600 homes will be built in and around Stevenage between 2011 and 2031. This will mean that we can meet our objectively assessed housing needs within our own administrative boundaries, although we maintain an on-going dialogue with our neighbours on this topic.
- 4.7** Our primary focus is on regeneration, inward investment and renewal. We will maximise the use of previously developed sites in the Town Centre, the Old Town and the New Town neighbourhoods.
- 4.8** Our top priority is the regeneration of the Town Centre – or Stevenage Central as it is now badged. This will be a flagship scheme to address negative perceptions of the town by providing a vibrant centre fit for the 21st Century. This major public-private sector regeneration programme will deliver in the region of 3,000 new homes, making a significant contribution to meeting our housing target.
- 4.9** This development will help stimulate interest in Stevenage as an attractive place to live, work, visit and invest. It will drive new residential developments. Six Major Opportunity Areas will be designated to deliver specific high-calibre, mixed-use schemes of homes, offices, retailing, sporting, cultural, civic and leisure uses. These high density schemes will deliver a step-change in the perception of our Town Centre.
- 4.10** But regeneration and the use of brownfield sites within the urban area will not be enough to meet our objectively assessed housing needs. We need to meet those needs not only for their own sake, but also because they will underpin our economic growth ambitions and our regeneration aims.
- 4.11** Our strategy identifies three new neighbourhoods to be provided on greenfield sites: to the west, north and south-east of the existing town.
- 4.12** We have reviewed the Green Belt and found it necessary to roll-back the inner Green Belt boundary. This will mean new boundaries will be set, often in conjunction with our neighbours in East and North Hertfordshire District Councils.

4.13 Within the space afforded by the gap between the new inner Green Belt boundary and the edge of the existing urban area, new neighbourhoods are planned. These are designed to establish a strong sense of community and ensure that these developments meet their own locally-generated needs. This will include provision of shopping, health, community, leisure and education facilities. Strategic green space provision will be an integral part of the new neighbourhoods.

4.14 To meet the housing needs of the whole community, we will aim to deliver up to 40% of all new housing development as affordable housing, by encouraging higher levels of provision, where possible. We will also deliver 'aspirational' homes to encourage higher earners to live in the town. We will meet the needs of other groups such as older people and Gypsies and Travellers. Together, these approaches will address the Development Corporation's legacy and deliver a more balanced housing stock.

4.15 Within the urban area, the High Street provides a range of uses that complement the centre of the New Town. It is characterised by the highest concentration of listed buildings in the Borough and a range of independent retailers, cafes and pubs. Our strategy seeks to protect the role and character of the High Street, and the Old Town more generally.

4.16 Local facilities in the New Town neighbourhoods are protected and will be regenerated. A rolling programme of investment in the town's existing neighbourhood centres will provide modern services for the residents of the New Town. It will deliver a substantial improvement to the image and quality of the built fabric and public realm.

4.17 These schemes will allow us to provide hundreds of new homes on previously developed sites in the New Town neighbourhoods. All new developments will be required to provide high standards of design and sustainability.

4.18 Raising the town's economic prospects is fundamental to our vision. Many employment opportunities within the Borough are provided in our two main employment areas, at Gunnels Wood and Pin Green.

4.19 Gunnels Wood is the largest employment area in the county. It is the home of both very large inter-continental businesses and small local companies. We plan for the remodelling of this area to make it a destination fit for modern business. The Bio-Science Catalyst and the Cell Therapy Catapult, now under construction, evidence the considerable potential that the business community sees in Stevenage: we aim to tap into that potential and support it. The importance of our second employment area at Pin Green, and other locations which provide significant employment, are also recognised.

4.20 We have exercised the Duty to Co-operate constructively and worked with our neighbours along the A1(M) corridor (Central Bedfordshire and North Hertfordshire to the north; Welwyn Hatfield to the south) to ensure that there is adequate employment land to meet the needs of all.

4.21 Our ambition for new employment growth will be matched by a drive to increase the skill base of our workforce. Today, Stevenage is characterised by relatively low educational attainment and aspirations. Residents are under-represented in executive, management and professional

positions. We aim to improve the life-chances of our children by working with the County Council and other education providers to increase the capacity of the town's schools and their educational attainments.

4.22 As well as education, we recognise the importance, and land-use implications, of other key social and community uses.

4.23 The Lister Hospital is the largest employer in the town. Acute (emergency) services for north and east Hertfordshire have been consolidated here. A programme of further consolidation and growth will follow, through to the end of the plan period. We will facilitate this growth.

4.24 We will require the provision of local leisure and community facilities to support new development. Some of these facilities will be delivered within the Town Centre (to serve the large new residential community there) and the three new neighbourhoods, whilst others will be delivered through the regeneration of existing neighbourhood centres.

4.25 Alongside these ambitious plans for development we will also make sure that people retain access to green spaces close to their homes. Open space was a key element identified by the New Town master-planners. We will ensure that 21st Century Stevenage will uphold their vision and values.

4.26 We will add new spaces and new typologies into the supply and we will further develop the network of Green Links within the town. This plan significantly increases the number of protected Principal Open Spaces in the town and it designates two new Green Links to afford people the opportunity to walk from their local neighbourhood, along a green route, out into the open countryside beyond the town.

4.27 We will require developers to contribute towards Water Framework Directive (WFD) actions on sites adjacent to watercourses and improve the quality of water that enters groundwater aquifers across the Borough.

4.28 Although Stevenage is a New Town, there is some history which pre-dates its designation. We have a number of Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas. The Conservation Area status of part of the North Stevenage site will maintain the historic setting of Rooks Nest ~ the childhood home of author E.M. Forster ~ and the landscapes which inspired his novels. It will also help to provide a continuous green link from the Old Town to the open countryside. Our strategy affords protection to other important spaces, connections and historic sites across the town.

4.29 We recognise that we cannot meet our homes target without investment in infrastructure. We will work within the environmental and infrastructural limits to development. We will work to commit to protect and enhance the natural environment and landscape of the Borough by:

- protecting existing open space and areas designated for environmental purposes;
- requiring new developments to include open space to meet locally defined targets;
- requiring developments to make links to the surrounding countryside;

- seeking to create an ecological network; and
- protecting and enhancing our heritage assets.

4.30 Capacity in the waste water system to Rye Meads Sewage Treatment Works is constrained in the long-term but is currently adequate to meet our needs to 2026. New works are planned to deliver a sustainable long-term solution. The electricity and gas suppliers have not identified any issues that need us to place any constraints on development.

4.31 There are capacity issues on the A1(M), especially between Junctions 6 and 8 around Stevenage. However, following a successful lobbying campaign, Highways England are currently designing a SMART motorway scheme to be in place and operational during the early 2020s.

4.32 Links to a new neighbourhood west of Stevenage will be created by upgrading existing routes to this site, through Gunnels Wood. Across the town, other small-scale highways improvements have been identified as necessary to support the level of regeneration, change and growth proposed in the plan.

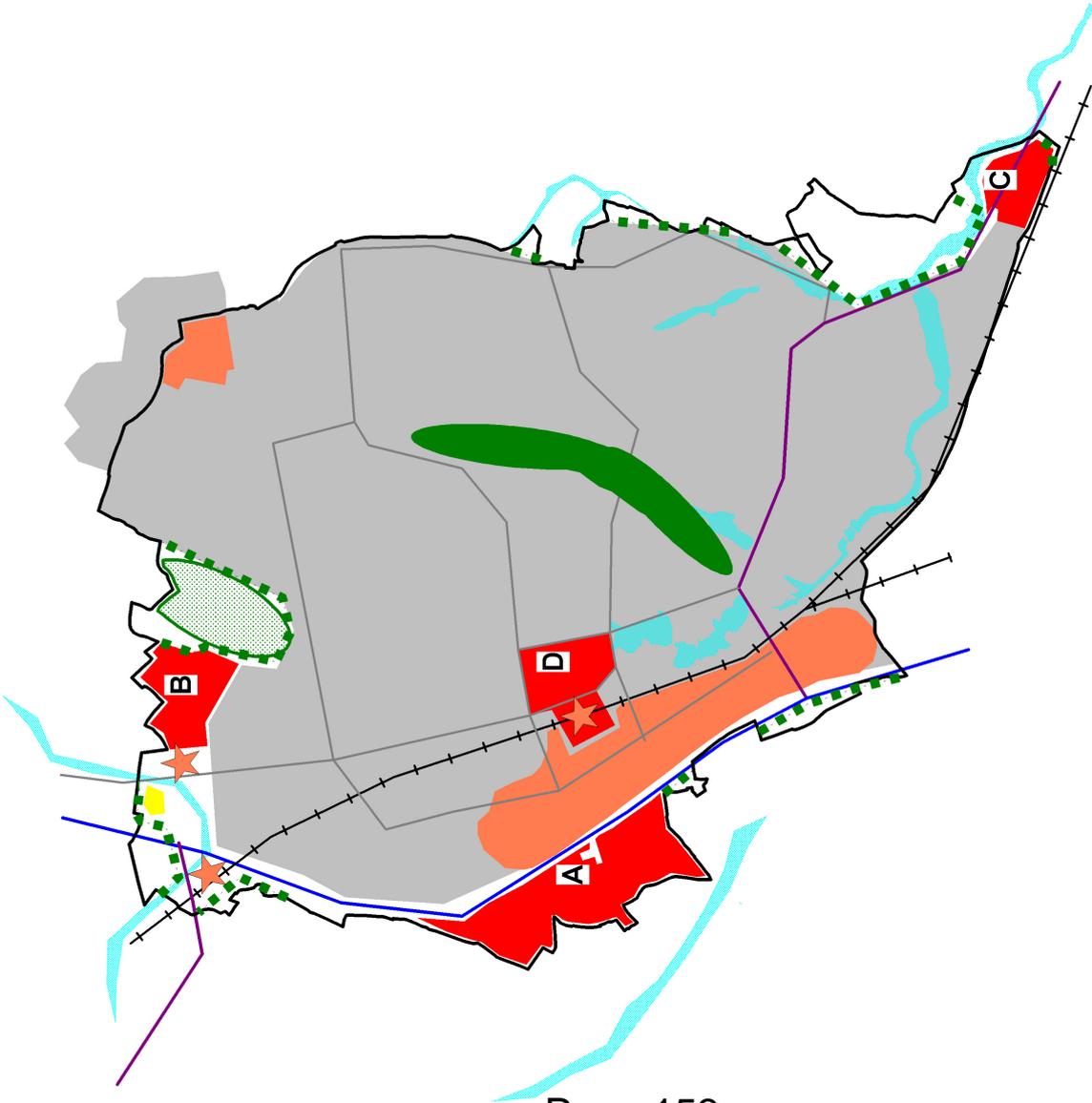
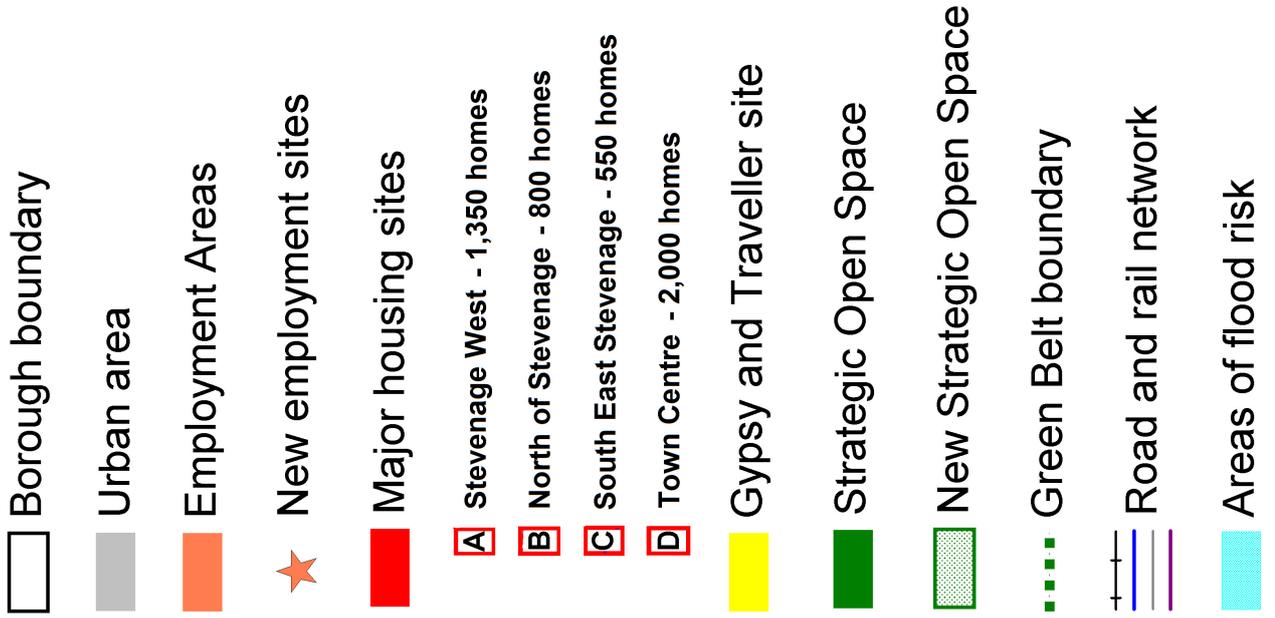
4.33 Bus station facilities will be relocated as part of the Town Centre regeneration scheme. The opportunity will be taken to improve bus - train transfer. Pedestrian and cycle links from the town centre to Gunnels Wood and the Old Town will be improved.

4.34 Our plans for Stevenage are challenging and ambitious. Because of this, it is vital that our strategy includes a clear programme for its planning and delivery.

4.35 Our strategy sets out clear pathways and mechanisms for delivery.

4.36 The key projects, stakeholders, agencies and partnerships are identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and progress will be monitored against targets set in the Monitoring and Delivery chapter. This sets out what we expect to happen, who we expect to deliver change and how we will monitor progress to make sure that our policies are being correctly implemented.

4.37 Our plan is necessarily ambitious: we have both the Government's aspirations and our own to meet. By 2031, if all of the proposals in this plan are implemented, Stevenage will demonstrably be a different – and better - place than it is today. It will be better linked, better served and its people will enjoy better life-choices. This is an exciting time to be in Stevenage, whether as a resident or as a business. This plan aims to drive and deliver beneficial changes that will make good on the original promise of Stevenage as a New Town.



Picture 1 Key diagram

5 Strategic Policies

Sustainable development

Policy SP1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development

When considering development proposals, we will take a positive approach that reflects a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

We will work proactively with applicants to find solutions that will allow proposals to be approved where possible. We will secure development that improves social, environmental and economic conditions in the area.

We will permit planning applications that accord with the policies in this Local Plan and, where relevant, any Neighbourhood Plans unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision, we will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In these cases we will take into account whether:

- a. Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the NPPF, or any other relevant planning guidance issued by the Government, taken as a whole; or
- b. Specific policies in that guidance indicate that permission should be refused or development should be restricted.

5.1 'Sustainable Development' is a phrase that has been widely used since the 1980s. It means making economic progress while also looking after our social and environmental needs. It also means not using, or permanently removing, too many of the resources that future generations may need.

5.2 The Government wants to make sure that the planning system helps the country as a whole to achieve sustainable development. Planning has a vital role to play. It determines how many homes will be built, the types of employment opportunities that are provided and which open spaces and habitats are protected from development.

5.3 We have a legal duty to contribute towards sustainable development through our plans⁽¹²⁾. This means getting the balance right between:

- Our economic role in supporting a strong economy;
- Our social role in providing necessary housing and services; and
- Our environmental role in protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment.

5.4 The Borough Council fully supports the concept of Sustainable Development. Policy SP1 is a 'model policy' previously published by The Planning Inspectorate that is included as standard in all Local Plans. It shows how we will work to meet the requirements of Government policy. We will take a positive approach that ensures we continue to permit the significant majority of planning applications for new development.

Policy SP2: Sustainable development in Stevenage

We will work within the principles of sustainable development and reduce the impact of development on climate change. We will support the New Town ideal of a balanced community.

Planning permission will be granted where proposals demonstrate (as applicable), how they will:

- a. Deliver homes or jobs that make a positive contribution towards the targets in this plan;
- b. Supply a mix of uses, make good use of land and maximise opportunities for brownfield redevelopment within the town;
- c. Regenerate areas of the town that are under-performing;
- d. Reduce deprivation, improve quality of life and make sure that residents share in the benefits of regeneration and growth;
- e. Raise the aspirations, earnings, education level or life expectancy of residents;
- f. Provide a mix of homes and jobs for all sectors of the community;
- g. Promote journeys by bus, train, bike and foot and reduce the need to travel;
- h. Work within the limits of infrastructure and increase capacity where this is necessary to support development;
- i. Make high-quality buildings and spaces that respect and improve their surroundings, reduce crime and the fear of crime;
- j. Support facilities and services that encourage people to live, work and spend leisure time in Stevenage;
- k. Produce places and spaces that enable people to live a healthy lifestyle;
- l. Take a proactive approach towards energy use, including renewable energy and energy efficiency measures where practicable and appropriate;
- m. Avoid or prevent harm from flood risk, contamination and pollution;
- n. Protect and improve important open spaces, wildlife sites and habitats;
- o. Preserve or enhance areas and buildings of historical and archaeological interest; and
- p. Increase community awareness and involvement so that residents are involved in, and proud of, their town.

5.5 Policy SP2 contains our set of guiding principles for all new development in the Borough. All applications for development should achieve as many of its aims as practicable.

5.6 Many of the issues associated with sustainable development, such as housing and climate change, are important at national and international levels. We must take local action to help meet the challenges that they bring. The location and distribution of development, the choice of transport modes which are made available and ensuring development is resilient to future change are all important responses.

5.7 New homes will help to tackle a national shortage and meet local needs. We will place development in areas that do not increase flood risk or pollution and give people choices about the way they travel. Providing high quality new buildings, open spaces and local facilities will improve quality of life.

5.8 Examples of our principles can already be seen in many parts of Stevenage. The majority of the town has been planned and developed in the last sixty years. The original masterplanners actively sought to deliver a sustainable town by linking the provision of homes and jobs and connecting different areas with cycleways and public transport. This means that many of the issues in Policy SP2 have been closely considered as Stevenage has developed. This contrasts with other towns which have grown organically over a period of many hundreds of years when there were no planning controls.

5.9 We will continue to apply our guiding principles over the period to 2031. We want to provide a better choice of homes and support a broad range of jobs. New housing along with significant changes to areas such as the Town Centre will change how people outside of the town think about Stevenage. More people and businesses will be encouraged to move here.

5.10 However, it is important to provide benefits for all residents of the town; those that already live here as well as those who may arrive in the future. We will regenerate existing facilities in the town's neighbourhoods. We will work to improve skills and education and ensure that local facilities and services respond to local needs.

5.11 This approach will allow people of all ages, backgrounds and skills to live, work and prosper in Stevenage.

5.12 Our SA says that our policy is favourable in all aspects of environmental, social and economic indicators. Development that results in positive outcomes in all these areas can only benefit Stevenage and the people who live here.

A strong, competitive economy

Policy SP3: A strong, competitive economy

This Plan provides sites and land that will allow employment growth and contribute to a balanced planning strategy across the market area. We will:

- a. Provide at least 140,000 m² of new B-class employment floorspace over the plan period from Allocated Sites for Employment Development;
- b. Permit high intensity B-class employment uses in the most accessible locations. This includes high-density offices to the west of the railway station as part of a comprehensive and co-ordinated mixed-use development.
- c. Continue to remodel Gunnels Wood to meet modern requirements and provide a high quality and attractive business destination. This will include the continued development of the Stevenage GSK and Bioscience Catalyst Campus at the south of the employment area.
- d. Protect an employment area at Pin Green and retain a range of B-class employment accommodation in suitable locations elsewhere in the town.
- e. Work with Central Bedfordshire Council and North Hertfordshire District Council to ensure an appropriate level of employment provision within the wider A1(M) / A1 corridor over the plan period. The Borough Council will support, as required:
 - i. A new, strategic employment allocation at Baldock to be delivered through North Hertfordshire's local plan; and/or
 - ii. The continued development of the Stratton Business Park at Biggleswade through Central Bedfordshire's local plan.
- f. Recognise the important role played by the town's retail, health and other non-B Class land uses in providing employment.

5.13 Stevenage is an important place for doing business with the 2011 Census showing around 45,000 people working in the Borough. There are currently two main employment areas within the town:

- Gunnels Wood is located to the west of the railway line. It is the largest employment area in Hertfordshire, and is home to a number of international companies and UK headquarters.
- Pin Green, a smaller employment area, is located in the north east of the Borough, and provides several thousand jobs.

5.14 In planning, employment land usually refers to 'B-class' uses⁽¹³⁾ and includes:

- B1(a) - offices

13 Different land uses are categorised into classes by Government. These are defined by the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order (1987) (as amended).

- B1(b) - research and development
- B1(c) - light industry
- B2 - general industry; and
- B8 - storage and distribution.

5.15 The NPPF requires local authorities to plan proactively to meet the needs of businesses and support a successful economy. It is estimated that just under half of all jobs in the town are in B-class uses. Employment projections for Stevenage have varied significantly over time and are sensitive to changes in the wider economy. Through our evidence base, we recognise that it would be prudent to plan for at least 30 hectares of new employment land to meet locally derived needs over the plan period. In doing so, it is acknowledged that higher levels of provision could be required:

- In the event that future economic growth, or future projections of growth, out-perform current forecasts;
- If higher targets for employment growth are pursued by the Hertfordshire LEP;
- If a greater proportion of future jobs are to be contained within the local area rather than commuting elsewhere; and / or
- To facilitate schemes that sit outside of forecasts based on past local performance. This includes developments that:
 - Service national or international demand such as the Government-backed Bioscience Catalyst at the south of the town; or
 - Address new, or currently underperforming, markets such as high-intensity town centre office provision⁽¹⁴⁾.

5.16 This Plan recognises a range of opportunities for new employment provision within the Borough. New land is made available for employment use. This includes opportunities to the north of the town, beyond the Lister Hospital, and also to the west, within the proposed development beyond the A1(M).

5.17 Making better use of existing land in and around the town centre is another element of this Plan's employment strategy. This accords with Government planning guidance which directs intensive, trip-generating uses to the most accessible locations⁽¹⁵⁾. The demand for office space in central Stevenage is currently weak. This is because of the poor image of the town centre and lack of suitable premises. Our evidence base demonstrated that much of the office stock in the town centre was not fit for modern business⁽¹⁶⁾. These areas were deliberately excluded from our successful application for an exemption from office to residential permitted development rights in 2013. A number of large office blocks in and around the town centre have now secured 'prior approvals' and are delivering much-needed residential units.

14 Stevenage Employment & Economy Baseline Study (NLP, 2013); Functional Economic Market Area Study (NLP, 2015); Employment Technical Paper (SBC, 2015)

15 NPPF paragraph 34.

16 Employment and Economy Baseline Study (NLP, 2013)

5.18 Providing replacement, new town centre office space forms part of our regeneration proposals for Stevenage Central⁽¹⁷⁾. It will be fit-for-purpose and capable of attracting new investment to the town. We will deliver new floorspace both within the current Leisure Park site and in the 'gateway' areas to the Town Centre adjacent to the remodelled train station.

5.19 Beyond the Leisure Park, Gunnels Wood is the town's largest employment area and a key driver of the local economy. Large parts of the employment area have been remodelled over the last twenty years as large-scale occupiers have downsized premises and regenerated their sites. However, the relatively relaxed policy approach taken in the 2004 District Plan means there is no clear distribution of land-uses and few high-quality or landmark buildings. A number of non-B-class uses have been introduced in prominent locations.

5.20 This plan introduces a 'light touch' zonal approach which channels uses to particular parts of the employment area. Additional office floorspace will be directed to a new 'edge of centre' zone surrounding the central core. There are substantial opportunities to redevelop and intensify sites in this area towards the end of the plan period as regeneration benefits ripple out from the Town Centre.

5.21 At the southern end of the employment area, the first phases of the Bioscience Catalyst - an international facility for research and development - have been delivered. Land for future phases will continue to be safeguarded.

5.22 At the same time, it is essential to ensure that the town's employment offer continues to provide opportunities for industries and employees of all types and skills. Certain areas of Gunnels Wood will be reserved for smaller units in traditional manufacturing and small-scale distribution uses. This approach will also be followed in the town's second employment area at Pin Green, which provides a range of employment uses. Several of the town's retail centres contain smaller office or workshop units. These sites can help to reduce travel distances by providing jobs close to homes.

5.23 These responses will deliver a significant amount of new employment in Stevenage by 2031 but will not meet all of the identified needs. A shortfall of around 11.5ha has been identified by the most up-to-date evidence on employment needs⁽¹⁸⁾.

5.24 However, economic activity is not contained by the Borough boundary and Stevenage needs to be viewed within its wider FEMA⁽¹⁹⁾. Joint work has identified a FEMA along the A1(M) corridor. This area broadly covers Stevenage, North Hertfordshire and the eastern half of Central Bedfordshire (see Chapter 3). The FEMA contains several distinct sub-areas while links can also be seen between Stevenage and other areas such as Welwyn Garden City⁽²⁰⁾.

17 Stevenage Central Town Centre Framework (DLA, 2015)

18 Employment Technical Paper (SBC, 2016)

19 NPPF Paragraph 160, PPG: Housing and economic development needs assessments: Scope of assessments, paragraphs 008 and 012 (Reference ID: 2a-008-20140306 and 2a-012-20140306)

20 Functional Economic Market Area Study (NLP, 2015)

5.25 The Hertfordshire LEP has set out challenging targets for new job provision in the county. Their Growth Deal focuses on three growth areas that have been defined along the main transport corridors. Stevenage lies within the A1(M) corridor which stretches from Hatfield to Letchworth and broadly supports the findings of our FEMA work.

5.26 Emerging plans and evidence show sufficient employment potential in this wider area to be capable of meeting demand. We will continue to support relevant proposals in the plans of Central Bedfordshire and North Hertfordshire councils while recognising that they will make the final decision on the amount and type of employment provision in their own areas.

5.27 In particular, the following schemes will be supported where they help to 'make good' shortfalls arising from Stevenage and ensure an appropriate level of provision across the FEMA and other areas with strong connections to Stevenage:

- A new strategic allocation at **Royston Road, Baldock** in North Hertfordshire. This is a key opportunity to provide new employment land close to the Borough. This site falls within the Stevenage and Letchworth sub-area where it would be appropriate to make a full range of B-class provision to meet any unmet needs; and
- The continued development of **Stratton Business Park, Biggleswade**. This lies beyond Stevenage's immediate sub-market but within the wider FEMA in both commercial property and labour market terms. This is considered suitable to assist in accommodating unmet industrial and distribution (B1(c), B2 and B8) requirements.

5.28 These measures will ensure an appropriate level of employment provision throughout the A1 / A1(M) corridor. They will support sustainable economic growth, creating jobs and prosperity. They will support the aspirations of the Hertfordshire LEP while providing flexibility and choice for employers over the period to 2031.

5.29 There are also many jobs provided outside of our main employment areas and B-class uses in general. The town's biggest single employer is the Lister Hospital. Thousands of people are employed in retail, leisure and other services. This plan recognises the importance of these sectors to jobs and growth and contains appropriate policies to protect and enhance their contribution in this regard.

5.30 Our SA says that this policy performs very well in economic terms by supporting the development and growth of business and industry in the town. There may be some longer term, impacts to the environment due to development on Green Belt sites. However, these impacts can be reduced and mitigated through their development and delivery.

A vital Town Centre

Policy SP4: A vital Town Centre

We will make provision for the type and range of retail facilities that are required to support Stevenage's role, following the sequential test and the Borough's retail hierarchy. We will:

- a. Maintain the current retail hierarchy:
 - i. Stevenage Town Centre;
 - ii. High Street, Major Centre;
 - iii. Poplars, District Centre;
 - iv. Seven Local Centres; and
 - v. Seven Neighbourhood Centres
- b. Promote the comprehensive and co-ordinated regeneration of Stevenage Central (Town Centre plus adjoining sites). This will provide for in the order of 4,700m² of additional comparison retail floorspace, 3,000 new homes and an improved range of shopping, bars, restaurants, leisure, community, civic and cultural facilities. An extended and regenerated train station will be the focus of an enlarged Stevenage Central area, within which six Major Opportunity Areas will be designated to promote distinct mixed-use redevelopment schemes.
- c. Retain the primary retail frontages in both the Town Centre Shopping Area and the High Street Shopping Area as the focus of major comparison shopping.
- d. Support the provision of up to 7,600 m² net of additional convenience floorspace within the Borough boundary by 2031 to meet the needs of the expanded town. This will include:
 - i. 1,500m² for extensions to existing centres in the retail hierarchy, then other stores in accordance with the sequential test;
 - ii. A Local Centre in the west of Stevenage development in the order of 500m² to meet the day-to-day needs of the residents of the new neighbourhood;
 - iii. A Local Centre in the north of Stevenage development in the order of 500m² to meet the day-to-day needs of the residents of the new neighbourhood;
 - iv. A Neighbourhood Centre in the south-east of Stevenage development of no more than 500m² with a convenience store and other related small-scale Use Class A1 shops sufficient to meet the day-to-day needs of the residents of the new neighbourhood;
 - v. A new allocation for a large new store, in the order of 4,600m² net convenience goods floorspace and 920m² net comparison goods floorspace, at Graveley Road to meet identified needs post-2023.
- e. Tightly regulate new out-of-centre comparison goods floorspace and refuse the relaxation or removal of conditions on the type of goods that can be sold from existing out-of-centre comparison retail units.

5.31 Maintaining and enhancing the existing retail hierarchy in the Borough will be the focus of our retail strategy. Major comparison and convenience proposals will be directed, via the sequential test, to existing centres of an appropriate size and scale capable of best accommodating them. The existing hierarchy will be supplemented by new local centres within the new West of Stevenage and North Stevenage urban extensions and a new neighbourhood centre in the south of Stevenage development.

5.32 Our Town Centre shopping streets, once the pride of the Borough and capable of attracting people from a wide catchment, are today tired and not fit-for-purpose. They are in need of both basic maintenance in the building fabric and major investment to adapt the centre to meet modern tastes and needs. The retail world has moved on since the principal shopping streets were completed in the late 1960s: but Stevenage has not moved with the times.

5.33 This plan outlines proposals for a major regeneration of Stevenage Central, an area larger than the shopping streets, taking in the current Stevenage Leisure Park to the west of the train station. This regeneration programme has the potential to markedly change both the perception and the reality of Stevenage quite significantly, capitalising on the Borough's excellent rail links to London and Cambridge; and the planned level of housing growth across the Borough as a whole.

5.34 Across six Major Opportunity Areas, mixed-use schemes will be promoted to deliver 3,000 new homes and an improved range of shopping, bars, restaurants, leisure, community, civic and cultural facilities with a regenerated train station at its heart.

5.35 Our evidence studies show that there is a projected need for 4,700m² of additional comparison retail floorspace during the lifetime of this plan. In accordance with the retail hierarchy, and to support the regeneration of the Town Centre, this floorspace will be directed to the Town Centre. The projected significant increase in the resident population in and around the Town Centre may support some further growth in comparison floorspace: in which case, this will be directed towards the creation of additional floorspace in appropriate locations within the Stevenage Central area.

5.36 In order to protect the Town Centre from adverse competition from the extensive amount of out-of-centre comparison floorspace in the Borough, it is our intention not to permit any additional comparison floorspace in out-of-centre locations nor to permit existing out-of-centre retail units to benefit from any relaxation or removal of existing conditions on the type and nature of the goods that can be sold (i.e. that might permit them to compete more directly with the Town Centre).

5.37 There will be demand for new convenience floorspace in the latter half of the plan period. At least 20% of this longer-term need is reserved to allow for extensions to existing convenience stores in locations within the retail hierarchy. The development of this floorspace will be expected to be of an appropriate scale and in an appropriate location, following the sequential test and the Borough's retail hierarchy. New Local Centres within the two major new urban extensions north and west of the existing urban area will be permitted and they will join the Borough's retail hierarchy. A smaller-scale Neighbourhood Centre will be permitted in the south of Stevenage development; this will also join the Borough's retail hierarchy.

5.38 Provision is made for a major new convenience store on Graveley Road in the north of the Borough (on the existing garden centre site) to help to meet identified needs towards the middle of the plan period. This store should not be trading until 2023, in order to avoid potential adverse impacts upon the existing retail hierarchy.

5.39 Our SA concludes that there will be significant positive impacts for the economy through the regeneration of the Town Centre. The redevelopment will also provide longer term benefits socially and environmentally.

Infrastructure and transport

Policy SP5: Infrastructure

This plan will ensure the infrastructure required to support its targets and proposals is provided. New development will be required to contribute fairly towards the demands it creates. We will:

- a. Permit permission where new development
 - i. Makes reasonable on-site provision, off-site provision or contributions towards (but not limited to) the following where relevant:

affordable housing; biodiversity; childcare and youth facilities; community facilities; community safety and crime prevention; cultural facilities; cycling and walking; education; flood prevention measures; Gypsy and Traveller accommodation; health care facilities; leisure facilities; open spaces; passenger transport; play areas; policing; public realm enhancement; road and rail transport; sheltered housing; skills and lifelong learning; sports; supported housing; travel plans; utilities and waste and recycling.
 - ii. Includes measures to mitigate against any adverse impact on amenity or the local environment where this is appropriate and necessary; or
 - iii. Meets any specific requirements relating to individual sites or schemes set out elsewhere in this plan;
- b. Use developer contributions, legal agreements, levies or other relevant mechanisms to make sure that the criteria in (a) are met;
- c. Deliver a major reconfiguration of the road network in and around the Town Centre to catalyse regeneration;
- d. Work with Hertfordshire County Council, Highways England, the NHS, the Local Enterprise Partnership and other relevant service providers and agencies to deliver additional highway, education and health capacity as well as new and enhanced open spaces and community and leisure facilities; and
- e. Co-operate with other utilities and service providers to ensure that appropriate capacity is available to serve new development.
- f. Ensure new development does not have an adverse effect on the Lee Valley Special Protection Area (SPA). New development post 2026 will only be permitted if the required capacity is available at Rye Meads STW, including any associated sewer connections.

5.40 New development places extra demand on services. New homes will be occupied by families that need school places and open spaces. A new employment site might require a bus route to be changed or created so that employees have choices over how to reach work. It is also essential to make sure that new development is supported by suitable infrastructure. This includes providing access to key utilities such as water and electricity and ensuring that the major schemes needed to support development are delivered in a timely fashion.

5.41 Our evidence demonstrates that a growing Stevenage will need a range of new services and facilities⁽²¹⁾. Growth will also help us to tackle our identified housing needs by requiring new developments to provide affordable housing.

5.42 Government guidance lets us ask for developer contributions to make sure these things are provided. These can be secured in a number of ways:

- On large sites, a developer may be required to build or provide land for new facilities such as schools;
- A legal agreement can be used to secure affordable homes or (contributions towards) specific improvements that are related to the development; while
- We may set standard charges that will be collected from certain types of development and used to fund projects across the Borough through a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

5.43 Policy SP5 sets out a number of items for which developer contributions might be necessary. Although the way in which contributions are collected may change over the lifetime of this plan, our list of requirements is less likely to change. As part of the preparation of this plan, we have collected evidence which shows that a CIL could work in Stevenage⁽²²⁾. CIL will be developed alongside the Local Plan, though it will be subject to its own process and Examination.

5.44 Schemes which fail to make reasonable contributions will not be granted planning permission.

5.45 The Duty to Co-operate places a legal obligation on the Council to work with key service providers. We have engaged with these bodies, and other relevant service providers, on a regular basis to prepare this Plan and will continue to do so as it is implemented.

5.46 The regeneration of Stevenage Town Centre is a key priority. This will require major infrastructure interventions, including the closure and removal of Lytton Way as a through route for traffic. This is critical to opening up the east-west axis between the Town Centre Gardens and the Leisure Park and releasing land for development.

5.47 Further road schemes have been identified to mitigate other effects of the development proposed in this plan⁽²³⁾. These will provide additional capacity on local roads which are predicted to come under stress as a result of future development. This includes improvements to a number of key junctions in the town as well as on the approaches to, and at, the motorway junctions at the south-west and north-west of the Borough.

5.48 Between Junctions 6 and 8, the A1(M) narrows from three lanes to two. This places considerable pressure on this section of the motorway, particularly at peak hours. A SMART motorway scheme for the A1(M) was announced in the 2014 Autumn Statement and will provide an additional lane of capacity in each direction through hard-shoulder running. This scheme is expected to become operational in the early 2020s.

21 Infrastructure Delivery Plan (SBC, 2016)

22 Whole Plan Viability Study including Community Infrastructure Levy (HDH Planning & Development, 2015)

23 Stevenage Borough Council Preferred Option Housing Assessment - Transport Modelling Report (AECOM, 2015)

5.49 The targets and sites in this Plan will require new schools and GP premises to be provided. It will require existing facilities to be enhanced, extended or re-provided. In particular, the new neighbourhoods built to the west and north of the town will need to provide appropriate levels of on-site facilities and ensure these integrate with any future phases of development outside of the Borough boundary. Close working with the county council and various arms of the NHS will be required to ensure these projects proceed.

5.50 Stevenage is located in one of the driest regions of the country. Water provision and wastewater treatment will be important issues. All wastewater and sewage from Stevenage is treated at Rye Meads on the Hertfordshire / Essex border. This treatment works also serves a number of other growing towns including Harlow, Welwyn Garden City and Hertford. It is located within the Lee Valley Special Protection Area (SPA) - a wildlife site of European importance. It is also a RSPB-managed nature reserve providing public access.

5.51 Our evidence base has assessed the capacity of Rye Meads to cope with development across its wider catchment area. It concludes that the works should have capacity to accommodate development from across the catchment until at least 2026 with a reasonable prospect of accommodating development until 2031⁽²⁴⁾. New infrastructure will deliver additional capacity, both at the works themselves and in the connections from Stevenage. The Council will continue to engage with Thames Water, local authorities within the Rye Meads catchment, the Environment Agency and Natural England to ensure the need for additional capacity is reflected in appropriate plans and strategies and delivered without causing harm to the SPA.

5.52 Rye Meads is located some distance from Stevenage. However, in combination with the plans of other authorities, it is recognised that the rise in population resulting from the construction of new homes could increase recreational pressures on the SPA. A precautionary approach is necessary. We will encourage dialogue between developers, Natural England, the RSPB and local authorities within a reasonable distance of the SPA to ensure appropriate site management strategies and measures are implemented. Where appropriate, we will consider using contributions towards biodiversity that have been secured under Policy SP5 to assist in their delivery.

5.53 New developments will need to demonstrate that these issues have been taken into account in their proposals. Where appropriate and necessary, planning conditions will be used to phase the delivery of development in line with the provision of new or improved infrastructure.

5.54 With these measures, it is considered that Stevenage's Local Plan will deliver the infrastructure necessary to support its proposals and can proceed without causing significant harm to the Lee Valley SPA⁽²⁵⁾.

5.55 Our SA concludes that there are significant longer term social benefits arising from improvements to existing and additional infrastructure. It does conclude that there may be environmental impacts due to loss of greenfield/Green Belt land and consequences of an absolute increase in private car use arising from the plan. However, these impacts can be reduced and mitigated.

24 Rye Meads Water Cycle Strategy Review (SBC, 2015)

25 Appropriate Assessment Screening Opinion (SBC, 2015)

Policy SP6: Sustainable transport

We will create the conditions for a significant increase in passenger transport, walking and cycling. We will require new development to provide an appropriate level of car parking. We will:

- a. Support the provision of new town centre sustainable transport facilities, including:
 - i. New bus termini and waiting facilities;
 - ii. New pedestrian and cycle links, with particular emphasis on connections between the Town Centre and the Gunnels Wood employment area and Old Town; and
 - iii. A remodelled railway station that reflects Stevenage's position on the network and wider regeneration ambitions;
- b. Direct high density residential and commercial uses, and other developments that generate significant demand for travel, to the most accessible locations;
- c. Support the provision of sustainable transport schemes as identified in local transport plans and other relevant plans and strategies;
- d. Refuse permission where development proposals fail to provide any relevant plans or assessments relating to transport;
- e. Assess proposals against the car and cycle parking standards set out in the Supplementary Planning Documents; and
- f. Require new development to make reasonable on-site, off-site or financial contributions in accordance with Policy SP5 including (but not limited to):
 - i. The creation or improvement of routes to, from or in the vicinity of the site;
 - ii. The provision of crossings, underpasses, bridges or other appropriate means of traversing significant barriers for pedestrians and cyclists;
 - iii. The implementation of parking control measures within or in the vicinity of the development site; and / or
 - iv. The implementation of other transport schemes identified in our delivery plans.

5.56 The Government encourage us to plan positively for cycling, walking and passenger transport. It recognises that the transport system needs to be balanced in favour of sustainable transport modes, giving people a real choice about how they travel⁽²⁶⁾. Stevenage is well placed to meet these requirements. There are a large number of bus routes serving the town with most homes within walking distance of a bus stop. There is a comprehensive cycle and footpath network, fully segregated along key routes. Stevenage station is on the East Coast Main Line providing regular and fast services to London, Cambridge and towns and cities in the north of England.

5.57 This Plan sets out our ambitious proposals to regenerate, rebrand and reimagine the central area of Stevenage. There are significant opportunities to improve the experiences of pedestrians and cyclists, residents and visitors and employees and business travellers through good urban design that helps create a sense of place.

5.58 As part of the regeneration of the Town Centre we will close the existing bus station and replace it with new bus termini and waiting provision. We will take this opportunity to improve bus-train transfers. We will also require significantly improved connections into and through this area. This will let more employees in Gunnels Wood easily access their place of work. It will enable better access through the Town Centre and to and from the Old Town.

5.59 Pedestrians and cyclists can reach the Town Centre perimeter using existing facilities along key routes. However, in many places, this provision breaks down when it hits the ring road requiring users to cross large car parks or use underpasses or exposed bridges. The first impressions of Stevenage when arriving through the train station are poor while it is difficult to move east-west from the town centre to the main employment area at Gunnels Wood. The existing layout of the leisure park is dominated by surface car parking.

5.60 Our evidence recognises the need to deliver major interventions in and immediately around the railway station⁽²⁷⁾. As well as creating a sense of arrival in the town, these will also provide practical linkages across the railway line. Any operational works on land that is controlled by Network Rail and the train companies will not require planning permission from the Council. However, we will work together to ensure that any such schemes integrate with our wider proposals for the Town Centre.

5.61 We will support high density uses in the Town Centre and in other locations with good access to passenger transport that will help reduce the number and length of journeys that people need to make. Developments will be required to make appropriate on-site provision for cyclists and pedestrians. This might include cycle parking spaces and ancillary facilities such as lockers and showers. Where appropriate we will require Transport Assessments and Travel Plans to demonstrate that the proposed development will not have an unacceptable impact.

5.62 However, although we need to encourage people to use cleaner and greener modes of transport, we also need to recognise the important role played by the car in modern life. People may be able to cycle or catch the train to work during the week, but will still have a car to visit friends and relatives at weekends. Early parts of the New Town were built on the assumption that only one in every eight homes would need a parking space. Some of these areas now suffer from significant traffic problems as cars park on street. Small, but important, green spaces and verges are being lost to make additional parking provision. We need to make sure that our approach is not too restrictive or unrealistic. Repeating the mistakes of the past would yet again create problems for future generations.

5.63 We will use parking standards to assess development proposals. These will require less parking to be provided in locations near passenger transport and local facilities. However, these will also reflect the levels of car ownership that we expect from new development.

5.64 Where appropriate we will require new developments to contribute towards, or provide, transport improvements. This might include funding towards a new or improved bus route or a relevant scheme identified in our delivery plans.

5.65 Our SA says that provision of sustainable transport has positive benefits across the board. Environmental and social aspects benefit the most due to reductions in, for example, pollution from the use of private cars, but also through improving the health and wellbeing of the residents of Stevenage by encouraging the use of bicycles and walking.

High quality homes

Policy SP7: High quality homes

This Local Plan supports significant growth in and around Stevenage to help meet needs across the market area. We will:

- a. Provide at least 7,600 new homes within Stevenage Borough between 2011 and 2031.
- b. Deliver these through the sites and broad locations identified in this plan that allow for at least:
 - i. 2,950 new homes in and around the Town Centre;
 - ii. 1,350 new homes in a new neighbourhood on undeveloped land to the west of the town within the Borough boundary;
 - iii. 1,350 new homes to the north and south-east of the town on land removed from the Green Belt;
 - iv. 1,950 new homes elsewhere in the Borough; and
 - v. 11 new, permanent Gypsy and Traveller pitches on a new site close to Junction 8 of the A1(M).
- c. Ensure at least 60% of new homes completed within the Borough boundary between 2011 and 2031 are on previously developed land.
- d. Make sure there is always enough land to build homes for the next five years.
- e. Support applications for housing development on unallocated sites where they are in suitable locations and will not exceed our environmental capacity.
- f. Build a full range of homes in terms of tenure, type and size. This plan positively addresses housing needs and existing imbalances in the housing stock by setting targets for:
 - i. At least 20% of all new homes over the plan period to be Affordable Housing with an aspiration to deliver up to 40% affordable housing where viability permits;
 - ii. An appropriate mix of housing sizes, in line with the most up-to-date evidence of need; and
 - iii. At least 3% of new homes over the plan period to be 'aspirational' to deliver a more balanced housing stock; and
 - iv. At least 1% of new homes on the urban extensions to be self-build.
- g. Supplement these homes through the provision of up to 200 bed spaces in supported accommodation subject to up-to-date evidence of need
- h. Work with North Hertfordshire District Council and, if necessary, East Hertfordshire District Council to ensure any homes provided on the edge of Stevenage but outside the Borough boundary are successfully integrated into the urban fabric of the town.

5.66 Providing new homes is a key outcome of the plan-making process. Stevenage currently has a population of around 86,000⁽²⁸⁾. This will continue to grow and change over the plan period driving demand for places to live within the Borough.

5.67 The NPPF says that plans should normally meet the full, objectively assessed needs (OAN) for market and affordable housing in the housing market area. Our evidence identifies a requirement for Stevenage of 7,300 homes over the period 2011-2031. This takes into account migration trends over a 10-year period and also includes adjustments in response to market signals in line with Government guidance⁽²⁹⁾.

5.68 This plan sets a target slightly above the identified level of OAN. This variously takes into account:

- The acute need for affordable housing in the town. A modest increase in the target allows more homes in response to this pressure and particularly reflects the Council's emerging housebuilding programme which will deliver up to 100% affordable homes on sites in the Borough⁽³⁰⁾;
- The fact that as people live for longer, and live in their own homes for longer, it may be appropriate to assume that more of their needs will be met in the normal housing stock;
- Official Government household projections for the Borough⁽³¹⁾;
- The need to ensure development viability and set a challenging target that provides a clear signal that we are serious about delivering regeneration and change in the Borough; and
- What we consider to be a reasonable and achievable rate of housing delivery.

5.69 Between them, these factors justify the housing target for the Borough. This target meets the future needs of Stevenage within the Borough boundary and does not rely on other authorities to make good any shortfall. Simultaneously, the small size of the Borough and the challenging target we have set means there are not additional sites or land which might be used to meet unmet needs from other areas.

5.70 Notwithstanding this point, we have worked with other authorities to define the functional HMA in which Stevenage lies (see Chapter 3)⁽³²⁾. We will continue to have regard to emerging proposals across the HMA and work with relevant authorities to ensure the requirements of national guidance are met⁽³³⁾.

28 Population Estimates for UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, Mid-2014 (Office for National Statistics, 2015)

29 Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update 2015 (ORS, 2015)

30 Our previous SHMA (DCA, 2013) said 575 affordable homes were required each year. The latest SHMA suggests that our Objectively Assessed Needs should contain a 10% uplift in response to market signals and affordable housing needs. These extra homes would equate to a 14% uplift.

31 The 2012-based household projections (DCLG, 2015) suggest 7,700 households will form over the plan period. Although the evidence suggests our housing requirements should be calculated in a slightly different way, we think it is also important to aim towards this higher number.

32 Housing Market Areas in Bedfordshire and surrounding areas (ORS, 2015)

33 Paragraph 47 of the NPPF requires local plans to ensure that the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area are met, insofar as this would be consistent with the policies of the Framework. The Housing Technical Paper (SBC, 2015) considers provision across this wider area.

5.71 Taking into account completions and permissions since 2011, this target will require development to accelerate to a rate of around 450 homes per year over the remainder of the plan period. This is above long-term development rates since the Development Corporation was wound up. However, the development industry supports our belief that this level of delivery can be achieved⁽³⁴⁾.

5.72 In order to deliver the housing target, this plan sets out an ambitious development strategy for the Borough.

5.73 Our most recent housing land study⁽³⁵⁾ identifies sufficient sites within the Borough to meet our housing requirement to 2031. In trying to meet these needs, whilst ensuring sustainable development, we have chosen sites for development in the order shown below:

- Previously developed sites
- Greenfield sites within the existing urban area
- Greenfield sites outside of the existing urban area
- Green Belt sites

5.74 A technical paper⁽³⁶⁾ has been produced to explain how we have decided which sites from the land availability assessment to take forward and allocate within this plan.

5.75 Since 2011, 593 homes have been completed, and a further 1,758⁽³⁷⁾ are already in the planning process. This means that land for a further 5,249 homes needs to be identified.

| Locations | Minimum target 2011-2031 | Already completed or permitted | Minimum still to be planned for to 2031 |
|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| In and around the town centre | 2,950 | 950 | 2,000 |
| New neighbourhood to the west of the town | 1,350 | 0 | 1,350 |
| New neighbourhoods to the north and south-east on land removed from the Green Belt | 1,350 | 0 | 1,350 |
| Elsewhere within the Borough | 1,950 | 1,401 | 549 |

5.76 National guidance encourages the reuse of land that has been previously developed (brownfield land). Since the start of the plan period around 85% of new homes and planning permissions (including prior approvals) have been on previously developed land (PDL). We also

34 Housing completions in the 20- and 30-year periods to 2011 averaged 300 per year. The required rate represents an uplift of around 50%

35 Strategic Land Availability Assessment: Housing. Update 2015

36 Housing Technical Paper (SBC, 2015)

37 Excludes some schemes that we know are unlikely to come forward in their current form, to avoid double-counting.

plan to redevelop a number of large PDL sites in the future, including the Town Centre and some of the Neighbourhood Centres. However, Stevenage has a limited supply of these sites, so we will also require a number of greenfield sites to be developed. Our evidence⁽³⁸⁾ suggests that just over 45% of future housing could be built on PDL. Overall, we expect that approximately 60% of all housing completions over the period 2011-2031 will be on PDL.

5.77 The largest potential for delivering these homes comes from the Town Centre. The regeneration of the Town Centre area is the highest priority of the Borough Council. The Council recently commissioned work to produce a regeneration plan for the central area of the town. The Town Centre Framework draws together a range of evidence and ideas to provide a strategic, but flexible, plan for the area. The Framework aims to deliver large-scale housing growth. It estimates just under 3,000 new homes could be provided.

5.78 Stevenage was developed around the concept of individual neighbourhoods, each having their own centre for facilities and services. However, many of these centres are now ageing and in need of regeneration. The nature of shopping and the way in which community facilities are used has also now changed, resulting in many of the commercial units being left vacant. Redevelopment is required in order to ensure these centres meet the needs of the community for the future. The neighbourhood centres are generally low density, under-occupied sites, which offer significant potential for intensification, as mixed use development sites. Increased residential use of these sites will help to meet our housing targets, whilst retaining the community use and functions of these sites.

5.79 The redevelopment of Archer Road is currently underway, and the Borough Council aims to regenerate a further seven neighbourhood centres within the plan period.

5.80 Development around the edge of the town, within the Borough boundary, accounts for another large proportion of the housing numbers. The West of Stevenage housing allocation from the District Plan has been carried forward and work is currently underway to try and progress this scheme. This plan releases land from the Green Belt to allocate two more large schemes to the north and south-east of the town.

5.81 As well as ensuring we meet the overall housing target, national guidance also requires us to maintain a rolling five-year housing land supply. As we are reliant on a number of large schemes, and relatively few small sites, many of our new homes are likely to be delivered towards the end of the plan period. As such, we will not phase development, so that sites can be delivered whenever the market decides. We will actively encourage development to come forward towards the front end of the plan period.

5.82 The homes that are delivered from the sites identified in this plan, and through other permissive regimes, will be supplemented by windfalls. These are the sites that are brought forward which have not been specifically identified for development. Applications on windfall sites will be assessed against the detailed policies of this plan. They will be supported in principle where they help maintain our supply of deliverable sites and will not have an adverse impact.

5.83 As part of the housing strategy, this plan also makes provision to meet the future needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community⁽³⁹⁾. There is currently one Gypsy and Traveller Site in Stevenage. This is to the west of the A1(M) at Dyes Lane and provides 17 pitches.

5.84 Our evidence suggests a requirement for between 11 and 16 new pitches by 2031⁽⁴⁰⁾. There is some uncertainty around the precise level of future requirements because of the small size of the existing community and the difficulties of projecting their needs over a long time period. We will ensure that the minimum requirement identified is met and will keep our evidence under regular review to ensure that appropriate levels of provision are made over the period to 2031. Our existing site at Dyes Lane has been developed to the limits of the existing land ownership and this plan identifies a new site at the north-west of the Borough to meet future requirements.

5.85 As well as setting targets for the overall amounts of housing it is vital that the plan sets clear expectations as to the types of home that will be built.

5.86 The provision of affordable homes is a key priority for the Council. Over the plan period, at least 1 in 5 of the new homes provided should be affordable homes. This target should be viewed in the context of the Council's aspiration to harness increasing values and viability and deliver up to 40% of all homes as affordable in later years of the plan. This will be pursued through targeted reviews of relevant policies and evidence. The provision of affordable units on private developments, in line with our policy requirements, will be supplemented by the Council's own housebuilding programme. This will deliver schemes containing up to 100% affordable housing on public land.

5.87 Diversifying the Borough's housing stock in terms of housing types and sizes is another key priority. We need to ensure the provision of homes is in line with the most up-to-date assessment of need, including large / family homes, referred to in this plan as aspirational homes.

5.88 Similarly, we need to ensure the right sorts of provision are made for older residents. Much of this can be accommodated within the housing stock though the data suggests up to 200 bed spaces of specialist accommodation is likely to be required⁽⁴¹⁾. However, it is important to be flexible in this regard. The ways in which older people choose to live, and in which providers seek to deliver services is changing. This is reflected in the housing target we have set (see Paragraph 5.67). We will continue to support proposals for care homes, and other appropriate forms of provision, that respond to future demands.

39 In accordance with Government advice in Planning policy for traveller sites (DCLG, 2015)

40 Stevenage Borough Council Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Study (David Coultie Associates (DCA), 2013); Housing Technical Paper (SBC, 2015)

41 Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update 2015 (ORS, 2015). This suggests a requirement for almost 200 additional institutional bedspaces over the period to 2031. These would normally be classified as a class C2 use, compared to dwellings which are C3 and are excluded from the OAN. It is standard statistical practise to assume that the proportion of older persons requiring this form of accommodation will remain constant.

5.89 The Government recognises the aspirations of many people to build their own homes. Although we are not aware of an identified need in the Borough currently, we want to ensure that these opportunities exist if things change in the future. The larger urban extensions provide a suitable location to meet this need, as putting aside plots for self-build use can be combined with the need to provide larger, aspirational homes, if necessary.

5.90 Stevenage is already built up to and, in places, across the administrative boundary (see Chapter 2). This plan cannot set policies for land outside the Borough boundary. However, we are committed to working closely with our neighbours to ensure that our plans interact positively with one another. North Hertfordshire District Council have set out proposals to allocate land on the edge of Stevenage for development. These could deliver almost 2,000 additional homes around the town by 2031. Further land on the eastern edge of Stevenage has been promoted to East Hertfordshire District Council for consideration.

5.91 The final decisions on whether to pursue these schemes rests with our neighbours. We will continue to support these proposals, recognising the benefits they bring in terms of:

- Ensuring an appropriate level of housing is built across the wider area;
- Providing opportunities for people living in and around Stevenage to have a home of their own; and
- Supporting our wider ambitions to grow and regenerate the town by encouraging investment and providing a greater population for the town centre and other facilities to draw upon.

5.92 Our SA says that the amount of housing we are planning for will have significant social benefits. However, there will also be environmental impacts from the development of greenfield sites. The detailed allocations in this plan assess the implications for each site. Mitigation measures have been identified.

Good design

Policy SP8: Good design

We will require new development to achieve the highest standards of design and sustainability. We will:

- a. Preserve and enhance the most important areas and characteristics of Stevenage whilst delivering substantial improvement to the image and quality of the town's built fabric;
- b. Require significant developments to be masterplanned to ensure the delivery of high-quality schemes;
- c. Set out detailed design criteria and require applicants to have regard to Supplementary Planning Documents and other relevant guidance; and
- d. Implement the Government's optional Technical Standards to ensure schemes deliver the space, accessibility and water efficiency expected of modern developments.

5.93 Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. The NPPF is clear that development of a poor design which does not improve the character and quality of an area and the way it functions should be refused. This applies to all forms of development, including individual properties, building extensions, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes. It is essential that new development proposals promote character in the townscape and landscape by conforming to locally distinctive patterns of development, culture and landscape.

5.94 Stevenage was the UK's first designated 'New Town', which incorporated the pre-existing settlement (see Chapter 2). There are examples of high-quality design and layout, both historic and modern, which should be preserved whilst also influencing the future. The high quality design of transport infrastructure, for example, positively contributes to sustainability and quality of life objectives. New development proposals should continue to ensure that movement on foot or bicycle is as easy and convenient as travelling by car.

5.95 However, the New Town also resulted in large homogeneous areas built over a short period of time. As a result, designs that were considered innovative and exciting at the time are now overlooked and not considered good examples. Parts of the New Town have suffered from urban decay with some areas being simultaneously in decline. New designs should raise the overall tone of design whilst respecting those parts of its history and general principles that still work.

5.96 Our policies require masterplans for the largest schemes to ensure that developments which will be developed over an extended period of time, or by different developers, contribute to a holistic vision.

5.97 Detailed policies relating to design are set out in Part III of this plan. The Stevenage Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provides detailed standards and advice. The Council may wish to review this and / or provide additional guidance over the lifetime of the plan.

5.98 The Government has significantly streamlined the type and amount of requirements we can place upon new development. Having reviewed these, and relevant evidence for the Borough, we have concluded that it would be appropriate to introduce these within Stevenage.

Healthy communities

Policy SP9: Healthy communities

We will provide community facilities that meet the needs of local residents and those living in the area around Stevenage. We will:

- a. Identify a hierarchy of district, local and neighbourhood centres;
- b. Permit applications within identified centres where they support its role and function, deliver the proposed distribution of retail floorspace and preserve the vitality and viability of the hierarchy as a whole;
- c. Require centres to be provided in significant new developments. Where development is planned to cross administrative boundaries, these will be masterplanned to form a part of the larger scheme, working with neighbouring authorities where necessary.
- d. Protect and enhance healthcare provision by:
 - i. Working with the NHS Trust to support the roles of the Lister Hospital as the main provider of acute healthcare in north and east Hertfordshire and as a major employer of local people. The future of the site is safeguarded through a specific site allocation.
 - ii. Helping to deliver new facilities that provide a wide range of public health services in the following locations:
 - North of Stevenage
 - Stevenage West
 - The town centre.
- e. Work with Hertfordshire County Council and other education providers to raise educational achievement and aspirations. We will support the provision of new education or training facilities where they meet a demonstrated need and are in an accessible location.
- f. Support the provision of leisure and cultural facilities to reflect the distribution of the existing and future population, by protecting and enhancing existing facilities and helping to deliver new facilities, particularly:
 - i. A new wet and dry leisure facility to replace the Arts and Leisure Centre and Stevenage Swimming Centre within the town centre
 - ii. Additional skate parks/youth facilities within the urban extensions to the north, west and south-east
 - iii. A new cricket ground within Stevenage West
 - iv. New sports hall provision at The Barclay School and the new secondary school (former Barnwell East site)
- g. Consolidate existing social and community facilities in Stevenage to provide a network that is sustainable in the long term.

- h. Require new development to make appropriate contributions towards community facilities.
- i. Support the provision of other, appropriate new facilities and only allow the redevelopment of existing facilities where it can be proven that they are no longer required or viable for community uses.

5.99 Government guidance requires local planning authorities to ensure that communities have access to a range of social, recreational and cultural facilities and services. Providing the right facilities, in the right locations, can play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities.

5.100 Policies mainly relate to A1, C2, D1 and D2 Use Classes and include facilities such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, healthcare facilities, public houses and places of worship.

5.101 Stevenage performs worse than the national average, and significantly worse than the surrounding area (Hertfordshire) in many areas of healthy living, with particularly low levels of educational attainment and physical activity, and higher levels of smoking related deaths and obesity⁽⁴²⁾.

5.102 Creating a healthy living environment is, therefore, a key priority of the Borough Council. This plan aims to ensure that adequate provision is made for community facilities in future developments and that existing facilities are protected.

5.103 The idea of community neighbourhoods was central to the development of Stevenage as a New Town. Locally important facilities are provided by a network of large and small centres across the town. These have traditionally been known as 'neighbourhood centres'. These centres are a key feature of Stevenage's built heritage and an important part of the town's character. Because of their successes, similar facilities have continued to be provided in neighbourhoods built since the 1980s. These include Chells Manor and Great Ashby.

5.104 The provision of local facilities within a designated centre is still supported as a concept. We will require large-scale housing developments to provide community facilities and services according to an up-to-date assessed need.

5.105 Despite their successes, a number of the original centres are now in need of investment and repair. Many of the buildings require replacement or significant improvements, and the design and layout of some centres encourages anti-social behaviour and leads to a fear of crime, thus discouraging visitors.

5.106 The Council is committed to improving and regenerating these centres throughout the plan period, and beyond. Some of these redevelopment programmes will also provide additional housing to help us meet the targets in Policy HO1. It will be important to retain and improve the centre's role in providing services for the local community, as required.

42 Stevenage Health Profile (Public Health England, 2015); Hertfordshire Health Profile (Public Health England, 2015)

5.107 In order to be consistent with national guidance, the plan identifies a network of district, local and neighbourhood centres. This will guide future development on these sites.

5.108 The Lister Hospital is one of the largest hospitals in Hertfordshire, providing a wide range of services including; accident and emergency, maternity, acute elderly and acute mental health units. It also provides specialist sub-regional services in urology and renal dialysis. The hospital is the largest employer in the town providing more than 2,700 jobs.

5.109 We recognise the importance of the Lister Hospital, both as a healthcare facility and as a major source of employment for the town. The site will be protected for this use. The East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust is responsible for hospital services.

5.110 As well as the hospital, healthcare is provided at GP surgeries and a number of other secondary care facilities across the town. These are mostly managed by NHS England. Existing sites will be protected.

5.111 It is recognised that some of these facilities are already working at, or above capacity. To help address this, planning permission was granted in June 2014 for a replacement doctor's surgery in Shephall. This will be built at the western end of the Ridlins Playing Fields. We will continue to safeguard this site for healthcare uses. Provision for new healthcare facilities will also be required within our larger housing sites at North Stevenage, West of Stevenage and the Town Centre. Options for the reconfiguration of healthcare sites within the Town Centre area are currently being explored.

5.112 Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), as Local Education Authority, is responsible for determining future requirements for education. The most up-to-date evidence on need will be followed in relation to education provision.

5.113 In terms of secondary school provision, additional capacity resulting from development within the Borough will be accommodated through the reuse of a currently unoccupied secondary school site at Barnwell East. Our plan safeguards the Barnwell East site for education use.

5.114 The County Council generally request new primary schools to be provided on sites of over 500 new homes. For the larger development sites of Stevenage West, North of Stevenage and the town centre, new primary school provision will be required. Individual policies relating to each of these sites will set out their specific requirements in terms of education. The remaining need will be accommodated through the expansion of existing schools. Developer contributions will be required in order to deliver this additional capacity.

5.115 The Borough Council will continue to work with HCC to assess the future requirements arising from development in the Borough.

5.116 Limited land availability within the Borough means that a proactive approach to planning for sport and recreation is essential. Our evidence⁽⁴³⁾ identifies a number of key priorities for the town. The highest priority being the replacement of the currently ageing facilities within the Arts

and Leisure Centre and Swimming Centre to a new wet and dry leisure centre. Other requirements include increased sports hall provision, skate parks or other youth facilities, a new cricket ground and securing Community Use Agreements at schools.

5.117 The Leisure Park provides the focus for more intensive leisure facilities within the Town Centre, with facilities including a cinema, ten-pin bowling, a soft play facility for children, and a gym. This provides a strategic facility, attracting people from nearby towns and villages. This site forms a part of the wider Stevenage Central regeneration area, with proposals to intensify the site and add residential use. Policy TC3 seeks to retain the leisure focus of this area.

5.118 National guidance classes many leisure and cultural facilities as 'town centre uses'. Policy TC13 defines the retail hierarchy for Stevenage, which development proposals for main town centre uses will be assessed against.

5.119 Our SA recommends that the plan should examine the site specific impacts of any new allocations and set out any necessary mitigation measures. These may include (but not necessarily be limited to) travel plans or other sustainable transport measures. We will make sure the new pattern of provision means that all residents can continue to access these services. The policy provides long term social benefits through the improvement of health and wellbeing of residents of the town. This has a secondary economic benefit in ensuring that the town has a happy, healthy workforce.

Green Belt

Policy SP10: Green Belt

We will support the principles of the Green Belt and provide long-term certainty over the limits of development. We:

- a. Have carried out a Green Belt Review. This plan establishes defensible long-term Green Belt boundaries within the Borough which allow scope for the continued growth of Stevenage to at least 2031. This includes new boundaries around the Borough to accommodate:
 - i. Land released for development within the plan period; and
 - ii. Land added back into the Green Belt.
- b. Will continue to work with North Hertfordshire and East Hertfordshire District Councils to create a coherent and connected Green Belt boundary around the town, including the safeguarding of land in North Hertfordshire to meet our needs beyond the plan period.
- c. Will decide applications for development in the Green Belt in accordance with national guidance and any other relevant policies.

5.120 Green Belts are one of the best known and oldest planning policies. Their main purpose is to prevent urban sprawl by ensuring land is kept permanently open.

5.121 The NPPF sets out the five purposes of the Green Belt:

- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

5.122 The Green Belt boundary around the town, previously identified by the District Plan⁽⁴⁴⁾, was very close to the existing urban area. In conjunction with this, the town's urban nature means that limited opportunities are available for development. In the past the Green Belt has been reviewed and land has been released to allow for development to the north east of the town at Great Ashby, and to the west of the town. Development to the west has been the subject of various planning applications, but is yet to proceed.

5.123 The NPPF allows for Green Belt boundaries to be altered if there are 'exceptional circumstances'. Where it is considered necessary to alter Green Belt boundaries, this should be undertaken through the preparation or review of the Local Plan. It is also a requirement that any revised boundary should have permanence enduring beyond the plan period of 2031.

5.124 This plan is informed by a Green Belt Review⁽⁴⁵⁾.

5.125 The results of this review recommend a number of sites, both within and outside of the Borough boundary, which could be released for development in the plan period and beyond without damage to the overall purpose of the Green Belt in this location.

5.126 The parcels of land recommended for release are characterised by the following:

- Being of sufficient scale to make a meaningful contribution to housing or other development needs;
- Being of a sufficient scale to offer opportunities for the incorporation of green infrastructure in combination with their relationship with the wider Green Belt;
- Concentrating growth in a small number of locations which are well related to the existing urban area and can be integrated accordingly;
- Offering opportunities for strategic masterplanning to allow for the phased release of land, creation of a sense of place and the provision of sustainable development.

5.127 There is no definition of 'exceptional circumstances' within the NPPF. However, it has been considered by the Courts. The recent *Calverton* judgement⁽⁴⁶⁾ identifies criteria that should be taken into account when considering whether these circumstances exist. Our overarching approach to Green Belt review and consideration of these criteria is set out in a technical paper⁽⁴⁷⁾. We consider that the future development and regeneration needs of the Borough do provide the 'exceptional circumstances' that are required to alter Green Belt boundaries.

5.128 Our evidence⁽⁴⁸⁾ demonstrates that the sites recommended for release will not harm the overall purposes of the Green Belt in this area.

5.129 To meet our development needs, we have taken just under 90 hectares of land out of the Green Belt. This includes land to the north and south-east of the town. Policy GB1 defines the extent of the revised Green Belt boundary within the Borough.

5.130 The Local Plan releases the following parcels of land:

- Land at North Stevenage (Housing - 800 new homes)
- Land to the South of Stevenage (Housing - 550 new homes)
- Garden Centre site (Convenience retail)
- Land adjacent to Graveley Road (Gypsy and Traveller provision)
- Land west of Junction 8 (Employment)

5.131 As we do not wish to encroach on the Green Belt boundary unnecessarily, all of the other sites within the Borough identified in the Green Belt Review for potential release or safeguarding for future development will remain within the Green Belt. We do not consider these sites to be suitable for development.

45 Review of the Green Belt around Stevenage: Part 1 - Survey against Green Belt Purpose (AMEC, 2013); Review of the Green Belt around Stevenage: Part 2 - Site Assessment and Capacity Testing (AMEC, 2015)

46 [Calverton Parish Council v Nottingham City Council & Ors \[2015\] EWHC 1078 \(Admin\) \(21 April 2015\)](#)

47 Green Belt Technical Paper (SBC, 2015)

48 Review of the Green Belt around Stevenage: Part 2 - Site Assessment and Capacity Testing (AMEC, 2015)



5.132 Our evidence also recommends adding land into the Green Belt, to complement release of other land, thus strengthening the overall purpose. Two of these areas lie outside of the Borough Boundary. The parcel of land in Norton Green has been included within the Green Belt boundary. It is a small settlement, with a rural village-like character. Renewing the Green Belt designation on this site will help to protect it as such and will address the anomaly relating to its previous removal.

5.133 The Green Belt Review included consideration of land outside of the Borough Boundary in neighbouring East Hertfordshire and North Hertfordshire districts. This helps to ensure a strategic view is taken rather than allowing the boundary to become a physical barrier and potentially distorting the conclusions of the study. Clearly this plan cannot determine the future of land outside of the Borough boundary, however, we will continue to work with our neighbours to ensure a coherent and connected Green Belt boundary around the town, encouraging them to take on board the recommendations of our evidence.

5.134 We will consider proposals for development within the Green Belt using national guidance. Where the proposed use is proved to be acceptable, we will use our detailed policies to decide whether to grant planning permission.

5.135 Our SA appraisal recognises that some loss of the Green Belt will have negative environmental impacts. However, we will concentrate on reducing and mitigating these impacts through specific policy measures.

Climate change, flooding and pollution

Policy SP11: Climate change, flooding and pollution

We will work to limit, mitigate and adapt to the negative impacts of climate change, flood risk and all forms of pollution. We will:

- a. ensure new development minimises and mitigates its impact on the environment and climate change by considering matters relating (but not necessarily limited) to the provision of green space, renewable energy, energy efficiency, water consumption, drainage, waste, pollution, contamination and sustainable construction techniques;
- b. ensure new development reduces or mitigates against flood risk and pollution;
- c. take a sequential approach to development in all areas of flood risk; and
- d. protect existing flood storage reservoirs and require new flood storage reservoirs to be provided where appropriate.

5.136 Climate change continues to be a subject that features prominently on the World Stage. As part of our commitment to limiting the Borough's negative impacts on the environment, we will ensure that all new developments

- are energy efficient;
- have low water consumption;
- incorporate appropriate drainage (SuDS);
- incorporate waste recycling;
- minimise pollution;
- remediate contamination; and
- seek to adopt sustainable construction techniques.

5.137 Some small areas of the Borough are at risk from flooding⁽⁴⁹⁾. Land has been allocated for development using the sequential approach and conforms to Government guidance on flood risk. We will require development proposals to assess risks from all types of flooding and mitigate or reduce risk through the provision of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) and other measures.

5.138 The development of the New Town on a previously greenfield site posed significant challenges in terms of surface water drainage. Although most of the town falls within the catchment of the Stevenage Brook, this watercourse has limited capacity. The solution was to create a series of flood meadows ~ or Flood Storage Reservoirs (FSRs). These helped to regulate the discharge of water in times of storm. There are now 12 FSRs in and around Stevenage. These will be protected from development to help prevent any increase in flood risk.

49 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) (Faber Maunsel, 2009); SFRA Update (SBC, 2013)

5.139 SuDS are a drainage solution that provide an alternative to the direct channelling of surface water through networks of pipes and sewers to nearby watercourses. SuDS include methods for draining and storing surface water in a sustainable way, designed to mimic natural drainage processes as far as possible, providing multiple environmental benefits.

5.140 Where it is considered that the use of SuDS will not be sufficient to cope with additional run-off water created by new development, new flood storage reservoirs will be required to meet demand and ease the flood risks from surface water run-off. Where there is an identified need, we will require FSRs to be accommodated as part of a planning application.

5.141 Government guidance requires us to ensure new development is appropriate for its location⁽⁵⁰⁾. High levels of light and noise pollution can have a negative impact on the amenity of surrounding land uses. It can also have an adverse effect on wildlife where existing (diurnal and nocturnal) patterns are disturbed.

5.142 However, there are certain activities and industrial practises which cannot occur without some emission of pollutants (including light and noise) or use of hazardous substances. In Stevenage, the zonal approach used to plan the New Town meant that these uses are generally located in our two main employment areas: Gunnels Wood and Pin Green. These areas are well away from residential and other sensitive land uses. This approach will be continued by only permitting hazardous and polluting developments where the risks or impacts are acceptable.

5.143 Stevenage lies under flight paths in and out of London Luton Airport. Airport passenger numbers have grown significantly since the turn of the Millennium and will continue to do so. We will make sure that new development, particularly to the west of the town, conforms with advice on acceptable levels of exposure to aircraft noise.

5.144 Our SA says that this policy will have positive effects for the Borough as it takes responsibility for controlling pollution and flood risk. However, it does identify potentially negative effects due to permitting potentially contaminating land uses within the Borough. However, these can be controlled by environmental regulations in order to control the effects.

The natural and historic environments

Policy SP12: Green infrastructure and the natural environment

The green infrastructure, natural environment and landscape of Stevenage will be protected, enhanced and managed, and we will positively acknowledge its influence on Knebworth Woods SSSI and Lea Valley SPA. We will:

- a. Create, protect and enhance key areas of open space and biodiversity value including:
 - i. parks, recreation grounds, amenity spaces and woodlands which are integral to the open space structure of Stevenage as Principal Open Spaces. This will include Fairlands Valley Park;
 - ii. locally important wildlife sites; and
 - iii. a series of ten green links around the town. These will be collections of spaces that are worthy of protection for their connectivity and their recreation, amenity or wildlife value.
- b. Preserve, create, protect and enhance locally important linear features including:
 - i. the historic lanes and hedgerows which pre-date the New Town; and
 - ii. structural green spaces along major routes within the town.
- c. Create and protect multi-functional green space and sports facilities as an integral part of new developments in accordance with the latest standards and permit the creation of other new open spaces where they will meet an identified deficit;
- d. Mitigate or, as a last resort, compensate for the loss of green infrastructure or assets of biodiversity importance resulting from development; and
- e. Only grant planning permission if an adequate assessment of priority habitats and species has been undertaken. Any identified impact on these habitats and/or species will need to be avoided, mitigated or compensated.

5.145 Green and open spaces are an important part of Stevenage. Around a quarter of the town is taken up by parks, playing fields, woodlands and other amenity spaces. Local people value open spaces in the town. They provide places to relax, exercise and enjoy nature. These areas also include sites that are important for wildlife.

5.146 Identifying and conserving a network of green spaces is a vital part of the planning process. Government guidance recognises the importance of providing access to high quality open spaces. It recognises that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. We should plan positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure⁽⁵¹⁾.

5.147 Green infrastructure includes many types of land that we think should remain (largely) undeveloped including parks, important open spaces, wildlife sites and rights of way. Providing green spaces was an important part of the original New Town structure. However, the small size of the Borough, and the shortage of readily re-usable brownfield sites, can create pressure to develop these spaces for other uses. We want to keep the most important spaces for future generations to provide a green urban area and to link the town to the countryside.

5.148 Generally speaking, there is good provision of open spaces within the town. Looking across the Borough as a whole, the amount of green space is considered suitable for the size of the population. However, there are local areas where people do not always have access to the full range of open space typologies. The growth of the town will increase this pressure as a larger population fuels demand for places to relax and play.

5.149 The majority of Stevenage residents make regular use of the town's parks and open spaces. In addition to the town's largest park at Fairlands Valley, there are a number of other parks providing recreational and open spaces. These include areas such as Hampson Park and St Nicholas Park. This plan protects a series of Principal Open Spaces. These include the sites mentioned above and other areas that provide significant opportunities for recreation or play.

5.150 As well as sites specifically designed for public use, we will preserve important natural habitats. The plan recognises 45 sites in Stevenage for their wildlife value and local importance. There are no European or nationally designated sites in the Borough, however, there are a number outside of the Borough boundary including Knebworth Woods SSSI, Rye Meads SSSI, Chilterns AONB and the Lea Valley SPA.

5.151 The elements of Policy SP12 described above will allow us to protect individual sites that are important in their own right. However, it is also important to safeguard the connections between these sites and other green areas. Stevenage New Town was designed to provide corridors of open spaces which connect the neighbourhoods of the town and the surrounding countryside. The plan identifies a series of green links and corridors.

5.152 New developments will be required to make reasonable provision of open space to cater for the additional demand they will create. The balance between on-site and off-site provision and contributions will be assessed on a site-by-site basis and will be commensurate with the size of the proposed development. Opportunities for biodiversity offsetting should be considered in determining the most appropriate green infrastructure strategy.

5.153 The provision of new open spaces and associated facilities will be supported where they would support a space's existing function or meet an identified deficit. However, we also recognise that some areas of open space in the town are not valued. They are not used by members of the public or are of particularly poor quality. In some instances, it may be acceptable for these sites to be developed for alternate uses. Our approach to these areas is set out in our detailed Part III policies.

5.154 Our SA says that this policy performs well in its provision of positive environmental impacts. This is achieved through the protection of existing green and open space and the requirement for additional space through new development. It also contributes towards social aspects in ensuring that there is space for residents to relax and contribute towards health and wellbeing.

Policy SP13: The historic environment

We will preserve and enhance the most important areas and characteristics of Stevenage. We:

- a. Have carried out Heritage Impact Assessments for development sites within, or adjacent to, conservation areas. Site specific mitigation measures have been incorporated to minimise the impacts of development.
- b. Will use national guidance and legislation to review, designate and determine planning applications affecting heritage assets.
- c. Will protect areas of archaeological importance and other relevant heritage assets by applying the detailed policies set in this plan.

5.155 Heritage assets often add distinctive character and interest to a place. These irreplaceable assets should be conserved and protected. Listed buildings and conservation areas are two types of designations which aim to protect buildings, structures and historic areas.

5.156 Listed buildings are those that are of particular historic or architectural interest at the national level. There are over 100 listed buildings in Stevenage. This includes two Grade I listed buildings; St. Nicholas Church, Rectory Lane and Rooks Nest House, Weston Road, and ten Grade II* listed buildings. Listed buildings are subject to strict planning controls, and require additional listed building consent.

5.157 Listing aims to prevent development that would have a negative impact on the special character of the building or structure (including the interior), and its setting. Applicants proposing the alteration, extension or change of use of a listed building will be required to demonstrate how the proposal would contribute to the building's conservation, whilst preserving or enhancing its architectural or historic significance. Demolition, in part or in full, will be refused.

5.158 Conservation areas are defined in law as 'areas of special architectural or historic interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'⁽⁵²⁾. There are seven conservation areas in Stevenage, listed below along with the key features of these areas:

| Conservation Area | Reasons for designation |
|----------------------------|---|
| Broadwater (Marymead) | It is the best surviving example of a 1950s New Town neighbourhood. |
| Orchard Road | To preserve the relatively unaltered Victorian and Edwardian buildings and layout. |
| Old Town High Street | To preserve the core of the Old Town along the route of the former Great North Road. |
| St Nicholas / Rectory Lane | To preserve historic buildings at St Nicholas Church, Rooks Nest and Rectory Lane, along with fields to the north that provide their setting. |

| Conservation Area | Reasons for designation |
|-------------------|---|
| Shephall Green | To preserve the medieval village around Shephall Green. |
| Symonds Green | To protect historic buildings and their setting which were a small rural hamlet before the development of the New Town. |
| Town Square | It was the first pedestrianised town centre in the country. |

Table 1 Stevenage conservation areas

5.159 Listed buildings and conservation areas are protected by National laws and guidance. We will continue to use these to help us decide applications within affected areas. We will also use them to decide whether we need to review our conservation areas.

5.160 Our housing allocations (policies HO1 to HO4) designate some sites within or adjacent to conservation areas for development. Heritage Impact Assessments for all of these sites were carried out, to determine whether the site allocation would be appropriate and what might be done to minimise the impacts of development on the heritage asset(s). Mitigation measures for all sites have been identified and incorporated into the site specific considerations or policies, as part of the allocations.

5.161 There are also a number of other areas within the town where it is likely that historic artifacts might be found. The most important of these are designated as Areas of Archaeological Significance. Development within these areas will require archaeological assessment.

5.162 Our SA concludes that this policy impacts positively on environmental and social aspects. It is considered, also, that the preservation of the historic environment will benefit the economic aspect through the preservation of conservation areas, both built and natural.

6 A strong, competitive economy

New employment land

Policy EC1: Allocated sites for employment development

The following sites and areas, as defined on the Policies Map, are allocated for employment development. Planning permission will be granted where proposals fall within the specified use classes and, individually or cumulatively, meet or exceed the target floorspace provision.

| Reference | Site | Use classes | Target floorspace provision |
|-----------|--|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| EC1/1 | Stevenage GSK and Bioscience Catalyst Campus | B1(b), B1(c) with ancillary uses | 50,000m ² |
| EC1/2 | South of Bessemer Drive, Gunnels Wood | B1(a), B1(b) | 12,000m ² |
| EC1/3 | West of Gunnels Wood Road | B1(b), B1(c) | 4,000m ² |
| EC1/4 | Land west of North Road | B1(c), B2 and / or B8 | 20,000m ² |
| EC1/5 | Stevenage Central | B1(a) | 35,000m ² |
| EC1/6 | West of Stevenage | B1(a)*, B1(b), B1(c) | 10,000m ² |
| EC1/7 | Land west of Junction 8 | B8 and ancillary uses | 12,500m ² |

*Small business use only

6.1 The NPPF requires local authorities to identify specific employment sites to match the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the plan period. The seven sites identified in Policy EC1 will make a significant contribution towards future employment needs and provide a range of opportunities.

6.2 In relation to the Stevenage GSK and Bioscience Catalyst Campus, initial master planning undertaken by GSK suggests that this site may have capacity for a significantly greater level of B1(b) and B1(c) floorspace than has previously been consented on the site. Any floorspace beyond the previously consented floorspace would need to be the subject of a fresh planning application. Other uses will be allowed where they are ancillary to these uses and help to nurture the continued growth of this international facility.

6.3 Two smaller, undeveloped sites in Gunnels Wood are also allocated. Site EC1/2 occupies a prominent position on Gunnels Wood Road, and at the gateway of the proposed access to development west of Stevenage. Any proposals will need to address the requirements of Policy EC5 to ensure a high-quality scheme is delivered. EC1/3 is the last plot within the former British Aerospace premises that is yet to secure a permission.

6.4 Alongside the intensification of the existing employment area, new land is identified to the west of North Road. This will provide a range of non-office employment uses and should be brought forward early in the plan period. Development proposals will need to have regard to the constraints on this site and, in particular, ensure appropriate clearances from the overhead lines⁽⁵³⁾.

6.5 Further sites are identified for the period after 2021. The Allocated Site for Employment Development for Stevenage Central consists of two areas either side of the railway line. It is envisaged that high-intensity office development will contribute to a significantly enhanced gateway to the town. This allocation should be viewed alongside policies for the relevant Major Opportunity Areas (see Chapter 7). It may be appropriate to view the boundary of this allocation pragmatically. Future masterplanning work or detailed proposals may determine that it is more appropriate to provide some of the allocated floorspace outside of, but in close proximity to, the identified sites.

6.6 To the west of the A1(M), a small employment site should be provided as part of a comprehensive scheme. An indicative location is shown on the policies map. This allocation should be read alongside the policy for Stevenage West (see Policy H2)

6.7 Finally, around four hectares of land is identified west of Junction 8 of the A1(M) on land released from Green Belt as part of the review conducted for this plan. Access to this site is constrained and only lower-intensity uses will be permitted here to ensure the traffic generated can be accommodated in terms of both access to the site itself and dispersal onto the wider highway network.

Gunnels Wood

Policy EC2a: Gunnels Wood Employment Area

The spatial extent of the Gunnels Wood Employment Area is defined on the Policies map.

Policy EC2b: Gunnels Wood Edge-of-Centre Zone

Within the Edge-of-Centre Zone, as shown on the policies map, planning permission will be granted where:

- a. Development (including changes of use) is for use classes B1(a) offices or B1(b) research and development;

53 <http://www2.nationalgrid.com/UK/Services/Land-and-Development/A-sense-of-place/> provides advice

- b. The scheme makes efficient use of the site in terms of floorspace and job provision; and
- c. Proposals interact positively with the 'Stevenage Central' area.

Planning permission will only be granted as an exception to these criteria where the proposed development is ancillary to B1(a) or B1(b) uses or essential to the continued operation of an established B-class use.

6.8 Gunnels Wood is the main employment area in Stevenage. It is home to a range of international companies such as MBDA, GlaxoSmithKline, Airbus and Fujitsu Services. It also provides a hub for smaller businesses. This includes start-up companies and new premises such as the Business & Technology Centre, as well as more established companies in workshops and older buildings across the employment area. The employment area contains several of the sites identified in Policy EC1, including the Bioscience Catalyst.

6.9 Gunnels Wood is well located in transport terms. It has excellent access to the A1(M) at Junction 7. The railway station is just to the east between the Leisure Park and the Town Centre. The central part of Gunnels Wood, in particular, is a highly sustainable location. It is within easy walking distance of passenger transport connections and other services.

6.10 Our evidence recognises that parts of Gunnels Wood perform differently. Some areas have modern premises and are well occupied. Others lack a coherent identity, have high levels of vacancy or are characterised by older buildings. Some sites are only developed to low density. However, the lack of new sites limits opportunities for companies to relocate to alternate premises within the town. This prevents under-used sites from being redeveloped⁽⁵⁴⁾. The proposed new employment sites in this plan will positively address this issue.

6.11 Within Gunnels Wood, high intensity uses should be located in the most accessible locations. This is in line with sustainability objectives and national guidance. The area immediately adjacent to 'Stevenage Central' is designated as the Edge-of-Centre Zone. It provides easy access to passenger transport facilities and the services of the town centre for employees.

6.12 This area contains a number of low density or underutilised sites. It has significant potential to deliver additional employment floorspace and jobs. Our evidence base identifies the Edge-of-Centre Zone as an area which we should expect to deliver windfall schemes in the second half of the plan period⁽⁵⁵⁾.

6.13 Where sites come forward for change of use or redevelopment, office and research uses will be permitted. To maximise delivery of floorspace and jobs, low-density schemes will be resisted⁽⁵⁶⁾. By 2031, the Edge-of-Centre zone should provide a transition from the redeveloped Leisure Park to the remainder of the employment area, including the provision of improved connecting routes for pedestrians and cyclists.

54 Stevenage Employment and Economy Baseline Study (NLP, 2013)

55 Employment Technical Paper (SBC, 2015)

56 As a guide, plot ratios (the relationship between site area and floorspace) of 50-100% will normally be expected.

6.14 In the long-term, this area may provide opportunities for other uses that complement both the operation of the employment area and the wider regeneration proposals in this area. This includes proposals for arts, culture and tourism development⁽⁵⁷⁾. However, it is important to prevent an over-dominance of these uses and to protect the primacy of the employment area. Any such proposals will continue to be treated as an exception to policy. They will need to meet any requirements relating to sequential testing and / or impact assessments set out in the NPPF and other relevant policies of this plan.

Policy EC3: Gunnels Wood Industrial Zones

The areas around Leyden Road and Crompton Road, as shown on the policies map, are designated as Industrial Zones. In these areas, planning permission will be granted where:

- a. Development (including changes of use) is for use classes B1(c) light industry, B2 general industry and / or B8 storage and distribution; and
- b. Any new, individual unit or building is of an appropriate size and generally does not exceed 300m² within Leyden Road Industrial Zone or 500m² within Crompton Road Industrial Zone.

Planning permission will only be granted as an exception to these criteria where the development is ancillary, or essential to the continued operation of, an established B-class use.

6.15 The Edge-of-Centre Zone, and many of the allocated sites for employment development, make provision for high-skill, high-value sectors. However, Stevenage has traditionally had a strong base in small-scale manufacturing and distribution. These uses can provide supply-chain and support services to larger businesses and ensure the provision of job opportunities for all skill levels. The areas around Leyden Road and Crompton Road, in particular, contain a concentration of smaller units in these use classes.

6.16 Industrial and warehousing premises generally have lower land values than other employment uses. Without some form of protection, it is possible that they could be replaced by higher value uses over time. Within the identified Industrial Zones, only smaller scale industrial and distribution uses will generally be permitted.

6.17 Within the Leyden Road Industrial Zone, the majority of premises are between 150m² and 250m². The Crompton Road Industrial Zone also contains a number of smaller and mid-sized units of up to 500m², interspersed with larger buildings. It will be our general expectation that any new buildings or redevelopment schemes would fall within these parameters. In both cases there may be exceptions where larger new units can be supported, particularly where (prospective) businesses that fall within the specified use classes demonstrate they have been unable to secure appropriate land or premises elsewhere in the Borough.

57 As set out in the definition of Main Town Centre uses in Annex 2 of the NPPF

Policy EC4: Remainder of Gunnels Wood

Outside of the Edge-of-Centre and Industrial Zones and allocated sites for employment development, planning permission will be granted within the Gunnels Wood Employment Area where:

- a. Development (including changes of use) is for use classes B1(b) research and development, B1(c) light industry, B2 general industry and / or B8 storage and distribution;
- b. (Re-)Development of the site would not prejudice the provision of an appropriate number and range of jobs across the Employment Area as a whole; and
- c. On sites over two hectares in size, any proposals for B8 development are either part of a mixed-use scheme providing a range of acceptable uses or essential to the continued operation of an existing use.

Planning permission for B1(a) offices will only be granted as an exception to criterion a where

- i. it is ancillary to a B1(b), B1(c), B2 or B8 use;
- ii. essential to the continued operation of an established B1(a) use; or
- iii. a sequential test clearly demonstrates that no suitable sites are available in more accessible locations.

6.18 Beyond the allocated sites and zones, we will support a broad range of uses and unit sizes within Gunnels Wood. The large size of this remaining area, and the size of plots within it, makes it particularly suitable for larger scale development proposals. Major schemes ~ those of 1,000m² or more ~ will generally be supported here. This will help to ensure that, when taken as a whole, Gunnels Wood is capable of meeting the needs of all businesses.

6.19 In setting these requirements and expectations, it is important to ensure that land in Gunnels Wood is used efficiently and effectively. Our strategic policies identify that Stevenage is unlikely to be able to meet all future employment needs within the Borough boundary. It is important to ensure that this issue is not exacerbated. Proposals which are likely to result in a net loss of jobs, or are proposing schemes with low job densities will be subject to particular scrutiny to ensure they will not jeopardise the overall employment strategy of this plan. Large format warehousing, in particular, will be resisted.

Policy EC5: Active frontages and gateways

The following roads, insofar as they lie within the Gunnels Wood Employment Area, are subject to this policy:

- Broadhall Way;
- Bessemer Drive;
- Gunnels Wood Road;

- Fairlands Way; and
- Six Hills Way.

Planning permission for the (re-)development of sites with a frontage along one or more these roads will be granted where:

- Proposals face directly onto the identified road(s) and provide active frontages and natural surveillance;
- Buildings are not set back significantly from the identified road(s);
- Car parking and service areas are located away from the street frontage of the identified road(s); and
- On corner plots, where these roads intersect, schemes incorporate landmark architecture and gateway features wherever this would be compatible with the proposed use(s).

6.20 Gunnels Wood currently contains very few businesses that face directly onto the street. Some existing developments have large parking areas located at their frontage. Buildings are set back from the road giving a lack of definition and activity.

6.21 Broadhall Way, from its connection with Junction 7 of the A1(M), is a key vehicular gateway. It not only provides an entrance to Gunnels Wood area, but also to Stevenage as a whole. There is generally a poor sense of arrival into the area. The same problem is evident along many of the key routes within the employment area. Blank facades and buildings set back from the street provide a passive and uninviting street scene.

6.22 Making frontages more active creates interest and adds vitality at ground level. It increases natural surveillance of the segregated footpaths and cycleways. Long frontages with a (perceived) lack of overlooking may be a factor which deters trips by foot and by bike.

6.23 Good design will, over time, create a more active impression of the employment area. Active frontages will be achieved by:

- Avoiding unnecessary setbacks;
- Ensuring buildings face and overlook the street;
- Providing design details which add visual interest, such as windows, doors and evident internal uses;
- Ensuring buildings adhere to a common and uniform building line; and
- Screening parking and service areas.

6.24 Landmark buildings, particularly on corner plots, improve legibility by providing recognisable points for navigation. With the exception of Bessemer Drive, all of the roads identified under this policy intersect at roundabouts⁽⁵⁸⁾. These corner sites provide ideal locations for more intensive and visually striking development as they have multiple frontages. Bessemer Drive will form the

58 The slip roads to the roundabout between Gunnels Wood Road and Six Hills Way fall within the definition of this policy

principal access to development west of the motorway (see Policy IT1). Any proposals on the corners of this road, and along its length, should help provide an appropriate and coherent streetscene and a 'gateway' to the new neighbourhood.

6.25 In some instances, set backs and / or less active frontages will be required for operational or other reasons. Where required, privacy can be maintained through the use of obscured or mirrored glazing. Where setbacks are required, strong definition can still be achieved through the use of high quality boundaries and/or landscaping as well as clear signage at the entrance point.

Pin Green

Policy EC6: Pin Green Employment Area

The spatial extent of the Pin Green Employment Area is shown on the policies map. Planning permission within this area will be granted where:

- a. Development (including changes of use) is for use classes:
 - B1(b) research and development;
 - B1(c) light industry;
 - B2 general industry; and / or
 - B8 storage and distribution; and
- b. Any individual, new unit(s) maintain an appropriate range of premises across the employment area and do not exceed 3,000m² in size.

Planning permission for B1(a) offices will only be granted where

- i. it is ancillary to an acceptable B1(b), B1(c), B2 or B8 use;
- ii. essential to the continued operation of an established B1(a) use; or
- iii. a sequential test clearly demonstrates that no suitable sites are available in more accessible locations.

6.26 Pin Green is in the north-east of Stevenage. It was developed as an employment area through the late 1960s and early 1970s to provide additional jobs for a growing population. Today, Pin Green is the second largest employment area in Stevenage. It is of fairly low density with a mix of uses including small warehousing, light industrial and some offices. Since the adoption of the last Local Plan in 2004, approximately nine hectares of Pin Green have been redeveloped for housing, or have a resolution to do so. The employment area boundary has been redrawn to reflect this.

6.27 There are limited opportunities for new development in Pin Green. There are no undeveloped plots and reasonable levels of occupancy. However, there may be windfall opportunities for sites to change their use or be redeveloped.

6.28 New development at Pin Green must be for B-class uses. A range of B-class uses will be allowed. However, office uses are better located near to the Town Centre and main transport hub and will not normally be permitted⁽⁵⁹⁾. Notwithstanding this point, established office premises will continue to be supported.

6.29 With the exception of some larger premises fronting Wedgwood Way and Cartwright Road, the units at Pin Green are generally aimed at small to medium sized businesses, with an active market in this sector. Areas such as the Parsons Green Estate and Wedgewood Gate provide predominantly small business uses. Intermediate units of up to 1,000m² are available across much of the employment area. These are complemented by developments such as the Stevenage Business and Industrial Park providing larger unit sizes of up to 3,000m². This is the model we wish to see continue at Pin Green. Where sites become available for (re)development, new units will be expected to maintain a broad balance of provision.

6.30 We will encourage any development to improve upon the fabric of the existing buildings. The introduction of modernised facilities for employees and the improvement of energy efficiency in the building stock will be supported where they do not adversely impact the amenities of neighbouring residents.

Employment development on unallocated sites

Policy EC7: Employment development on unallocated sites

New major employment development will not be permitted outside of allocated areas and centres. Planning permission for B-class use on sites not allocated for any specific purpose will be granted where proposals:

- a. Are on previously developed land;
- b. For offices are accompanied by a sequential test;
- c. Are of an appropriate size and scale; and
- d. Do, and will, not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the local environment and residential amenity

Planning permission for the loss of employment land on sites not allocated for any specific purpose will be granted where;

- i. There is sufficient suitable and employment land available elsewhere;
- ii. The proposals provide overriding benefits against other objectives or policies in the plan; or
- iii. It can be demonstrated that a unit has been unsuccessfully marketed for its existing use, or has remained vacant, over a considerable period of time.

59 The National Planning Policy Framework defines offices as a main town centre use and requires a sequential test for proposals outside of designated centres and not in accordance with an up-to-date plan.

6.31 The significant majority of existing and future employment supply lies within the sites, areas and centres allocated in this plan. These areas rightly provide the focus for the provision of B-class uses in Stevenage. As a planned new town, major new employment proposals should be sited here.

6.32 However, employment uses outside of these areas also play an important role in the local economy. They can help to create mixed-use localities that provide jobs for, and services to, residents in line with sustainability objectives. The Old Town area in particular contains an additional supply of small workshops and office buildings.

6.33 New, or replacement, small premises that meet the criteria above will be granted planning permission.

6.34 At the same time, this plan recognises that future opportunities in the Borough are likely to be insufficient to meet identified requirements. These requirements already incorporate some allowance for the loss of existing premises. However, it is important to ensure that this situation is not unnecessarily exacerbated. The loss of existing premises outside of designated areas will be permitted where this has been taken into account. The Council will normally expect a site to have remained vacant and been actively marketed for a period of at least six months to satisfy criterion iii.

7 A vital Town Centre

Stevenage Town Centre

7.1 Retailing is an important part of the national and local economy. In line with national policy, the intention of this plan is to retain, protect and - where possible - enhance retailing and the retail hierarchy within the Borough.

7.2 The retailing sector has been particularly badly hit by the recession that has affected the national economy since 2008. The sector has experienced the outright closure of many household names, many retailers have restructured and, temporarily at least, rethought their business models. Town centres have experienced higher shop vacancy rates and longer void periods.

7.3 Generally, Stevenage Town Centre has experienced a lower rate of vacancies than many other centres. The recent closure of the large Marks and Spencer unit in Queensway North is atypical in that regard.

7.4 As the focal point of the Borough, the Town Centre is crucial to the overall image and perception of Stevenage.

Town Centre

7.5 Stevenage Town Centre was the UK's first wholly pedestrianised shopping centre and this unique heritage has shaped a distinctive town centre. It continues to influence the character and sense of place today. It has retained the majority of its overall character: the original Phase I of the Town Centre development now forms the core of the Town Square Conservation Area. But in many respects the centre has not aged well. The wholly non-vehicular concept now appears dated and the overall impression is of a centre that is tired and in need of rejuvenation. The architectural style is out of tune with modern tastes, being modern but not of today. The buildings generally require investment in basic maintenance and this is evident in many places. A programme of investment in the public realm across the shopping streets was begun in 2015, but this needs to be matched by private sector investment in the buildings.

7.6 Many of the shop units are now considered too small for national retail chain stores but are too large for independent retailers. There is a limited stock of shop units, many are not well located and there is a lack of quality retailing. The mix of uses and the lack of traffic in the pedestrian precinct mean that, after the shops close, there is no activity and no impetus to the delivery of a night-time economy. The Town Centre provides a value retail offer that serves the needs of its core catchment well. But it fails to appeal to a broader, and more prosperous, catchment which is, today, highly mobile and travels to rival centres including St Albans, Milton Keynes and Luton. The retail parks in Stevenage also provide significant competition for the Town Centre.

7.7 Our evidence suggests that, thus, the Town Centre is under-performing, uses land inefficiently and by creating a poor first impression of Stevenage, is suppressing investor interest in Stevenage more broadly. There have been a number of attempts to regenerate the Town Centre in the last twenty years; the most recent being a retail-led scheme that collapsed, due to the recession, in 2012.

7.8 In 2015, the Stevenage First partnership (primarily the Borough and County Councils in collaboration with the Hertfordshire LEP) commissioned a new vision for the Town Centre from master-planning consultants David Lock Associates.

7.9 Securing the buy-in of stakeholders, a new framework has been created that will steer and direct the regeneration of the Town Centre for the next thirty years. The framework covers an area larger than what is traditionally thought of as being the Town Centre - the area within the ring road - it stretches westwards to encompass the train station and the Stevenage Leisure Park. This area is now collectively known as Stevenage Central.

7.10 The Borough Council is seeking to attract major public and private sector investment in Stevenage Central. This will secure the transformation of the central area, making it fit for purpose in the 21st Century and enabling it to regain its former role within northern Hertfordshire and the surrounding area.

7.11 Three of the Major Opportunity Areas (MOAs) (Central Core, Marshgate and Southgate Park) border the Town Square Conservation Area. Development here will need to be carefully considered. The Conservation Area and its setting will be protected and enhanced, whilst recognising that carefully managed change will make a positive contribution.

7.12 Our evidence⁽⁶⁰⁾ identifies that the Town Centre is in need of investment, both in a physical and an economic sense. There is a need for it to evolve and change, keeping up with market demands if it is to survive. Retaining the town centre exactly as it is today and limiting opportunities for change, will result in damage or even the loss of the heritage assets in the long term. A lack of investment will limit its economic function and reduce its importance as a retail area. In this regard, it should be noted that, in recent years (but not currently), the Town Square Conservation Area appeared on Historic England's "at risk" register.

7.13 Our evidence identifies⁽⁶¹⁾ means whereby key features that provide the setting of the Conservation Area will be protected. In particular, the Town Square Conservation Area Management Plan SPD recognises that the replication of existing architectural styles is not necessarily appropriate and that opportunities for innovative design should not be closed off.

7.14 Schemes within the MOAs are encouraged to incorporate taller, higher-density buildings, with innovative, modern design. A carefully managed transition between old and new will be required in order to ensure the proposals are appropriate. The Heritage Plan identifies the need for further heritage assessment and design work to be completed prior to any specific development scheme being approved; this is reflected in the policies for the three affected MOAs. Developers should seek advice from the Borough Council at an early stage in the evolution of their proposals.

Policy TC1: Town Centre

The extent of the Town Centre is defined on the policies map.

60 Stevenage Retail and Leisure Capacity Study (CACI, March 2013)

61 Stevenage Central Town Centre Framework (David Lock Associates - July 2015): which includes a Heritage Delivery Plan, which considers development within all of the MOAs.

7.15 The extent of the Town Centre for the purposes of paragraph 23 of the NPPF is defined as being:

- The Town Centre Shopping Area (TCSA);
- The Southgate Park, Central Core and Station Gateway MOAs in their entirety; and
- That part of the Northgate MOA south of Fairlands Way and that part of the Marshgate and Gardens MOA west of St George's Way.

The Major Opportunity Areas

7.16 Six Major Opportunity Areas have been identified within the Stevenage Central area. These, for the most part, sit outside the shopping streets (now designated as the TCSA). Individual policies have been created for each of these areas. Mixed use developments will be encouraged in each area, to deliver significant new high-density flatted housing; new office accommodation; retail floorspace; hotel and conference accommodation; an extended and regenerated train station; leisure, cultural and civic uses; new multi-storey car parking; an improved public realm and a new green park. These MOAs are based on a number of key design principles and strategic components. Development proposals will be assessed against the contribution that they make to the delivery of those principles.

7.17 Stevenage will again become a destination town centre with an 'extended day offer' that meets the needs and aspirations of its catchment. The retail base will focus on meeting modern and emerging demands; new leisure uses will be supported by a growing central residential community; and new office sites will be created to exploit the enhanced accessibility of Stevenage Central to Central London and Cambridge by train.

7.18 A new central library and NHS clinic will be accessibly located in an integrated public sector hub, which may also include the Borough Council's own Customer Service Centre.

7.19 The ring road collar around the Town Centre will be broken by radically altering the function of Lytton Way between Fairlands Way and Six Hills Way. This will enable a significantly regenerated and enlarged train station to be developed in close proximity to a replacement bus station; new office buildings to be provided, new multi-storey car parks to be built and new surface-level pedestrian connections to be made between the station and Town Square. This change will allow better connectivity for pedestrians within Stevenage Central and to the Gunnels Wood Employment Area.

7.20 Legible public transport, walking and cycling links will be created between the retail streets of the Town Centre and the complementary retail and leisure offers available in the High Street and the retail warehouse parks, principally Roaring Meg.

7.21 New high quality public spaces - including green spaces - will be created at junctions and arrival points. A new linear park parallel to Southgate will be created. Existing routes and public spaces will be refurbished, high quality street furniture will be installed and new architectural lighting will be introduced to revitalise the quality of the original New Town buildings.

7.22 High design standards will be expected throughout. The design of new development must respect and respond to the Town Square Conservation Area. When not in immediate proximity to the Town Square Conservation Area, tall buildings are likely to be acceptable. Exceptionally

tall buildings may be affected by the eastern flight path to London Luton Airport, which passes directly over Stevenage Town Centre; developers are advised to make contact with the London Luton Airport Consultative Committee at the earliest opportunity.

Policy TC2: Southgate Park Major Opportunity Area

Within the Southgate Park Major Opportunity Area, as defined on the Policies Map, planning permission will be granted for:

- a. High-density Use Class C3 residential units;
- b. New multi-storey or basement car parking;
- c. New Use Class D1 civic hub;
- d. A linear park running east-west parallel to Six Hills Way; and
- e. A new primary school on the Eastgate car park

Applications should address the following design and land use principles:

- i. Landmark buildings should be created in prominent locations;
- ii. New residential development on the south side of Southgate Park should have habitable rooms orientated to face southwards over the new linear park
- iii. Pedestrian linkages southwards to North Hertfordshire College should be improved;
- iv. Southgate should be re-opened as a trafficked street in the form of a shared surface;
- v. Danesgate should be widened along its length from Lytton Way to Danestrete, and the corner with Danestrete eased to allow buses to negotiate the corner more easily;
- vi. Tower Road should be removed;
- vii. The Plaza site should be redeveloped into the new public sector hub, fronting onto Town Square; and
- viii. Heritage assessment and design work to preserve and enhance the significance of the Town Square Conservation Area and the contribution made by its setting.

7.23 Stevenage's original police station, The Towers residential block and its associated car parking, the Southgate Health Centre, NHS Southgate West, the central library, the Borough Council's Southgate surface car park, Matalan and The Plaza are the current principal uses in this area.

7.24 The NHS and the central library are expected to be relocated into a new public sector hub within the redeveloped Plaza site. This clustering of public sector services in a modern, fit-for-purpose building will improve the quality of service that can be offered. The removal of the NHS and the central library from their current buildings will release them for residential redevelopment.

7.25 The new residential opportunity should aim to create a high density residential community with a southward facing aspect, overlooking the new linear Southgate Park. A new development site will be created by the removal of the Lytton Way/Six Hills Way roundabout, as a part of the reconfiguration of Lytton Way. This would be south of the current McCarthy and Stone scheme.

We anticipate that this would be a suitable site for a high-density development of either residential or offices. Car parking for these developments may be in multi-storey and/or basement format. Alternatively, the Borough Council is open to proposals for car-free provision.

7.26 A new primary school, in a suitable urban (as opposed to edge-of-town) form, will be located on the Borough Council's current Southgate car park to serve the needs not only of the new Southgate Park residents but also of the larger new residential community proposed in and around Stevenage Central.

7.27 There is a 2015 resolution to grant outline planning permission for a major redevelopment of the Matalan site and adjacent land, comprising over 500 high-density residential units, ground floor retail and leisure uses, supporting semi-basement car parking and a landscaped central area. When detailed planning permission is being negotiated, the Borough Council will seek the transfer to it of sufficient land on the Danesgate boundary to allow for two-way traffic along the whole of this section of road, and the easing of the Danesgate/Danestrete junction to allow buses to negotiate this corner in both directions more easily.

7.28 The Southgate Park MOA lies adjacent to the Town Square Conservation Area. Developments in the vicinity of the conservation area will need to preserve and enhance the surroundings and the setting of the conservation area.

7.29 The key to delivering this site successfully will be the successful re-provision of the central library and NHS clinics onto a redeveloped Plaza site.

Policy TC3: Centre West Major Opportunity Area

Within the Centre West Major Opportunity Area, as defined on the Policies Map, planning permission will be granted for:

- a. High-density Use Class C3 residential units;
- b. Replacement Use Class D1, D2 leisure and Use Class A3 and A4 bar, restaurant and cafe uses;
- c. New multi-storey or basement car parking;
- d. New Use Class B1 office premises;
- e. New de minimis (by volume) Use Class A1 shop units sufficient to serve the day-to-day convenience retail needs of the residents of Centre West;
- f. A new Use Class C1 hotel, with ancillary conference facilities, close to the train station;
- g. A taxi rank; and
- h. A series of interlinked public squares and open spaces;

Applications should address the following design and land use principles:

- i. Redevelopment of the large surface-level car park and the creation in its place of a new urban street form;
- ii. High quality place-defining buildings should be located in appropriate, prominent locations;
- iii. The creation of an attractive new east-west pedestrian link from a significant new public square in the heart of the site through the train station precinct towards Town Square;

- iv. Commercial and leisure uses to be focused to the east of the site, close to the train station;
- v. Residential uses to the east of the site will only be permitted above first floor level and will require appropriate noise mitigation due to its proximity to the East Coast Main Line;
- vi. Provision for a taxi rank in proximity to the train station;
- vii. Traffic calmed car/pedestrian shared surfaces; and
- viii. Reservation for additional pedestrian/cycle routes in the longer term to allow greater, and more direct, access through to Gunnels Wood Road and the wider Gunnels Wood Employment Area.

7.30 Centre West is currently the site of the Stevenage Leisure Park, which comprises a large surface car park and a mixture of Use Class D1, D2 assembly and leisure; Use Class A3 restaurants and cafes; and Use Class A4 bar units. To ensure that such facilities continue to meet local shopping needs we will consider removing Permitted Development rights and / or using legal agreements under Policy SP4 to retain any new units in A1 use.

7.31 Initial discussions have already been held with the current owners of the Leisure Park, Legal and General Property. The redevelopment of the existing, dated, out-of-centre style, large-format units into a much more mixed-use, high density scheme will create an altogether more appropriate urban form for such a central site. This means that its high-profile location alongside the railway line will form an important part of the first impression that visitors arriving by train will get of Stevenage. Consequently, high urban design standards, including new streets and public squares, will be expected.

7.32 It is anticipated that the replacement commercial and leisure uses will be focused to the east of the site, close to the train station, along with the new hotel and office buildings. The residential uses are best focused to the west and south of the site, away from the noise of the East Coast Main Line. Any residential use to the east will require noise mitigation.

7.33 A part of the eastern edge of the Centre West site is likely to be needed for the planned new fifth, terminating, platform at the train station. This will bring the western face of the station further into the development site than at present and should provide an opportunity to put a better facade onto the station that can be well integrated with the new mixed-use development. As a part of the intention to create a train station that genuinely has two faces, it is intended to provide a taxi rank on the Centre West site.

7.34 New shops will be limited to a *de minimis* scale, meeting the day-to-day convenience retail needs of the residents of Centre West. No larger-scale facilities will be permitted in order to protect the important role of the adjacent Town Centre shopping streets in the retail hierarchy.

7.35 The keys to delivering this site successfully will be its integration with the adjacent Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area, creating a new westward facing frontage to the train station and establishing a more urban built-form.

Policy TC4: Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area

Within the Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area, as defined on the Policies Map, planning permission will be granted for:

- a. An extended and regenerated train station;
- b. New bus station;
- c. High-density Use Class C3 residential units;
- d. New multi-storey or basement car parking;
- e. New Use Class B1 office premises;
- f. A new Use Class C1 hotel; and
- g. New Use Class A1 and Use Class A3 restaurant and cafe uses.

Applications should address the following design and land use principles:

- i. Major reconfiguration of Lytton Way between Fairlands Way and Six Hills Way;
- ii. Demolition of the Arts & Leisure Centre to facilitate better east-west integration and create new development sites in the environs of the train station
- iii. The provision of replacement sports and theatre facilities elsewhere within Stevenage Central
- iv. A significantly regenerated and enlarged dual-frontage train station of high quality, with associated facilities
- v. New public squares on the eastern and western frontages of the train station
- vi. High quality office buildings within a short walking distance of the train station
- vii. At least one multi-storey car park and cycle parking plus drop-off space to specifically serve train customers
- viii. Establishment of an attractive east - west pedestrian route across the East Coast Main Line
- ix. High quality landmark gateway environment to create a positive image of Stevenage for all rail visitors

7.36 The Station Gateway area currently comprises the 1970s train station, the Arts and Leisure Centre (including the Gordon Craig Theatre), a series of surface level car parks and the southern section of Lytton Way. The train station is one of the top three busiest stations in Hertfordshire, alongside St Albans and Watford Junction. To ensure that such facilities continue to meet local shopping needs we will consider removing Permitted Development rights and / or using legal agreements under Policy SP4 to retain any new units in A1 use.

7.37 The redevelopment of this area offers the opportunity for a step change in the perception of Stevenage, whether people are getting on or off trains whilst visiting Stevenage, transitioning between trains or merely passing at speed by train through the station. This is a high-profile area, a major re-shaping of which will have far-reaching implications for this key gateway to the town.

7.38 Stevenage train station, whilst relatively modern (1973), is struggling to cope with the volumes of users that it experiences. There are issues over the width of the concourse, the gate line, the platform capacity and the stairs. The booking hall is cramped and waiting facilities are quite basic. The small-scale nature of the retail offer makes the station a relatively unattractive place to wait. Car and cycle parking are inadequate, drop-off and taxi facilities are cramped and bus interchange is sub-optimal.

7.39 A high quality major mixed-use redevelopment of the train station that addresses these concerns is necessary to meet the growing expectations of a rising population and the international business community located in the Borough. Such a scheme will enable the station to have better concourse and booking facilities, build a new fifth platform on the west side of the station, free the pedestrian over-bridge from clutter and other uses, introduce a customer-focused retail offer of an appropriate scale, create two passenger-friendly faces (to the Central Core and to Centre West MOAs) and to have active ground floor frontages. Taxi and drop-off facilities should move to the west of the station; a relocated bus station will allow easy inter-modal transfer and be located to the east of the station. Multi-storey car parking facilities can be provided to the east and/or west of the train station to meet the growing needs of train passengers.

7.40 Station Gateway is the key area necessary to stimulate market demand for new office space in Stevenage. The office market outside London remains weak. Stevenage must provide both sites and a general environment that can compare with competing locations, such as Reading and Milton Keynes. Fortunately, Stevenage offers a competitive advantage over both these locations, with quicker journey times into Central London. The fastest services take only 18 minutes to Kings Cross, where Google's new European headquarters are located.

7.41 The proposed reconfiguration of Lytton Way is a bold and irreversible step. Traffic will be re-directed onto the nearby parallel routes of Gunnels Wood Road and St George's Way. Only through the reconfiguration of Lytton Way will sufficient land be created to allow a new frontage to be inserted onto the eastern side of the train station. This step will also create new office and residential development sites close to the train station. The removal of the Arts and Leisure Centre will enable easy ground-level access from the train station to Town Square and the retail streets. Detailed studies are currently underway to confirm the best locations for the sports and theatrical facilities elsewhere within Stevenage Central.

7.42 The three keys to unlocking this site are the regeneration of the train station, the reconfiguration of Lytton Way and the removal of the Arts and Leisure Centre.

Policy TC5: Central Core Major Opportunity Area

Within the Central Core Major Opportunity Area, as defined on the Policies Map, planning permission will be granted for:

- a. High-density Use Class C3 residential units;
- b. New Use Class A1, A3 and A4 shop, bar, restaurant and cafe uses;
- c. New multi-storey or basement car parking;
- d. New Use Class B1 office premises;

- e. New Use Class D1 and D2 leisure, cultural and civic uses, including a replacement theatre and museum; and
- f. Signature public spaces

Applications should address the following design and land use principles:

- i. A replacement bus station, closer to the train station;
- ii. A southern extension to the Westgate Centre, containing in the order of 4,700m² additional comparison floorspace, facing onto an enlarged Town Square;
- iii. A continuation of the east - west pedestrian route linking Town Square with the train station;
- iv. Continuing preservation and enhancement of the Town Square Conservation Area;
- v. Provision will be made for new green space within an enlarged Town Square;
- vi. A new municipal theatre and art gallery on the north-eastern edge of the enlarged Town Square;
- vii. New development should include active ground floor frontages to principal streets;
- viii. The layout of new streets and squares should facilitate east-west pedestrian access and create sequential views and vistas between the train station and Town Square;
- ix. High quality development with landmark buildings in appropriate locations, including fronting onto Town Square;
- x. High-rise buildings; and
- xi. Heritage assessment and design work to preserve and enhance the significance of the Town Square Conservation Area and the contribution made by its setting.

7.43 The Central Core currently comprises the buildings surrounding Town Square, the Borough Council's Danestrete and Swingate offices, Mecca bingo, the magistrates courts, surface car parking and Use Class A1 shops and A2 financial and professional services uses. To ensure that such facilities continue to meet local shopping needs we will consider removing Permitted Development rights and / or using legal agreements under Policy SP4 to retain any new units in A1 use.

7.44 It is proposed to create a replacement bus station at the western end of a widened Danesgate, served by a one-way circulatory bus route from Six Hills Way. Through this relocation, the bus facilities will move closer to the train station. The intention is to both facilitate better public transport integration and create the opportunity to extend Town Square into a radically enlarged space with a strong green element. This will allow a better physical transition from the pedestrianised retail streets and the Town Square Conservation Area into the new developments in Station Gateway and at Centre West.

7.45 The Central Core offers the opportunity to deliver one or more major green public spaces at the heart of Stevenage Central. It forms the eastern end of the new surface-level pedestrian route to the train station. The layout of new streets and squares should create sequential views and vistas between the train station and Town Square. Retail frontages should be used to maintain active ground floors along this route.

7.46 A potential southern extension to the Westgate Centre offers the opportunity for the creation of large new shop units that will be attractive to multiple retailers. A larger extension, or additional floorspace elsewhere within the Central Core MOA, may be justified by the enlarged local resident population being planned for across Stevenage Central. Our evidence also identifies a need for a qualitative improvement to town centre retailing in Stevenage. New floorspace, or alterations to the size and/or layout of existing units, may provide opportunities to address these qualitative issues.

7.47 This area also offers significant opportunities for high density residential uses (with shops and restaurants underneath), replacement council offices and replacement theatre, museum and art gallery facilities. These latter, cultural elements (subject to the out-turn of detailed studies now underway) will be co-located with cafes, restaurant and bars to hopefully bring some much needed nightlife into the heart of the town.

7.48 Whilst only a small part of the Central Core lies within the Town Square Conservation Area, developments within, and in the vicinity of the conservation area will need to preserve and enhance the surroundings and the setting of the conservation area.

7.49 The keys to the successful delivery of this area are moving the bus station; and creating a high quality ground-level pedestrian route between Town Square and the train station.

Policy TC6: Northgate Major Opportunity Area

Within the Northgate Major Opportunity Area, as defined on the Policies Map, planning permission will be granted for:

- a. High-density Use Class C3 residential units;
- b. New Use Class B1(a) office premises;
- c. New Use Class A1, A3 and A4 shop, bar, restaurant and cafe uses;
- d. Replacement Use Class A1 major foodstore;
- e. New multi-storey or basement car parking;
- f. Replacement cycle and pedestrian footbridge between Ditchmore Lane and Swingate; and
- g. Signature public spaces.

Applications should address the following design and land use principles:

- i. A continuation of the north - south pedestrian route linking old North Road with Ditchmore Lane;
- ii. New development should include active ground floor frontages;
- iii. New landmark buildings on the Lytton Way/Fairlands Way junction;
- iv. The layout of new streets and squares should facilitate both north-south and east-west pedestrian access and create sequential views and vistas between the old North Road and Swingate
- v. Pedestrian priority at an at-grade crossing on Swingate

7.50 Northgate currently includes the Tesco Extra store and its associated large surface car park, servicing and filling station, together with the Saffron Ground office building. To ensure that such facilities continue to meet local shopping needs we will consider removing Permitted Development rights and / or using legal agreements under Policy SP4 to retain any new units in A1 use.

7.51 The Tesco Extra store is now quite dated in terms of its external appearance and does not best meet the operator's current format expectations. Redevelopment, perhaps towards the end of the plan period, into a smaller store with other uses above is a possibility. The redevelopment of this land-hungry site into a more mixed use, intensive, high density style would transform this north-western quarter of the Town Centre. It would also allow for a better quality townscape transition between the Old Town and the principal retail streets of the Town Centre. Any redevelopment would be likely to require the repositioning of the Tesco unit through 90° from its current east-west orientation into a north-south orientation, with multi-storey parking and/or residential uses above.

7.52 The site is sufficiently large as to permit a variety of additional uses, including one or more of shop, bar, cafe, restaurant and office uses in a more high-density urban format. Consequently, high urban design standards, including new streets and public squares, will be expected. A new pedestrian route incorporating a 'green bridge' northwards to Ditchmore Lane and southwards to a pedestrian-priority crossing of Swingate is a must in order to create a new spine for this quarter of the Town Centre.

7.53 Initial 'in principle' discussions with Tesco suggest that this site is unlikely to come forward until the end of the plan period, transitioning into the post-2031 period. Notwithstanding, it is important that the plan should provide certainty and encouragement to investors whilst also setting out a framework for the determination of planning applications. It is important that other elements of the Stevenage Central regeneration programme come forward, perhaps particularly the creation of a sizeable new residential community providing additional walk-in trade, before there is sufficient confidence for investors to believe that investment in the Northgate area is a desirable and deliverable prospect. The key to unlocking this site is the reconfiguration of the Tesco Extra store.

Policy TC7: Marshgate Major Opportunity Area

Within the Marshgate Major Opportunity Area, as defined on the Policies Map, planning permission will be granted for:

- a. High-density Use Class C3 residential units;
- b. New Use Class D1 and D2 leisure, cultural and civic uses;
- c. New Use Class A1, A3 and A4 shop, bar, restaurant and cafe uses; and
- d. New multi-storey or basement car parking.

Applications should address the following design and land use principles:

- i. Rejuvenation through new retail units and public realm improvements, including the northern underpass to Town Centre Gardens;

- ii. Replacement retail units at the eastern end of The Forum connecting to a new surface-level pedestrian crossing of St George's Way to link with the new leisure complex and Town Centre Gardens;
- iii. Active retail frontages along St George's Way to redefine the eastern edge of the Town Centre;
- iv. New high-density residential development along St George's Way, orientated to have views over Town Centre Gardens;
- v. A new sports/swimming complex with an interactive frontage onto Town Centre Gardens;
- vi. Creation of a critical mass of uses and activities to stimulate greater day-to-day and event use of Town Centre Gardens; and
- vii. Heritage assessment and design work to preserve and enhance the significance of the Town Square Conservation Area and the contribution made by its setting.

7.54 This Major Opportunity Area currently includes the parkland of Town Centre Gardens, the Borough Council's Marshgate car park, Park Place shop units, Hertfordshire County Council's Bowes-Lyon House youth centre and the Borough Council's Swimming Centre. To ensure that such facilities continue to meet local shopping needs we will consider removing Permitted Development rights and / or using legal agreements under Policy SP4 to retain any new units in A1 use.

7.55 The demolition of the Arts and Leisure Centre necessitates the relocation of the sports facilities. The co-location of these facilities with the existing Swimming Centre makes excellent sense for the users of both facilities and allows the creation of a sizeable municipal sports facility. (The Gordon Craig Theatre is to be re-located within the Central Core Major Opportunity Area). Any enhanced youth facilities at Bowes-Lyon House should allow for the creation of a multi-purpose community and arts facility with a large hall overlooking the lake in Town Centre Gardens.

7.56 There is significant untapped potential in the Marshgate and Park Place area for new high density residential development above ground floor shops, bars and restaurants. Providing new residential units with an eastwards facing aspect, overlooking the park, should make these units an attractive commercial prospect. Breaking the ring road collar in this area, by the improvement of subway crossings and the creation of a new surface-level crossing, is important to making better use of Town Centre Gardens. This major Green Flag award-winning public space represents a significant asset for the Town Centre.

7.57 A part of the Marshgate MOA lies adjacent to the Town Square Conservation Area. Developments in the vicinity of the conservation area will need to preserve or enhance the surrounding and the setting of the conservation area

7.58 The keys to delivering this site are two-fold: the relocation of the sports facilities from the Arts and Leisure Centre; and opening up Town Centre Gardens to make it a more widely used, accessible and appreciated space.

Policy TC8: Town Centre Shopping Area

The spatial extent of the Town Centre Shopping Area (TCSA) is defined on the policies map. Within the TCSA, uses appropriate to a town centre will be permitted at ground floor level, including Use Classes A1, A2, A3, A4, C1, D1 and/or D2.

Within the TCSA, the following premises and areas are identified as Primary Frontages at ground floor level:

- 27 - 29 (odd) Town Square;
- 40 - 50 and 66 - 96 (even) Queensway;
- 41 - 73 and 79 - 101 (odd) Queensway;
- 6 - 22 (even) The Forum;
- 1 - 11 (odd) The Forum; and
- The Westgate Centre.

Within the Primary Frontages, planning permission will be granted only for Use Class A1 (shops). Planning permission will be granted for other uses within the Primary Frontages where:

- a. The proposal is for use class A3 (restaurants & cafes) at the following locations:
 - 50 - 56, 60 - 64 & 75 Queensway
 - 2 - 6 & 20 - 22 The Forum and 98 & 103 Queensway;
- b. In other locations, the benefits to the overall vitality and viability of the town centre would equal or outweigh those that would be provided by an A1 or A2 use in the equivalent location. This will be considered having regard to whether:
 - The proposal will retain an active frontage;
 - The proposal will generate footfall equivalent to, or greater than, an A1 or A2 use in the equivalent location; and
 - The unit has been unsuccessfully marketed for A1 or A2 use, or has remained vacant, for at least six months.

Subject to the above criteria, the redevelopment of existing premises will be permitted within the TCSA where this would not cause harm to the Town Square Conservation Area.

7.59 The Major Opportunity Areas and the Town Centre Shopping Area are largely mutually exclusive, with the exception of a small area on the north side of the bus station (which lies within the Central Core MOA), Park Place (which lies in the Marshgate MOA) and the Tesco Extra store (which lies in the Northgate MOA). Within the existing shopping streets, the Council intends to protect the principal comparison shopping areas, whilst allowing greater freedom and flexibility in secondary and tertiary areas. Consequently, the retail streets are broadly protected by the Town Centre Shopping Area designation, whilst the best ground floor retail frontages are given extra

protection through the Primary Frontages designation. The Council is keen to offer the opportunity for the Town Centre to become an all-day destination - by permitting cafes, bars, restaurants and public houses in appropriate locations.

7.60 Shopping is now a leisure activity and Stevenage needs to respond to that change. Consumers have a choice of shopping destinations and experiences available to them and are often prepared to travel considerable distances to enjoy a new or distinctive experience. Our evidence suggests that people from within Stevenage's catchment are travelling to enjoy centres such as St Albans, Milton Keynes and Luton. The retail parks in Stevenage also provide significant competition for the Town Centre. Stevenage Town Centre once again - as it did in the 1960s - needs to become a centre of choice for people from a wide catchment.

7.61 It is hoped that the significant numbers of people living in the new residential community proposed in the Major Opportunity Areas will stimulate a change in the retail offer available in the Town Centre. This is what happened at the southern end of the High Street when a number of new medium to high density residential schemes were permitted in that vicinity. Private-sector investment in new restaurants, bars and shops - responding to the presence of significant numbers of people living locally - led to a significant regeneration of the southern part of the High Street without the need for public-sector investment. The Borough Council intends to create a set of circumstances in the Town Centre whereby a similar market-led regeneration of the retail offer can occur. A more open and permissive attitude will generally be taken to stimulate positive change, whilst retaining sufficient control within a planned framework to regulate negative changes.

Old Town High Street

Policy TC9: High Street Shopping Area

The spatial extent of the High Street Shopping Area (HSSA) is defined on the policies map.

Within the HSSA, planning permission for development of a scale appropriate to the High Street's location in the retail hierarchy and which falls into Use Classes A1, A2, A3, A4, C1, C3, D1 or D2 will be granted where it:

- a. Would not take land or premises allocated or identified for other, specific uses;
- b. Would not cause harm to the significance of any designated heritage asset(s) including through harm to their setting;
- c. Does not propose Class-A uses outside of the High Street Primary Shopping Area

7.62 The High Street is the former A1/Roman road linking London to the North of England. From medieval times onwards, it became a focus for both farmers taking their livestock to market and travellers heading into and out of London. This led to the establishment of a number of coaching inns, a market and shops. Today, its role as a trunk route has been superseded by the A1(M), whilst its local role as a distributor road has been taken by Lytton Way. This has freed up the road to fulfil an altogether different function.

7.63 Today, the High Street forms the spine of the Major Centre, as designated within this plan's retail hierarchy. It contains a broad mix of uses but 27% of the floorspace is convenience (food) shopping (primarily Waitrose and a Tesco Express) whilst 23% is comparison shopping. The High Street also has a larger than usual proportion of bars and restaurants, emphasising its important role in the Borough's leisure offer. It is a busy, well used and popular centre, but one that fulfils both a mixed town-wide and purely local function. The Council wishes to maintain that flexibility of uses, but also wishes to provide a clear framework of acceptable uses.

7.64 Virtually all of the High Street lies within a Conservation Area and there are a number of Listed Buildings, together with buildings of local significance. Consequently, development will be expected to preserve and enhance these heritage assets.

Policy TC10: High Street Primary and Secondary Frontages

Within the High Street Shopping Area are defined Primary and Secondary Frontages, as shown on the policies map.

The following premises and areas are identified as Primary Frontages at ground-floor level:

- 70 - 92a High Street
- 35 - 75 High Street
- Middle Row

The following premises and areas are identified as Secondary Frontages at ground-floor level:

- 26 - 68 and 94 - 132 High Street
- 15 - 23, 29 - 33 and 77 - 129 High Street

Within the High Street Shopping Area, planning permission will be granted for Use Classes A1, A2, A3 or A4 where:

- a. At least 60% of the Primary Frontages, as measured by both units and floorspace, will remain in Class A1 use should the proposal be implemented;
- b. The main ground floor shopping frontage will face onto either High Street or Middle Row; and
- c. Any additional Use Class A3 or A4 uses will not adversely affect the character of the centre or otherwise result in a detrimental over-concentration of such uses in the vicinity of the application site.

Planning permission will be granted as an exception to these criteria where there are overriding benefits to the overall vitality and viability of the High Street, having regard to whether:

- The proposal will retain an active frontage;
- The proposal will generate footfall equivalent to, or greater than, a normally acceptable A-class use in the equivalent location; and
- The unit has been unsuccessfully marketed for normally acceptable A-class uses or has remained vacant for a considerable amount of time.

The amalgamation of existing premises to create larger units or the conversion of upper floors to provide additional floorspace in the same use class will not be permitted.

Within the High Street Shopping Area, further Class A5 uses will not be permitted.

7.65 Whilst the High Street fulfils a number of different retail roles, including making an important contribution to the Borough's leisure offer and providing opportunities for more specialist shopping and services not catered for in the Town Centre Shopping Area, one role that is particularly valued is its ability to meet a range of local convenience shopping needs for people in the immediate locality. For this reason, this plan identifies a Primary Frontage in the High Street where Class A1 uses are protected.

7.66 The integrity of the small area of Primary Frontage, as the focus of convenience and comparison retailing in the High Street, is paramount. The Secondary Frontages offer opportunities for a broader mix of uses.

7.67 Given the already strong mix of cafes, sandwich shops, supermarkets, newsagents and take-aways (often offering food of limited nutritional value), coupled with the location of two large secondary schools at the northern end of the High Street, the Borough Council has determined not to permit any further A5 uses within the High Street Shopping Area as a part of its commitment to providing opportunities for healthy lifestyles, especially amongst young people.

Generic retail policies

Policy TC11: New convenience retail provision

New Class A1 convenience retail floorspace provision will be expected to follow the sequential test and the Borough's retail hierarchy.

1,500m² floorspace is reserved to be provided as extensions to existing stores in the retail hierarchy, then other stores in accordance with the sequential test.

New convenience retail floorspace provision, of an appropriate scale and in an appropriate accessible location, will be made in the new neighbourhoods at Stevenage West, North of Stevenage and South East Stevenage.

New Local Centres will be permitted in each of the Stevenage West and North of Stevenage new neighbourhoods, each in the order of 500m², to meet the day-to-day needs of the residents of the respective new developments.

A Neighbourhood Centre will be permitted in the South-East of Stevenage development of no more than 500m² with a convenience store and other related small-scale Use Class A1 shops, sufficient to meet the day-to-day needs of the residents of the new neighbourhood.

These new Local Centres and the Neighbourhood Centre will become a part of the Borough's retail hierarchy. They should, wherever possible, be co-located with other community uses such as schools and/or health or community facilities, where such facilities are being provided.

A site for a major new foodstore of up to 4,600m² net convenience goods floorspace and 920m² net comparison goods floorspace to serve Borough-wide needs post-2023 is identified on the policies map at Graveley Road. A retail impact assessment will be required, particularly focusing upon the impact on Local Centres and Neighbourhood Centres.

7.68 Our evidence suggests that there is currently a small need for convenience floorspace in the Borough. Only towards the middle of the plan period will a significant need for additional floorspace arise. This projected Borough-wide need is 7,600m² net of convenience trading floorspace. The Council is under an obligation to plan positively for this need, which requires a policy setting out how this floorspace should be distributed and any necessary allocations made.

7.69 1,500m² of the total need is reserved to allow for extensions to existing centres in the retail hierarchy, then other stores in accordance with the sequential test. A further 1,500m² is reserved to the new Local Centres at Stevenage West and North of Stevenage, and the new Neighbourhood Centre at South East Stevenage. An allocation for a large new store post 2023 will address the remaining 4,600m² net of identified need for convenience floorspace. Allowing for up to 20% (920m²) of additional net floorspace within the store to be devoted to ancillary comparison goods, the total floorspace increases to 5,520m². Assuming a 70% gross to net floorspace ratio, the maximum floorspace of the new superstore would be 7,900m² gross.

7.70 A site on Graveley Road, currently already in Class A1 use as a garden centre, is identified to accommodate such a large store. The northern tip of the garden centre site lies in North Hertfordshire District: as it is outside of the Borough, this local plan cannot allocate that part of the site. Given the fact that there is no immediate need for additional floorspace, and allowing for construction and trading establishment, we will entertain a planning application for this store from 2018 onwards. This new store should not be trading before 2023. Although on the northern edge of the Borough, this store will be well located in respect of the new neighbourhood North of Stevenage (see Policy HO3). Also, there are no alternative sites capable of accommodating a store of the required size.

7.71 The impact of this new store, given that it will essentially draw its trade from existing stores, will need to be assessed by the applicants and included with any planning application. To ensure that such facilities continue to meet local shopping needs we will consider removing Permitted Development rights and / or using legal agreements under Policy SP4 to retain any new units in A1 use.

Policy TC12: New comparison retail provision

Planning permission will be granted for additional comparison retail floorspace of the order of 4,700m² within one or more of the Town Centre Shopping Area, the Marshgate MOA, the Central Core MOA, the Station Gateway MOA or the Northgate MOA.

Proposals for out-of-centre comparison goods floorspace will be refused, unless they are an ancillary element to a major convenience store proposed under Policy TC11.

Proposals to relax or remove conditions on the type of goods that can be sold from existing out-of-centre comparison retail units will be refused.

7.72 Our evidence studies show that there is a projected need for 4,700m² of additional comparison retail floorspace during the lifetime of this plan. In accordance with the retail hierarchy, and to support the regeneration of the Town Centre, this floorspace will be directed to the Town Centre. This is most likely to take the form of a major extension to the existing Westgate Centre, but may, alternatively, come in a series of smaller-scale proposals.

7.73 The projected significant increase in the resident population in and around the Town Centre may support some further growth in comparison floorspace; in which case, this will be directed towards the creation of additional floorspace in appropriate locations within the Stevenage Central area.

7.74 Stevenage already has a very well developed out-of-centre comparison goods offer (the size of the offer is approximately that of the Town Centre). In order to support the retail hierarchy and, in particular, the much needed regeneration of the Town Centre, we believe that there is no need to allow for any additional out-of-centre comparison goods floorspace, other than as an ancillary element to a major convenience store.

7.75 Because of the very significant quantum of out-of-centre comparison floorspace, and its adverse impact upon the vitality and viability of the Town Centre Shopping Area, the Borough Council will also resist any proposals to relax or remove conditions controlling the type of goods that can be sold from existing out-of-centre comparison units.

Policy TC13: Retail impact assessments

Applications for main town centre uses should be located in the Town Centre, then in edge-of-centre locations and only if suitable sites are not available will out-of-centre sites be considered. When considering edge-of-centre and out-of-centre sites, preference will be given to accessible sites that are well connected (preferably by multi-modal means) to the Town Centre.

An impact assessment will be required for any proposals in excess of 300m² for main town centre uses outside the Town Centre. This should include an assessment of:

- i. The impact of the proposal on existing, committed and planned public and private investment in centres in the catchment area; and
- ii. The impact of the proposal on town centre vitality and viability, including local consumer choice and trade in the Town Centre and wider area, up to five years from the time that the application is made. For major schemes, where the full impact will not be realised in five years, the impact should also be assessed up to ten years from the time that the application is made.

Proposals will be permitted unless they fail the sequential test, or are likely to have a significant adverse impact on one or both of the above factors.

7.76 We will follow the guidance in the NPPF (paragraphs 24 - 26) that we should apply a sequential test to planning applications for Town Centre uses (as defined in Annex 2 to the NPPF) that are outside of the Town Centre. We have set a local threshold for for an impact assessment for proposals outside the Town Centre, as the alternative would be that applications are assessed against the national threshold (of 2,500m²), which our evidence suggests could be potentially harmful to centres.

7.77 Applications for main town centre uses should be located in the Town Centre (as defined above), then in edge-of-centre locations and only if suitable sites are not available will out-of-centre sites be considered. When considering edge-of-centre and out-of-centre sites, preference will be given to accessible sites that are well connected (by multi-modal means) to the Town Centre. Applicants should, in such circumstances, show flexibility on issues such as format and scale.

8 Infrastructure and transport

Infrastructure and developer requirements

Policy IT1: Strategic development access points

The preferred vehicular access points to strategic development sites from the existing road network are shown on the policies map:

- To land west of Stevenage via the existing road network at Bessemer Drive and Meadway;
- To land north of Stevenage from B197 North Road approximately 250 metres north of the junction with Granby Road;
- To land south-east of Stevenage from a new roundabout on the A602 approximately 200 metres east of the junction with Bragbury Lane;
- To Stevenage Leisure Park from Argyle Way and Six Hills Way; and
- To Stevenage town centre from reconfigured junctions between:
 - Fairlands Way and Lytton Way; and
 - Six Hills Way, Lytton Way and London Road

Planning permission will be granted where proposals demonstrate:

- a. That these preferred access points have been incorporated into the scheme design; and
- b. For the development areas to the north and west of Stevenage, how they would integrate with any future phases of development beyond the Borough boundary.

Alternative access points and solutions will be permitted where they are demonstrably preferable in highway terms.

8.1 This plan relies upon a small number of strategic-scale schemes to deliver the majority of future new development within the Borough. It is vital that these are successfully integrated into the existing infrastructure of the town. Working with developers and the highway authority, a number of preferred vehicular access points for these sites have been identified.

8.2 A scheme of approximately 1,350 homes plus supporting uses to the west of Stevenage within the Borough boundary can be delivered using the existing access points underneath the A1(M) at Bessemer Drive and Meadway. The entrance to the site at Meadway will require enhancements to provide alternating one-way access. In the long-term, it is our intention that this access point will be superseded for motorised traffic by a new route across the A1(M) to the north of the existing tunnel (see Policy IT2).

8.3 A primary access to the land to the north of Stevenage can be taken from the B197 North Road. A preferred point for this access has been identified, located broadly between the existing pylon lines.

8.4 The Borough Council and developers should continue to work closely with North Hertfordshire District Council to ensure the access arrangements for this site allow for integration with any subsequent schemes beyond the administrative boundary. The preferred long-term solution is a continuous link from the identified access point on North Road to a new or improved junction within North Hertfordshire at, or close to, the existing North Road / Graveley Road intersection approximately 150 metres north of the administrative boundary.

8.5 Pending agreement and delivery of this solution, a second point of vehicular access will be required within the Borough boundary. This will be needed for phases of development beyond 300 homes (or equivalent)⁽⁶²⁾. Secondary access might be provided from North Road, subject to acceptable clearance distances from the primary access point, or using Underwood Road where the existing carriageway extends to the boundary of the allocated land.

8.6 In the event of future development occurring in North Hertfordshire, any secondary access within the Borough boundary should be a short-term solution only. Any access point from Underwood Road, in particular, is not considered an appropriate long-term solution for private vehicular access and appropriate mechanisms will be used to ensure this.

8.7 Any outline scheme or masterplan for this land will be required to demonstrate that these issues have been fully taken into account.

8.8 A new roundabout on the A602 at the south-east of Stevenage has been identified as critical to the delivery of new housing in this area⁽⁶³⁾. The new junction should be of an appropriate design, in terms of capacity, to ensure the smooth flow of traffic on this key route into and out of the town. It should be complementary to the wider scheme to improve flows and key junctions between Stevenage and Ware that is a key priority of the Local Transport Board.

8.9 The regeneration framework for the Town Centre identifies a number of key access points. In particular, it supports the removal of the existing roundabouts where Lytton Way currently meets Six Hills Way and Fairlands Way and replacing them with signalised junctions.

8.10 It is expected that these access points will form the basis of any submitted schemes. Alternative proposals will be considered where they are robustly demonstrated to be preferable in terms of:

- Traffic flows to / from the development;
- Traffic flows across the wider highway network;
- Emergency access; and / or
- Highway safety.

62 This is the maximum that the Highway Authority will permit from a single point of access. Roads in Hertfordshire: Highway Design Guide 3rd edition (HCC, 2011)

63 Infrastructure Delivery Plan (SBC, 2015) **Page 220**

Policy IT2: West of Stevenage safeguarded corridors

The areas around Meadway and south of Todd's Green, as shown on the policies map, are safeguarded.

Planning permission will only be granted for any development proposals which would not physically inhibit or otherwise prejudice comprehensive development of land to the west of Stevenage within North Hertfordshire District in the period beyond 2026.

8.11 This plan sets challenging development targets for the Borough over the period to 2031. However, this approach requires the Council to make use of almost all major opportunities within the Borough. Beyond this plan period, it will be increasingly challenging to continue finding new sites for development. North Hertfordshire District Council have recognised this and their emerging plan safeguards land to the west of Stevenage to meet the long-term needs of the town.

8.12 This site could provide around 3,000 new homes. It would be connected to, and integrated with, the scheme proposed for the land within the Borough over the current plan period. However, development on this scale will not be able to simply rely upon the access points identified in Policy IT1. A major new access road will be needed to link this site to the town's road network.

8.13 A route from Gunnels Wood Road across the Meadway playing fields has long been identified as the preferred means of achieving this. However, this will require major investment to be delivered. The Borough Council will continue to work with landowners and developers, North Hertfordshire District Council, Highways England and the Hertfordshire LEP to develop a funding package and scheme to 'unlock' land in North Hertfordshire for development. In the interim, an access corridor is safeguarded to ensure this long-term project is not compromised by short-term decisions.

8.14 In the event that a new crossing is provided, it is anticipated that the existing Meadway tunnel would be closed to private vehicular traffic but would be retained to allow access to the site by more sustainable modes of transport.

8.15 A second area, to the south of Todd's Green is also recognised. Although the existing road network in this area will not support a significant access point, it could be suitable for a sustainable transport corridor. Previous plans for a comprehensive development scheme identified this area for supporting playing pitch provision. This could, in part, be used to offset the loss of any facilities at Meadway.

Policy IT3: Infrastructure

Planning permission for sites of 200 dwellings or more, including smaller sites being brought forward in phases that will cumulatively exceed this threshold, will be granted where applicants satisfactorily demonstrate how infrastructure needs arising from their proposals will be met. This should be demonstrated through:

- a. An infrastructure assessment at outline application stage; and / or
- b. A detailed infrastructure phasing and delivery plan at reserved matters or full application stage.

Where appropriate, conditions, legal agreements or other mechanisms will be used to ensure that development is phased to coincide with the delivery of infrastructure.

8.16 Requirements for specific infrastructure projects - such as schools, local facilities and transport - are set out in the relevant policies of this plan. However, the Council retains an overarching expectation that new development will not place an unacceptable burden on supporting services.

8.17 On schemes providing more than 200 homes⁽⁶⁴⁾, we will require applicants to demonstrate that their scheme will provide, or can be accommodated within the limits of, supporting infrastructure. Assessments will be required to demonstrate consideration of (but not necessarily be limited to) transport, education, health, green infrastructure & open space, sports and leisure and utilities provision.

8.18 The Council's evidence base provides a robust starting point for the consideration of infrastructure issues⁽⁶⁵⁾. However, this makes certain assumptions about the nature and timing of development and the availability of funding while service providers' requirements also change over time. Where analysis shows that schemes are likely to exceed infrastructure capacity, steps will be taken to ensure that new provision is made or development is phased so as to operate within the limits of existing provision until such time as additional capacity is realised.

8.19 Our environmental appraisals recognise that it will be necessary to take a precautionary approach to avoid causing harm to the Lee Valley SPA, which surrounds the Rye Meads wastewater treatment works⁽⁶⁶⁾. Where it cannot be demonstrated that proposals can be accommodated within the limits of existing or planned wastewater infrastructure, Grampian conditions or other appropriate mechanisms will be used.

8.20 To prevent unnecessary duplication or delays in the planning process, the Council will retain the discretion to discharge this policy requirement (in whole or in part) through the submission of other strategies and assessments that are required as part of the planning process, such as Transport Assessments and Design & Access Statements.

Sustainable travel

Policy IT4: Transport assessments and travel plans

Planning permission will be granted where:

64 Including smaller developments being brought forward in phases that will cumulatively exceed this threshold

65 Infrastructure Delivery Plan (SBC, 2017)

66 Appropriate Assessment Screening Opinion (SBC, 2015)

- a. Development would not have an adverse impact upon highway safety;
- b. Development reflects the principles of the Stevenage Mobility Strategy;
- c. Schemes exceeding the relevant thresholds are accompanied by a satisfactory Transport Statement or Assessment, which demonstrates that the residual cumulative impacts of development are not severe; and
- d. Developments exceeding the Transport Assessment threshold are accompanied by an acceptable (green) travel plan.

8.21 The Stevenage Borough Council strategy is to support and encourage increasing Mobility by sustainable and inclusive modes. It is to support a mode shift over time from car driver to more space efficient, socially inclusive and less polluting forms of Mobility, and not simply to supply extra road capacity for the benefit of car borne commuters in peak periods.

8.22 Stevenage is a Sustainable Travel Town and the Mobility Strategy focuses on reducing the need to travel overall and increasing the proportion of journeys made by sustainable modes (on foot, by bicycle, by public transport, or via schemes such as cycle hire and car clubs). The initiatives include walking, cycling and shared mobility infrastructure and enhancements, together with behaviour schemes.

8.23 The Strategy expects a step change in uptake of sustainable modes. It also advises that it is likely that some highway capacity would need to be reallocated for use by pedestrians, cyclists and bus users.

8.24 A Mobility Steering Group formed of Hertfordshire County Council, Stevenage Borough Council and invited stakeholders will monitor progress of the delivery of the Stevenage Mobility Strategy.

8.25 Maintaining safe and effective access to homes, facilities, jobs and schools is essential to ensuring good quality of life and a prosperous economy. Development proposals will not be supported where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe.

8.26 The County Council, as highway authority, support the use of Transport Statements and Transport Assessments to assess the impact of new development upon the wider network as well as being a means to ascertain internal infrastructure needs. Guidance sets out the thresholds at which these are presently required⁽⁶⁷⁾. Site-specific circumstances might result in an assessment or statement being requested for developments below these:

| | Transport Statement | Transport Assessment |
|-------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Residential | More than 50 dwellings | More than 80 dwellings |
| Business (Use Class B1) | More than 1,500m ² Gross Floor Area (GFA) | More than 2,500m ² GFA |
| Industrial (B2) | More than 2,500m ² GFA | More than 4,000m ² GFA |
| Warehousing (B8) | More than 3,000m ² GFA | More than 5,000m ² GFA |

67 Roads in Hertfordshire – A Guide for New Development (HSC, 2011)

| | Transport Statement | Transport Assessment |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Non-food retail | More than 800m ² GFA | More than 1,500m ² GFA |

Table 2 Thresholds for Transport Statements and Transport Assessments

8.27 Developers are encouraged to agree the most appropriate approach to transport modelling with the highway authority and Stevenage Borough Council.

8.28 Travel plans set out measures that will be adopted by developers or businesses to encourage residents or staff to use more sustainable modes of transport for their journeys. Initiatives can include, but are not limited to, car sharing, cycle storage, showers, dedicated bus services, homeworking, smart technology, cycle training, personalised travel planning and education and behavioural change measures.

Policy IT5: Parking and access

Planning permission will be granted where proposals comply with the requirements of the Parking Provision Supplementary Planning Document. Major development proposals, including redevelopments and changes of use, must additionally:

- a. Demonstrate how the development will be served by passenger transport. Planning obligations will be sought to provide services and facilities where appropriate; and
- b. Make the following provisions for pedestrians and cyclists:
 - i. Safe, direct and convenient routes within the development;
 - ii. Links to existing cycleway and pedestrian networks;
 - iii. Appropriate means of crossing vehicle roads within, or adjacent to, the site;
 - iv. Adequate landscaping and lighting of routes both within the development and on any new external links;
 - v. Contributions towards improving cycleways and pedestrian routes serving the development site, where appropriate;
 - vi. Secure bicycle parking provision; and
 - vii. Ancillary facilities such as changing rooms, showers and lockers, where appropriate.

Planning permission for development proposals which result in the loss of off-street parking spaces (excluding public car parks) or formally defined on-street bays will be granted where:

- c. The parking lost is replaced as near as possible to the existing provision in an accessible location; or
- d. It can be demonstrated that the provision is not suitable or required.

8.29 The original masterplans for the New Town failed to anticipate the rise of the private car's popularity. The layouts of the 1960s and 1970s do not reflect contemporary car ownership (or car sizes), present-day perceptions of safety or how and where people generally prefer to store their

car - within sight and easy reach of the front door. In parts of the town 'back-to-front' Radburn layouts result in underused garage courts with limited natural surveillance. In many areas, verges and small open spaces have been sacrificed to provide additional parking spaces.

8.30 As such, it is important to ensure that new development provides appropriate levels of car parking to prevent existing problems being exacerbated. This is particularly true of new residential development. Residential car parking standards are contained within the Parking Provision SPD. These include the discounts that will be applied in more accessible locations. Relevant applications will be required to meet these standards.

8.31 Recommended standards for other uses, and other types of parking, are also set out in this supplementary guidance⁽⁶⁸⁾. Proposals should have regard to these and demonstrate how they have been taken into account. These will be regularly reviewed over the plan period to ensure they are in conformity with relevant national or local guidance and reflect local patterns of car ownership.

8.32 Some schemes may propose undercroft, or gated parking provision to make appropriate provision. In these cases, the Council will take reasonable steps to ensure such provision is useable and to prevent parking from being displaced onto surrounding streets. This may include requiring any such provision is provided free of charge in perpetuity for residents or employees or using covenants (or other relevant mechanisms) to ensure car owners make use of provided spaces.

8.33 Existing parking provision in the town is a valuable asset. Even small schemes can have a big impact. The conversion or sub-division of a modest number of houses in a street can 'tip the balance' in terms of the number of cars versus the number of available spaces. Similarly, schemes which result in the physical loss of existing provision need to be closely monitored. Schemes which take these matters into account will be permitted. Where it can be demonstrated that appropriate replacement provision has been made, or that existing provision is simply no longer able to accommodate modern vehicles, the loss of spaces will be allowed.

8.34 As well as making appropriate provision for cars, it is important to ensure that new developments are easily accessible, especially for walkers, cyclists and passenger transport users. Proposals will be required to demonstrate how they integrate with and, where appropriate, enhance the existing networks around Stevenage. A number of priority schemes are identified in this plan (see Policy IT7) to aid consideration of this policy requirement.

Policy IT6: Sustainable transport

The following schemes are identified as priority new and improved sustainable transport schemes. Planning permission will be granted where proposals facilitate the creation or improvement of, reasonably provide or reasonably contribute towards these schemes:

1. The provision of a 5th platform at Stevenage station;
2. A significantly improved station building with entrances facing both the town centre and leisure park;

3. A new town centre bus station located to the west of the existing site and in close proximity to the station;
4. Public transport provision to and within the proposed strategic development sites to the west, north and south-east of Stevenage. This may be provided through the extension of existing, or creation of new bus routes;
5. Enhanced inter-urban bus provision including direct services to employment sites and locations outside of the Borough boundary;
6. New or improved bus services and facilities within 400 metres of major developments.

8.35 Stevenage is well served by public transport. The station is one of the busiest in Hertfordshire and is served by a variety of commuter, regional and long-distance services. It is a key asset and maximising its potential is essential to realising our strategy for the Town Centre. There is also a comprehensive bus network. Most parts of the town are within 400 metres of a bus stop and regular services.

8.36 In the short term, Network Rail have identified the provision of a fifth platform and turnback at Stevenage on the west side of the station⁽⁶⁹⁾. This will allow trains from the Hertford Loop to reach the station and return without needing to cross the East Coast Mainline. It is considered that the majority of this can be achieved within the existing railway boundary and will be classified as operational development. However, it is essential to ensure that any associated works, such as the (re-)provision of pedestrian and cycle access is compatible with future proposals for the Leisure Park site and Town Centre.

8.37 This scheme is being implemented primarily for operational purposes. It does not extend to wider environmental improvements of the station site. However, first impressions of Stevenage when travelling by train are poor. This is in terms of both the station environment itself and the routes to the Town Centre and Leisure Park. New station entrances, on both the east and west sides of the tracks are vital improvements and will catalyse further development in these key arrival spaces.

8.38 Beyond these schemes, the Council continues to support the concept of East-West Rail⁽⁷⁰⁾. Although this is not critical to the delivery of the plan itself, there are clear potential benefits that would arise from a route that improves rail accessibility to Stevenage.

8.39 Alongside improvements to rail provision, enhancements to the bus network will be required. The removal of the existing bus station from the Town Centre will unlock development potential in this area. A preferred site for its replacement is identified in our masterplanning work⁽⁷¹⁾. This is to the south of the existing Theatre building and would allow for better connectivity between rail and bus while retaining links to the retail core.

69 Network Specification: London North Eastern and East Midlands (Network Rail, 2015)

70 <http://www.eastwestrail.org.uk/>

71 Stevenage Central Town Centre Framework (DLA, 2015)

8.40 The new neighbourhoods to the west, north and south-east of Stevenage will need to demonstrate how bus provision will be made. This will be a key prerequisite of any schemes. Developers should work closely with the County Council's Passenger Transport Unit to identify the best solutions.

8.41 The Hertfordshire LEP have identified inter-urban bus travel as a key priority along the A1(M) corridor⁽⁷²⁾. This Local Plan recognises that it is simply not possible to physically accommodate all future housing and employment needs within the Borough. Direct and reliable services between Stevenage and employment areas in other nearby towns will be vital if they are to represent a genuine alternative to trips by car.

8.42 All major development proposals will be required to demonstrate how they will be served by public transport. Where appropriate, contributions towards new or improved services and facilities will be sought.

Policy IT7: New and improved links for pedestrians and cyclists

The following schemes are identified as priority new and improved links for pedestrians and cyclists. Planning permission will be granted where proposals maintain, enhance, reasonably provide or reasonably contribute towards:

Routes

The following schemes are identified as priority new and improved links for pedestrians and cyclists:

1. From Town Square to the Leisure Park via Stevenage Station;
2. From The Forum to Town Centre Gardens via a new surface-level crossing of St George's Way;
3. Along St Georges Way between the junctions with Fairlands Way and Six Hills Way;
4. From Ditchmore Lane to the town centre via an improved crossing over Fairlands Way;
5. From the junctions of Gunnels Wood Road and Bessemer Drive and / or Gunnels Wood Road and Six Hills Way to the new development west of Stevenage;
6. From Gunnels Wood Road via Meadway Ancient Lane to the new development west of Stevenage;
7. Along Gresley Way from Six Hills Way to Martins Way including a spur to Fairlands Way;
8. From the junction of Coreys Mill Lane and North Road and / or following the route of Bridleway 103 from Corey's Mill to new developments north of Stevenage;
9. From the junction of Broadhall Way and Bragbury Lane to new development south-east of Stevenage;
10. Along the principal interior roads of the strategic developments west, north and south-east of Stevenage.

Cycle Parking

72 Perfectly Placed for Business: Hertfordshire's Strategic Economic Plan (Hertfordshire LEP, 2014)

The Stevenage Cycle Strategy identifies improvements to cycle parking provision available to the public in Stevenage in terms of gaps in provision at appropriate locations as well as the quality of existing cycle parking.

Wayfinding

The Stevenage Cycle Strategy identifies improvements to wayfinding for pedestrians and cyclists in and around Stevenage, which includes signage and maps.

8.43 The segregated pedestrian and cycle network is one of the finest engineering achievements of the New Town. Wide and clearly defined routes are provided alongside the main roads of the town. A number of junctions are grade-separated allowing free flowing access across main routes.

8.44 However, the role of walking and cycling in the town has declined. The proportion of journeys to work by these modes in Stevenage has fallen by more than 60% over the last forty years. This is reflected in the state of the network with some stretches showing signs of poor maintenance and under-investment. However, cycling in particular is experiencing a renaissance in many towns and cities. It is important that Stevenage capitalises on this and promotes its ground-breaking heritage in this regard. This will deliver wider benefits in terms of health and wellbeing and also helps prevent a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby a lack of suitable provision results in a (perceived) lack of demand.

8.45 To help deliver the requirements of Policy IT5 a number of priority schemes for pedestrians and cyclists have been identified. These will be implemented over the plan period to integrate new areas of development into this network and to address known gaps in provision. The nature and scale of contribution that sites will be required to make will vary. Smaller sites may contribute through CIL or other pooled funding sources. The largest sites will be required to make direct on-site provision as well as contributions to connecting routes.

8.46 Significantly enhanced provision for pedestrians and cyclists is a key element of our masterplan for the Town Centre. We will break down the key barriers to movement that exist. In particular, connectivity from east to west will be improved. In the longer-term, the provision of an improved link between the Town Centre and Old Town High Street, including the provision of a replacement bridge across Fairlands Way, is envisaged.

8.47 On new strategic developments to the west, north and south-east, clearly segregated routes should be provided along principal interior roads to encourage safe walking and cycling journeys and reflect New Town design principles. These should connect to lower order streets where safe, on-carriageway cycling can be supported. Connections to the existing network will be delivered through a number of identified extensions and improvements.

8.48 For the development west of Stevenage, it would be preferable for connections to / from the development to run alongside the preferred vehicular access routes. However it is recognised that this may not be possible along Bessemer Drive without the use of third party land. In this event, upgrades and improvements to the existing route and underpass from Six Hills Way via Chadwell Road will be considered as an alternative.

8.49 The Stevenage Cycle Strategy will be regularly reviewed and updated over the plan period to ensure that it is up to date in terms of the infrastructure needs for active travel.

Policy IT8: Public parking provision

Planning permission resulting in the loss of existing public car or cycle parking provision will be granted where:

- i. Existing spaces are replaced within or adjacent to the new development;
- ii. Replacement car and cycle-parking provision are made within 200 and 80 metres walk respectively of the key attractors currently served; or
- iii. It can be robustly evidenced that the parking is no longer required.

Applications for new public car or cycle provision will be supported in principle where they respond to a demonstrated need and do not take land specifically allocated or otherwise protected for other uses.

8.50 There are a number of public car parking facilities across the town. These serve important destinations such as the railway station, Town Centre and Old Town. It is important to ensure sufficient levels of parking are provided at these locations to ensure their long term viability and vibrancy. There will be a general presumption against the loss of existing spaces unless the criteria of Policy IT8 are satisfied.

8.51 Transport planning often uses a 80 metres per minute standard for measuring walking speeds and distances⁽⁷³⁾. Cycle parking should be provided in as close proximity to the destination as possible to encourage use while car parking should be provided in close proximity.

8.52 The redevelopment of the town centre will require the rationalisation of existing car parking provision. The peripheral areas of the Town Centre are dominated by large, surface car parks and it will be vital to make more efficient use of this land. Similarly, the large surface car parks to the rear of the Old Town High Street provide opportunities for more development. New facilities will be supported in these areas to facilitate change.

73 Such as the Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) method employed for Transport for London

9 High quality homes

Housing allocations

Policy HO1: Housing allocations

The following sites, as shown on the proposals map, are allocated for housing to meet our development needs:

| Reference | Sites | Dwelling capacity (net) |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| HO1/1 | Bedwell Crescent neighbourhood centre | 45 |
| HO1/2 | Bragbury End sports ground car park | 8 |
| HO1/3 | Burwell Road neighbourhood centre | 20 |
| HO1/4 | Dunn Close garage court | 5 |
| HO1/5 | Ex-play centre, Scarborough Avenue | 15 |
| HO1/6 | Former Pin Green school playing field | 42 |
| HO1/7 | Fry Road day nursery | 6 |
| HO1/8 | Ken Brown car showroom | 36 |
| HO1/9 | Kenilworth neighbourhood centre | 65 |
| HO1/10 | Land at Eliot Road | 16 |
| HO1/11 | Land West of North Road (Rugby Club) | 149 |
| HO1/12 | Marymead neighbourhood centre | 60 |
| HO1/13 | Scout hut, Drakes Drive | 18 |
| HO1/14 | Shephall Centre and adj. amenity land | 34 |
| HO1/15 | Shephall View | 25 |
| HO1/16 | The Glebe neighbourhood centre | 35 |
| HO1/17 | The Hyde neighbourhood centre | 50 |
| HO1/18 | The Oval neighbourhood centre | 275 |
| Town Centre (Policies TC01 to TC13) | | 2,000 |

| Reference | Sites | Dwelling capacity (net) |
|-----------|--|-------------------------|
| | New neighbourhoods (Policies HO2 to HO4) | 2,700 |
| | | |
| | Windfall sites (after 2021) | 200 (20 per year) |
| | TOTAL | 5,804 |

Sites should be developed at an overall capacity which generally accords with the dwelling capacity given for that site.

Planning permission for residential development on these sites will be granted where the proposed development satisfactorily demonstrates how any site-specific considerations have been properly addressed and / or incorporated into the proposal.

Proposals on these sites which do not include housing will be refused.

9.1 Identifying sites and locations for new housing is one of the main roles of the Local Plan. Our target is for at least 7,600 homes to be built within the area covered by this plan between 2011-2031.

9.2 We have already made significant progress towards this target. At 1 October 2015, around 2,350 homes had been completed or granted planning permission. This leaves us with a residual requirement of 5,429 new homes to be developed.

9.3 Policy HO1 includes sufficient sites to meet the target, whilst also allowing for some flexibility if any of these sites do not come forward. Sites have been allocated where we think at least five homes can be built.

9.4 Our evidence⁽⁷⁴⁾ shows that we have exhausted all potential brownfield sites before greenfield or Green Belt sites were considered for allocation in this plan. The main opportunities for brownfield development come from the redevelopment of the neighbourhood centres and the regeneration of the Town Centre.

9.5 The housing numbers in this policy are indicative. Schemes on these sites should aim to achieve the highest possible net density appropriate to the character of the area, passenger transport accessibility and other relevant plan policies.

9.6 Many of the allocated sites have particular site-specific considerations to take into account. These might be environmental, social or local infrastructure issues. The table on the following page sets out the criteria that should be considered for each site. All of the sites have been assessed within our SA. The appraisal results have been used to help identify the site-specific considerations for developers.

9.7 The information set out against each proposal allocation is not a formal development brief. Any proposals coming forward on these sites will be assessed against all Local Plan policies and other material considerations relevant at the time of application. We may require developers to provide more information or include measures that are not specifically identified in the table below.

9.8 Policies HO2 to HO4 will provide the basis for developing the new neighbourhoods and detailed policies to guide town centre development are located in Section 7 of this plan.

9.9 The homes that are delivered from the sites identified in this Policy will be supplemented by windfalls. These are the sites that are brought forward which have not been specifically identified for development. They will be supported in principle where they help maintain our supply of deliverable sites and will not have an adverse impact. Policy HO5 sets out the criteria against which applications on windfall sites will be assessed.

| Site name | Site specific considerations |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Bedwell Crescent neighbourhood centre | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flood Risk Assessment required for any development of 1 hectare or more. Community facilities to be retained or reprovided, or their loss justified. Garages to be retained or reprovided, unless it can be demonstrated that they are no longer required to meet resident needs or others are available nearby, or they no longer meet operational requirements. No loss in overall levels of parking provision, unless it can be demonstrated that a lower level will still meet the needs of the centre. |
| Bragbury End sports ground car park | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within Area of Archaeological Significance - assessment will be required. Flood Risk Assessment required - within flood risk area. Preserve or enhance the setting of adjacent listed buildings. Emphasis on high quality landscaping within and / or around the development to reduce impact of greenfield development and create transition to Green Belt beyond. Satisfactory vehicular access will need to be ensured. Special consideration to sustainable transport measures due to edge-of-town location. An Ancient Lane runs along the site boundary. Suitable location to provide aspirational housing. |
| Burwell Road neighbourhood centre | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community facilities to be retained or reprovided, or their loss justified. Garages to be retained or reprovided, unless it can be demonstrated that they are no longer required to meet resident needs or others are available nearby, or they no longer meet operational requirements. No loss in overall levels of parking provision, unless it can be demonstrated that a lower level will still meet the needs of the centre. |
| Dunn Close garage court | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific measures identified. Garages to be retained or reprovided, unless it can be demonstrated that they are no longer required to meet resident needs or others are available nearby, or they no longer meet operational requirements. |
| Ex-play centre, Scarborough Avenue | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community facility to be retained or reprovided, or its loss justified. |
| Former Pin Green school playing field | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The loss of sports facilities will need to be mitigated. |

| Site name | Site specific considerations |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Fry Road day nursery | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community facility to be retained or reprovided, or its loss justified. |
| Ken Brown car showroom | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate whether previous uses have led to any contamination of site. |
| Kenilworth neighbourhood centre | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community facilities to be retained or reprovided, or their loss justified. Potential relocation of sub station and underground power cables. No loss in overall levels of parking provision, unless it can be demonstrated that a lower level will still meet the needs of the centre. |
| Land at Eliot Road | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preserve or enhance the adjacent Green Link to ensure minimal impact. |
| Land West of North Road (Rugby Club) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flood Risk Assessment required for any development of 1 hectare or more. Replacement sports facilities in a suitable location, and of equivalent, or better, quantity and quality will be required, prior to development. Special consideration to sustainable transport measures due to edge-of-town location. Public Rights of Way run along the boundaries of the site. |
| Marymead neighbourhood centre | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preserve or enhance the conservation area Community facilities to be retained or reprovided, or their loss justified. Existing employment provision should be reprovided. No loss in overall levels of parking provision, unless it can be demonstrated that a lower level will still meet the needs of the centre. Garages to be retained or reprovided, unless it can be demonstrated that they are no longer required to meet resident needs or others are available nearby, or they no longer meet operational requirements. |
| Scout hut, Drakes Drive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community facility to be reprovided or its loss satisfactorily justified. |
| Shephall Centre and adj. amenity land | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within Area of Archaeological Significance - assessment will be required. Preserve or enhance the conservation area Community facility to be reprovided or its loss satisfactorily justified. Suitable location to provide aspirational housing. |
| Shephall View | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satisfactory vehicular access will need to be ensured. |
| The Glebe neighbourhood centre | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flood Risk Assessment required for any development of 1 hectare or more. An archaeological assessment will be required. Investigate whether previous uses have led to any contamination of site Community facilities to be retained or reprovided, or their loss justified. Garages to be retained or reprovided, unless it can be demonstrated that they are no longer required to meet resident needs or others are available nearby, or they no longer meet operational requirements. Existing employment provision should be reprovided. No loss in overall levels of parking provision, unless it can be demonstrated that a lower level will still meet the needs of the centre. |
| The Hyde neighbourhood centre | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An archaeological assessment will be required. Flood Risk Assessment required for any development of 1 hectare or more. Investigate whether previous uses have led to any contamination of site. Community facilities to be retained or reprovided, or their loss justified. No loss in overall levels of parking provision, unless it can be demonstrated that a lower level will still meet the needs of the centre. |

| Site name | Site specific considerations |
|-------------------------------|--|
| The Oval neighbourhood centre | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Archaeological and transport assessments will be required. ● Flood Risk Assessment required for any development of 1 hectare or more. ● Investigate whether previous uses have led to any contamination of site. ● Community facilities to be retained or reprovided, or their loss justified. ● Open space, including the children's playground, should be retained or reprovided. ● No loss in overall levels of parking provision, unless it can be demonstrated that a lower level will still meet the needs of the centre. |

Table 3 Site specific considerations for housing allocations identified in Policy HO1

Policy HO2: Stevenage West

Land to the west of Stevenage, as defined by the policies map, is allocated for the development of approximately 1,350 dwellings.

A Masterplan for the whole site will be required as part of any planning application. The Masterplan must be approved prior to the submission of detailed development proposals for the site.

Development proposals will be permitted where the following criteria are met:

- a. The applicant can demonstrate that development can be expanded beyond the Borough boundary in the future, into safeguarded land within North Hertfordshire;
- b. The development incorporates employment floorspace of 10,000m², in accordance with Policy EC1;
- c. Improvements to existing access routes across the A1(M), via Bessemer Drive and Meadway, are provided, which link effectively into the existing road, cycleway and pedestrian networks;
- d. The scheme is designed to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport;
- e. An appropriate buffer to mitigate against noise impacts from A1(M) is included;
- f. At least 5% aspirational homes are provided in line with Policy HO9;
- g. Plots to accommodate at least 1% new homes are made available for self-build purposes;
- h. 30% affordable housing is provided in line with Policy HO7;
- i. Provision for supported or sheltered housing is made in line with Policy HO10;
- j. A primary school is provided in line with the most up-to-date evidence of need;
- k. Local facilities to serve the community are incorporated, including a GP surgery, subject to demand;
- l. Sports facilities are provided on-site, in line with Policy HC8, including, but not limited to:
 - i. A skate park or MUGA for children; and
 - ii. Land to accommodate a new cricket facility;
- m. A full archaeological assessment is undertaken;
- n. A full flood risk assessment is undertaken;

- o. The scheme incorporates a network of green infrastructure, with an emphasis on high quality landscaping within and around the development to reduce the impact of the development on the surrounding greenfield / Green Belt land;
- p. Existing Public Rights of Way retained and incorporated, where possible;
- q. The impact of noise pollution from London Luton Airport is mitigated; and
- r. Electric car charging points are provided at an easily accessible location within the site.

It is recognised that the site may be delivered by a number of different developers. In this case, any phase of development would be required to demonstrate that it would enable the delivery of the policy objectives for the development as a whole and those relevant to that phase, and enable an expanded scheme within North Hertfordshire District Council. Community facilities should be provided in a location that allows them to be expanded to meet the needs of the site as a whole.

9.10 The development site known as Stevenage West was originally released from the Green Belt in the District Plan⁽⁷⁵⁾ to allow for a large-scale residential-led scheme. This formed part of a wider cross-boundary allocation, which extended into North Hertfordshire. However, the land within North Hertfordshire was never released from the Green Belt.

9.11 Development on this site has been subject to a long planning history, resulting in the most recent application being withdrawn in 2013. Notwithstanding this, Stevenage West still provides a significant opportunity for development within both Stevenage and North Hertfordshire.

9.12 The allocation of Stevenage West provides the only opportunity within the Borough to accommodate a new urban extension, without compromising Green Belt land. As such it is crucial in terms of meeting our housing target.

9.13 The site's close proximity to Gunnels Wood Employment Area also means it offers an ideal opportunity to meet some of our employment needs. A mixed use scheme will be required, incorporating around 10,000m² of new employment land. This should be located towards the eastern edge of the site, adjacent to the main access point at Bessemer Drive.

9.14 A scheme is now being pursued to bring forward this part of the site within the Borough boundary independently from the North Hertfordshire land. This will allow it to be developed at an earlier stage within the plan period and using the existing access points across the A1(M). Further land is likely to be safeguarded by North Hertfordshire to enable the scheme to be expanded beyond the Borough boundary, to provide another 3,000 homes after 2026. Any development proposal will be required to demonstrate that it can be fully integrated with this wider scheme in the future. The approval of a Masterplan will be required prior to the submission of detailed development proposals for the site.

9.15 Two access points already exist to serve the site, allowing movement under the A1(M) at Meadway and Bessemer Drive. The entrance to the site at Meadway will require enhancements to provide satisfactory vehicular access, but no additional access points will be required at this

stage. The developer will need to work with the Highways Authority to ensure any improvements required to the road network are provided. A major new access point will be required to serve the wider, cross-boundary scheme. Land to facilitate this is safeguarded by Policy IT2.

9.16 The NPPF is clear that significant development should be focused in locations which are or can be made sustainable⁽⁷⁶⁾. Part of this means ensuring that the residents of new developments have access to appropriate local facilities. The location of the site, to the west of the A1(M), means that new facilities will be required to ensure that residents can meet their day-to-day needs. This will also ensure that these significant developments broadly reflect the ethos and planning principles that underpin the existing neighbourhoods of the town. Facilities will include a primary school (exact requirements to be confirmed by Hertfordshire County Council), a doctors surgery and local convenience retail provision.

9.17 New facilities which meet the general parameters for local or neighbourhood centres will be treated as such. New facilities which do not will be treated as local shops. Any applications for subsequent development or changes of use will be considered against the criteria of the relevant policy.

9.18 Sports facilities will also be required, in line with policy HC8. As part of this requirement, our evidence identifies a need for an additional cricket facility to be provided within the town, towards the end of the plan period. It recommends Stevenage West as the preferred location for this provision to be made. Subject to an up-to-date assessment of demand, the masterplan will be expected to show how this facility can be accommodated within the site. It is likely that additional (external) sources of funding will be required to deliver this facility. This will require further discussion at pre-application stage. In the event that no demand is shown for the proposed facility by an operator, equivalent quantitative sports pitch provision will be required in accordance with Policy HC8. A skate park / alternative youth facilities will also be required.

9.19 The site also encompasses an Area of Archaeological Significance. A full assessment will be required, and advice should be sought from Hertfordshire County Council.

9.20 Our SHMA identifies the need for more larger homes to balance out our housing mix. Due to its location on the edge of town, and adjacent to surrounding Green Belt / Greenfield land, our evidence⁽⁷⁷⁾ identifies this site as being suitable for providing much-needed aspirational homes within the Borough. The study recommends around 5% aspirational homes are provided on our urban extension sites. This will ensure an appropriate level of provision, without flooding the market.

9.21 A small proportion of plots will be required to be made available for sale to people who want to build their own homes. This can be combined with the aspirational homes requirement, by reserving larger plots that meet both criteria. If self-build plots are not taken up by the public after being marketed for at least two years, we will allow these to revert to conventional build plots.

76 As set out in Paragraph 17 'Core Planning Principles'.

77 Aspirational Housing Research (SBC, 2010).

Policy HO3: North of Stevenage

Land to the North of Stevenage, as defined by the policies map, is allocated for the development of approximately 800 dwellings.

A Masterplan for the whole site will need to be submitted as part of an outline planning application. The Masterplan must be approved prior to the submission of detailed development proposals for the site.

Development proposals will be permitted where the following criteria are met:

- a. The applicant can demonstrate that development can be expanded beyond the Borough boundary, and fully integrated with a wider, cross-boundary scheme;
- b. Satisfactory vehicular access is provided. At least two access points to and from the site will be required, which link effectively into the existing road, cycleway and pedestrian networks;
- c. The scheme is designed to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport;
- d. At least 5% aspirational homes are provided in line with Policy HO9;
- e. Plots to accommodate at least 1% new homes are made available for self-build purposes;
- f. 30% affordable housing is provided in line with policy HO7;
- g. Provision for supported or sheltered housing is made in line with Policy HO10;
- h. Local facilities to serve the community are incorporated, including a GP surgery, subject to demand;
- i. A primary school is provided in line with the most up-to-date evidence of need;
- j. A skate park or MUGA for children is provided on-site;
- k. A full archaeological assessment is undertaken;
- l. A full flood risk assessment is undertaken;
- m. The proposal seeks to preserve or enhance the conservation area, including the setting of adjacent listed buildings. The following mitigation measures should be incorporated;
 - i. As much of the requirement for aspirational homes (criteria d) as possible should be met on the part of the site that lies within the conservation area. Development within this area should also be heavily landscaped to reduce the visual impact of development;
 - ii. Existing hedgerows should be maintained and additional screening implemented to reduce the visual impact of the development;
 - iii. Tall buildings will not be permitted. Building heights will be a maximum of two storeys within the eastern part of the site;
 - iv. No vehicular access to the site will be permitted from the east of the site, across the open fields;
 - v. Existing Public Rights of Way are retained and designed into the development, where possible, and diverted where necessary; and
 - vi. Building styles and layout within the conservation area to the east of the site should reflect the key features of the conservation area.

- n. The scheme incorporates a network of green infrastructure, with an emphasis on high quality landscaping within and around the development to reduce the impact of the development on the surrounding greenfield / Green Belt land;
- o. An appropriate buffer around existing power lines is incorporated; and
- p. Electric car charging points are provided at an easily accessible location within the site

As part of any development proposal, we will require the open space to the east of the boundary to be retained as such, either via a Legal Agreement or through the transfer of land to the Borough Council.

9.22 Land to the north of Stevenage, east of the B197 North Road, has been removed from the Green Belt to enable the development of around 800 new homes. The large, relatively unconstrained site offers the opportunity to create an urban extension north of the existing urban area.

9.23 This site forms part of a wider potential development opportunity which stretches beyond the Borough boundary. North Hertfordshire have consulted on delivering a further 1,000 homes to the north of Stevenage. Any prospective developer should liaise with North Hertfordshire and adjacent landowners / developers to ensure that proposals on this site can be fully integrated with a wider scheme in the future. The approval of a Masterplan will be required prior to the submission of detailed development proposals for the site.

9.24 There is currently no vehicular access to the site. The primary access route can be taken from North Road. An additional access point is likely to be required for phases of development beyond 300 units (or equivalent traffic generating uses). The developer will need to work with the Highways Authority to ensure any required improvements to the road network are undertaken.

9.25 As with Stevenage West, the location of the site, on the edge of the town, means that new facilities will be required to ensure that residents can meet their day-to-day needs. This will also ensure that these significant developments broadly reflect the ethos and planning principles that underpin the existing neighbourhoods of the town. Facilities will include a primary school (exact requirement to be confirmed by Hertfordshire County Council), a doctors surgery and local convenience retail provision.

9.26 New facilities which meet the general parameters for local or neighbourhood centres will be treated as such. New facilities which do not will be treated as local shops. Any applications for subsequent development or changes of use will be considered against the criteria of the relevant policy.

9.27 Sports facilities will also be required, in line with policy HC8. Our evidence identifies a need for a skate park / alternative youth facilities to be provided on site.

9.28 Our evidence⁽⁷⁸⁾ identifies the need for more larger homes to balance out our housing mix. Due to its edge of town location, and its proximity to surrounding Green Belt / Greenfield land, our evidence⁽⁷⁹⁾ identifies this site as being suitable for providing much-needed aspirational homes within the Borough. The study recommends around 5% aspirational homes are provided on our urban extension sites. This will ensure an appropriate level of provision, without flooding the market.

9.29 A small proportion of plots will be required to be made available for sale to people who want to build their own homes. This can be combined with the aspirational homes requirement, by reserving larger plots that meet both criteria. If self-build plots are not taken up by the public after being marketed for at least two years, we will allow these to revert to conventional build plots.

9.30 The site lies partly within the St. Nicholas and Rectory Lane Conservation Area. Our evidence⁽⁸⁰⁾ shows that the development of this area will have some degree of impact on the character and appearance of the conservation. However, this will not be significant, and will be outweighed by the social and economic benefits that would be provided by the development of the land for residential use. A number of mitigation measures are identified that should help to minimise any negative aspects of development.

9.31 In particular, it recommends that larger, aspirational homes are provided within the part of the site that lies within the Conservation Area, and that these are heavily landscaped to enable more effective transition from the new housing to the adjacent open spaces. Existing screening is currently provided by the hedgerow, but this could be increased to make it more effective. This has worked successfully for the adjacent development of Chancellors Road, which also directly adjoins the conservation area. Building styles, massing and layout will require careful consideration.

9.32 The site is also adjacent to an Area of Archaeological Significance. A full archeological assessment will be required and guidance should be sought from Hertfordshire County Council.

9.33 In accordance with our Open Space Strategy, and the findings of the Heritage Assessment, we will seek to protect the openness of the countryside closest to St. Nicholas Church and within Rectory Lane Conservation Area, known locally as Forster Country. The protection will recognise the literary connection of the land to E.M. Forster and Rooks Nest House⁽⁸¹⁾. As part of any development proposal, we will require the remaining open space to be retained as such, either via a Legal Agreement or through the transfer of land to the Borough Council. This will be as part of / in lieu of on-site open space provision. Policy NH8 supports proposals which aim to enhance this site and to create a country park.

9.34 Pylons and overhead power cables run east/west through the centre of the site. Development will need to be carefully planned to ensure that a suitable buffer is provided. National guidance will be used to assess the minimum width requirements.

78 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SBC, 2015)

79 Aspirational Housing Research (SBC, 2010)

80 Heritage Impact Assessment - North Stevenage (SBC, 2015)

81 Open Space Strategy (SBC, 2015)

Policy HO4: South East of Stevenage

Land to the South East of Stevenage, as defined by the policies map, is allocated for the development of approximately 550 dwellings. The site will be developed as two separate parcels:

- North of the A602 (150 dwellings)
- South of the A602 (400 dwellings)

Development proposals will be permitted where the following criteria are met:

- a. Satisfactory vehicular access to both sites is provided from a single point of access off the A602, in line with Highways Authority requirements;
- b. The schemes are designed to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport;
- c. At least 5% aspirational homes are provided in line with Policy HO9;
- d. Plots to accommodate at least 1% new homes are made available for self-build purposes;
- e. 30% affordable housing is provided in line with policy HO7;
- f. Provision for supported or sheltered housing is made in line with Policy HO10;
- g. Existing Public Rights of Way are incorporated, where possible;
- h. The Ancient Lane along Aston Lane will be preserved or enhanced;
- i. A full archaeological assessment is undertaken;
- j. A full flood risk assessment is undertaken;
- k. The proposals seek to preserve or enhance the setting of adjacent listed buildings;
- l. The schemes incorporate a network of green infrastructure, with an emphasis on high quality landscaping within and around the development to reduce the impact of the development on the surrounding greenfield / Green Belt land;
- m. The tree boundary on the site to the North of the A602 is retained as far as possible; and
- n. Electric car charging points are provided at an easily accessible location within the site.

The following will also be required to be provided within the parcel south of A602, unless demonstrated that these facilities are more satisfactorily accommodated on the northern part of the site:

- i. Local facilities to serve the community, including a GP surgery, subject to demand; and
- ii. On-site sports facilities in line with Policy HC8, including, but not limited to, the provision of a MUGA or Skate Park for children.

9.35 Land to the south east of Stevenage, at Bragbury End, has been removed from the Green Belt to enable the development of around 550 new homes. The site is split into two parts. The land to the south of the A602 is the larger of the two sites, and is relatively unconstrained. This site will accommodate around 400 of the new dwellings. The site to the north will accommodate the remaining 150 homes.

9.36 There is currently no vehicular access to either of the sites. The Highways Authority has previously confirmed that a new roundabout on the A602 to serve both sites is critical to the delivery of new housing in this area⁽⁸²⁾.

9.37 Applicants for planning permission will need to address the requirements of the Development Plan as a whole. In this instance, this will include the Hertfordshire Minerals Plan which contains these sites within the Sand and Gravel Belt. Further advice can be obtained from either the Borough or County Councils on the practical implications of this designation.

9.38 Land to the north of the A602 is currently designated as outdoor sports provision and was previously used as playing fields. Our Sports Strategy⁽⁸³⁾ recognises that these facilities no longer have community use and have been redundant for some years. The assessment shows that we have an over-supply of playing fields across the town and that sufficient space will still remain even with the growth set out within this plan. As such, the sports provision does not require replacement. However, developers' contributions will be required towards improvements to existing public playing field sites in Stevenage, as part of the requirement for sports provision arising from Policy HC8. A skate park or MUGA for children will also be required.

9.39 The location of the site, on the edge of the town, means that new facilities will be required to ensure that residents can meet their day-to-day needs. This will also ensure that these significant developments broadly reflect the ethos and planning principles that underpin the existing neighbourhoods of the town. Facilities will include a doctors surgery and local convenience retail provision.

9.40 New facilities which meet the general parameters for local or neighbourhood centres will be treated as such. New facilities which do not will be treated as local shops. Any applications for subsequent development or changes of use will be considered against the criteria of the relevant policy.

9.41 Our SHMA identifies the need for more larger homes to balance out our housing mix. Due to the edge of town location of these sites, and their proximity to surrounding Green Belt / greenfield land, our evidence⁽⁸⁴⁾ identifies them as being suitable for providing much-needed aspirational homes within the Borough. The study recommends around 5% aspirational homes are provided on our urban extension sites. This will ensure an appropriate level of provision, without flooding the market.

9.42 A small proportion of plots will be required to be made available for sale to people who want to build their own homes. This can be combined with the aspirational homes requirement, by reserving larger plots that meet both criteria. If self-build plots are not taken up by the public after being marketed for at least two years, we will allow these to revert to conventional build plots.

9.43 The northern site currently benefits from a mature tree boundary to the south. It is acknowledged that an access route will need to break through these trees, but apart from this, the boundary should be retained as far as possible, to minimise the visual impact of development.

82 Infrastructure Delivery Plan (SBC, 2015)

83 Stevenage Sports and Facilities Strategy (Nortoft, 2015)

84 Aspirational Housing Research (SBC, 2010)

Windfall sites

Policy HO5: Windfall sites

Windfall sites

Planning permission for residential development on unallocated sites will be granted where:

- a. The site is on previously developed land or is a small, underused urban site;
- b. There is good access to local facilities;
- c. There will be no detrimental impact on the environment and the surrounding properties;
- d. Proposals will not prejudice our ability to deliver residential development on allocated sites; and
- e. The proposed development would not overburden existing infrastructure.

9.44 Windfall sites are proposals that come forward on sites that have not been formally allocated for housing. Windfall development can make a valuable contribution towards housing supply, but we need to ensure that it is appropriate development. Proposals for housing development that meet the above criteria (and other relevant policies) will be granted permission.

9.45 This plan has made substantial efforts to identify the sites required to meet its housing target. Site owners have had multiple opportunities to present sites for consideration through the plan-making process. Further sites that arise should be generally be small-scale infill or intensification opportunities. Opportunities may arise on larger, previously developed sites where there are genuine changes in circumstances that precluded their identification at the time of this plan's writing. Windfall greenfield sites should generally be less than 0.5 hectares in size to be considered acceptable.

9.46 The conversion of larger houses into smaller homes or flats or shared accommodation can be a useful means of providing additional dwelling stock, which meets the small property demand. However, an increase in residents can result in a need for additional parking and open space provision, can increase traffic, and can add to pressures on existing services and facilities. The conversion of larger houses will be permitted where any negative impacts can be successfully mitigated against.

9.47 Applications will only be permitted for schemes that are sustainable and will not have a negative impact on the surrounding area. Good access to local facilities will be required. Proposals should be within walking distance of primary school provision and other community facilities. In assessing applications, regard should be had to other relevant policies including (but not necessarily limited to) parking and design policies.

Policy HO6: Redevelopment of existing homes

Planning permission for schemes resulting in the change of use or redevelopment of existing homes for non-residential purposes will be granted where:

- a. It would provide a small-scale social, health, community or leisure facility or a small-scale extension to an existing business use in the same building;
- b. It would not adversely affect the surrounding or adjoining properties; and
- c. A suitable, alternative non-residential site is not available for the proposed use.

Planning permission for residential schemes resulting in a net loss of housing will be granted where it provides demonstrable benefits against the relevant housing policies of this plan.

9.48 Due to the constrained nature of the Borough, and the associated challenge of meeting our housing target, it is important that existing housing stock is retained wherever possible. However, it is recognised there can be exceptions to this.

9.49 The conversion, or redevelopment, of individual properties can provide local services, such as dental surgeries or GPs. These can contribute toward sustainability objectives by providing facilities close to where people live.

9.50 In parts of the town, existing stock may be ageing or otherwise unfit for purpose. The most viable replacement schemes may, on occasion, result in a net loss of housing stock. Where a scheme is providing demonstrable benefits against the overarching housing policy aims of this plan, and meets other relevant requirements, permission will be granted.

Homes for all

Policy HO7: Affordable housing targets

Planning permission will be granted for residential developments that maximise affordable housing provision. The following target levels of affordable housing provision will apply to schemes that meet the thresholds set out in national guidance:

- 25% of new homes on previously developed sites; and
- 30% of new homes elsewhere.

Planning permission will only be granted where these targets are not at least achieved if:

- a. Developers robustly demonstrate that the target cannot be achieved due to site-specific constraints resulting in higher than normal costs, which affect its viability; or
- b. Meeting the requirements would demonstrably and significantly compromise other policy objectives.

Where a development is phased, or a site is either divided into separate parts or otherwise regarded as part of a larger development, it will be considered as a whole and the appropriate target will apply.

Residential or mixed use schemes, that are not compliant with the above targets, or fail to meet other Local Plan policies, must be accompanied by a financial appraisal, based on agreed costs and development values at the time of the application. Where an appraisal shows that affordable housing provision in excess of the relevant target level can be supported, a higher level of provision will be encouraged.

9.51 Affordable housing is a pressing issue in Stevenage. In common with most areas of the country, house prices have risen substantially since the turn of the century. Housing Needs surveys consistently record high numbers of households that require assistance⁽⁸⁵⁾. The provision of new affordable homes is a key priority for the Council and we will seek the provision of affordable housing on all sites where we are able to do so.

9.52 It is recognised that affordable housing requirements should not place an unacceptable burden upon willing landowners or developers⁽⁸⁶⁾. The targets in this policy have been informed by viability evidence. This demonstrates that the target levels were broadly achievable at the time of the plan's writing⁽⁸⁷⁾.

9.53 It is our expectation that these targets will be met and, where possible, exceeded. House prices in Stevenage are low compared to surrounding towns. This plan sets a strategy for a transformational change of the town. This will significantly affect perceptions of Stevenage and its desirability as a place to live. In turn, this means there is scope for house prices to rise, relative to construction costs and other relevant values, positively affecting viability over the plan period. This is already being seen in certain schemes in and around the Town Centre.

9.54 Residential or mixed use schemes, that are not target compliant or fail to meet other key Local Plan Policies (those that were inputs into the whole plan viability assessment), must be accompanied by a financial appraisal, based on current costs and development values at the time of the application. All appraisals will be subject to scrutiny and review by the Council's Housing team. It is our expectation that affordable housing provision will be maximised once reasonable costs and returns and other policy requirements have been taken into account. Where an appraisal shows that affordable housing provision in excess of the relevant target level can be supported, a higher level of provision will be encouraged.

9.55 In all cases, the Council will consider the use of review mechanisms, clawback clauses or other relevant forms of agreement to capture any uplift in values that benefit scheme viability between the point of permission and the point of sale. Where necessary, these will be incorporated into any agreement secured under Policy SP5 of this plan.

9.56 If applicants consider that target levels cannot be achieved, the appraisal must set out the particular circumstances and costs relevant to that scheme.

85 Housing Technical Paper (SBC, 2015)

86 NPPF Paragraph 173

87 Whole Plan Viability Study including Community Infrastructure Levy (HDH Planning & Development, 2015)

9.57 In the event of a significant rise in house prices, or any other changes which will materially affect the costs of development over an extended period of time, our viability evidence will be updated to determine whether the target levels of affordable housing remain appropriate. Where justified, the targets will be amended through a single issue or partial review of this plan.

9.58 The NPPG sets thresholds for sites on which affordable housing provision can be required. Currently, affordable housing can only be sought on sites of over 10 dwellings. Should these thresholds be withdrawn in the future, the targets set out in Policy HO7 will apply to all schemes.

9.59 The Council will issue supporting guidance and advice as necessary to provide additional information to prospective applicants.

Policy HO8: Affordable housing tenure, mix and design

Where affordable housing is secured through Policy HO7, planning permission will be granted where those dwellings:

- a. Are provided by the developer on site with at least 70% of the units being for rent and the remainder consisting of other tenures to be agreed with the Council's Housing team;
- b. Meet the requirements of Policy HO9;
- c. Are physically indistinguishable from other types of homes and are distributed across the site to avoid over-concentration in any particular area; and
- d. Will remain at an affordable price for future eligible households.

Exceptions to criterion a. will only be considered where it would result in the delivery of new affordable housing within a similar timescale and

- i. It would be demonstrably preferable for planning or management reasons to secure land, off-site provision or a financial contribution; or
- ii. The proposed affordable housing units respond to a specific, identified need that justifies a departure from the normal tenure requirements.

9.60 As well as maximising the overall levels of affordable housing provision, it is equally important to ensure that the appropriate mix of homes are provided. The Council will seek the majority of new homes for rent, with the remainder in other appropriate tenures.

9.61 Our presumption is strongly in favour of on-site provision. However, the provision of land, off-site units or financial contributions will be considered in reasonable circumstances and where it will deliver comparable outcomes - in terms of the timing of housing delivery and number of dwellings. In exceptional circumstances, schemes may be able to contribute towards specific needs or tenure types that would justify a departure from the normal approach.

9.62 Commuted provision is most likely to be acceptable where:

- The application of the targets in Policy HO7 would result in particularly low numbers of affordable units, including on schemes of less than four homes;

- The provision of on-site units would result in specific and demonstrable management issues, which might include abnormal management costs or the provision of units in a leasehold scheme; or
- It could assist in the delivery of priority housing and regeneration schemes.

9.63 To provide mixed communities, new affordable homes should be distributed across development sites.

9.64 Affordable housing is usually secured in perpetuity, making sure that the benefits are passed on to future generations of occupiers. There can be exceptions to this. Many affordable homes have been sold through Right to Buy while some shared equity schemes provide the opportunity to gain 100% ownership of the property by 'staircasing' over time. The sale of high-value units, in line with Government requirements, may allow for greater than 1:1 re-provision off-site. We will not unreasonably interfere with statutory requirements and rights in our application of criterion d.

Policy HO9: Housing types and sizes

Planning permission for residential schemes will be granted where:

- a. An appropriate range of market and affordable housing types and sizes are provided taking into account:
 - i. Structural imbalances in the existing housing stock;
 - ii. The housing needs of the Borough, as informed by up-to-date and relevant evidence;
 - iii. The location and accessibility of the application site; and
 - iv. Recent completions, existing permissions and sites in the five-year land supply;
- b. The resultant scheme would provide a density and character of development appropriate to its location and surroundings. Significantly higher densities should be achieved in easily accessible locations; and
- c. Aspirational homes are provided in appropriate locations including, but not necessarily limited to:
 - i. New neighbourhoods to the north, west and south-east of the town;
 - ii. Suitable suburban, edge-of-town sites;
 - iii. The town centre, Old Town and other highly accessible locations; and
 - iv. Other appropriate sites where aspirational homes would complement the prevailing character

9.65 Providing an appropriate mix of homes that meet the requirements of all sectors of society is an integral element of sustainable development. New development should deliver an appropriate range of house types and sizes.

9.66 The overriding ambition of this policy is to address longstanding structural issues with the town's housing offer. The original masterplans for Stevenage did not incorporate a balanced mix of housing. As a result, Stevenage has a high proportion of terraced and, in particular, three-bed housing. These dominate the market⁽⁸⁸⁾.

9.67 Alongside this, the requirements suggested by up-to-date housing and population projections and other relevant demographic evidence will be taken into account. Recent trends suggest a significant need for houses over flats. Particularly, there are very few large family homes. Only 1 in 100 homes in Stevenage are in the highest Council Tax brackets⁽⁸⁹⁾.

9.68 The original masterplan for Stevenage involved building at relatively low densities of 25-30 dwellings per hectare. However, where sites are easily accessible, substantially higher densities will be required to ensure the most efficient use of land. Higher densities can also help to support local amenities and the viability of passenger transport.

9.69 We will address the large home shortage by ensuring a modest proportion of 'aspirational' homes are provided in suitable locations. Any aspirational houses are to be counted within the general requirements for large and / or market units rather than separate to them. Policies HO1 to HO4 identify those allocated sites where the provision of aspirational homes will be supported.

9.70 Previous evidence suggests that, to qualify as aspirational, houses should be:

- Built in small groups in suitable suburban and edge-of-town locations;
- Low density, typically between 8 and 15 dwellings per hectare;
- Detached with at least four bedrooms and two bathrooms;
- Sited on large plots with a built footprint generally in excess of 100m² and rear gardens of at least 200m²; and
- Set back from the road and provided with at least two off-street parking spaces.

9.71 To qualify as aspirational, flats should be:

- Located close to the Town Centre and railway station;
- On the upper floor(s) of multi-storey developments;
- Provide significantly larger than average accommodation. This may include the provision of private outdoor space or 'penthouse'-style units⁽⁹⁰⁾; and
- Internally finished to a high specification⁽⁹¹⁾.

88 Only four of the 326 local planning authorities (LPAs) in England have a higher proportion of terraced housing stock. Almost nine in ten LPAs have a lower proportion of three-bed homes (Census 2011, Tables KS401EW & LC1402EW / SBC analysis)

89 Properties in Council Tax Bands G and H. Data from Valuation Office website, <http://cti.voa.gov.uk/cti/>, October 2015.

90 Average market 2-bed flats provide around 55-75m². Aspirational flats should provide in excess of 85m² of accommodation. Units in excess of 100m² will be considered acceptable in penthouse-style accommodation.

91 Aspirational Housing Research (SBC, 2010) **Page 247**

9.72 These are generally considered to be minimum criteria. It may be appropriate to exceed these guidelines. On suitable sites of 0.5ha or more, around 10% of dwellings can be delivered as aspirational homes without prejudicing the efficient use of land. We will use this figure as a starting point for negotiation recognising that:

- On large sites this could require a significant number of aspirational homes that might not be desirable in a single location. A lower proportion of homes will be acceptable in these instances;
- On some smaller, windfall sites it may be appropriate to permit up to 100% aspirational homes. These would be an exception to general guidance and will only be allowed where they meet other relevant policy requirements and complement the prevailing character, diversify existing stock or otherwise lead to the best solution for the site; while
- In accessible locations where purely flatted developments are proposed, the proportion of aspirational homes that can be achieved will largely be determined by the proposed building height(s) and footprint(s).

9.73 Affordable housing unit mix will be agreed by negotiation with the Council's Housing team having regard to evidence of need. The range of market accommodation being proposed will also be taken into account to ensure a coherent development scheme is delivered.

Policy HO10: Sheltered and supported housing

Planning permission for sheltered and supported housing schemes will be granted where:

- a. The site is well served by passenger transport;
- b. There is good access to local services and facilities such as neighbourhood centres;
- c. Appropriate levels of amenity space and car parking for residents, visitors and staff are provided; and
- d. The proposal is appropriate to its locality.

On large developments in excess of 200 units, an element of sheltered and / or supported accommodation within use classes C3 should be provided where practicable and consistent with the above criteria as part of the general housing mix requirements of Policy HO9. The new neighbourhoods to the north and west of Stevenage should additionally include an element of accommodation in use class C2 as part of a comprehensive offer.

Schemes that would result in a net loss of sheltered or supported housing will not normally be permitted.

9.74 Over the lifetime of this plan, there will be a significant increase in the number and proportion of older residents in Stevenage. This is consistent with national trends as the 'baby boom' generation reach retirement age and beyond. The housing needs of this age group will vary considerably depending on circumstances. Many will be able to continue living in their own homes with minimal, or no, adaptation or support. Others will require some degree of care or assistance.

9.75 Other groups will also have specific support needs, including people of all ages with physical or learning disabilities or the homeless.

9.76 A number of different models exist to meet the housing needs that this creates:

- Housing with care can include extra care, sheltered housing and assisted living. This is normally delivered in the form of self-contained accommodation that is provided within a purpose-built block or small estate where all residents have similar support needs. Care is provided for those who cannot live completely on their own, or would like the comfort of knowing assistance is available, but do not need significant levels of personal care. An example might include self-contained sheltered accommodation with an on-site warden.
- Care or nursing homes provide a higher degree of personal care and / or long-term medical treatment for those who cannot live independently.

9.77 Self-contained accommodation with a modest level of care, or single dwellings providing care for up to six people, will normally fall within Use Class C3. Accommodation with greater levels of communal facilities, support and / or care will normally fall within Use Class C2. The distinction between these uses can be a fine one. A number of court and appeal decisions have considered this issue at length and have considered indicators including the presence of individual front doors, or the weekly level of care received in coming to a view.

9.78 The population and household projections which underpin this plan suggest that around 200 people will require C2-style accommodation over the plan period. This is in addition to the requirement for 7,300 homes recognised in that work. It is similarly recognised that this approach assumes a fixed proportion of those aged 75 or over will require such accommodation⁽⁹²⁾.

9.79 This statistical approach needs to be balanced against 'real world' views. People are living longer, and living in their own homes for longer. Assuming that the same proportion of over-75's will require more advanced levels of care in 2031 as in 2011 may not hold true. At the same time, the ways in which care is delivered are changing. There is an increasing focus upon adaptation of dwellings and home support.

9.80 The housing target set in Policy SP7 already includes a modest uplift over our objectively assessed needs. The potential to meet a greater proportion of the forecast needs for use-class C2 accommodation within the mainstream housing stock is one influence on this decision.

9.81 Future sheltered and supported housing schemes will be delivered in several ways. A number of units will be delivered by the market in response to perceived demand. Several schemes providing supported and assisted living for older residents have been built in Stevenage in recent years. Accommodation held by registered providers will continue to form an important component of the housing offer. Standalone and windfall schemes to (re-)provide sheltered or supported housing over the plan period will be considered on their merits having regard to the criteria above and other relevant policies.

92 This is a standard statistical assumption derived from the approach used in Government forecasts. Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Housing Market Assessment Update (ORS, 2015)

9.82 These approaches will be supplemented by a policy-led requirement. On the largest housing sites, we will expect an element of sheltered and / or supported housing to be provided. This requirement will be applied pragmatically having regard to:

- The nature of the proposal;
- Up-to-date information, including demographic data and the relevant plans or strategies of service providers; and
- Monitoring of completed schemes and permitted supply of market and affordable units that meet these definitions.

9.83 Where it is not practicable to secure provision on-site, for example in high-intensity flatted schemes or less accessible locations, the need to secure alternate contributions will be considered in line with Policy SP5.

9.84 Our presumption is that, on a Borough-wide basis, the quantity of sheltered and supported accommodation will increase over the plan period. The loss of existing sheltered and supported accommodation will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:

- Adequate and appropriate replacement provision is or will be made; or
- That existing units are no longer fit-for-purpose.

9.85 Replacement provision may be on the same site or in an alternate location.

Policy HO11: Accessible and adaptable housing

Planning permission for major residential schemes will generally be conditioned to ensure that at least 50% of all new dwellings are Category 2: accessible and adaptable dwellings. Where practicable, applications for minor schemes should seek to incorporate this standard.

9.86 Over the lifetime of this plan, there will be a significant increase in the aged population. The national trend however is for more and more elderly and disabled residents to stay in their own home, rather than live in a residential institution or retirement home. As a result, there needs to be an increase in the overall percentage of new homes built over the plan period that will be required to meet accessible and adaptable dwellings standards.

9.87 The Government's revised approach to technical standards for new development identifies three categories of accessibility for new development:

- M4(1) - visitable dwellings
- M4(2) - accessible and adaptable dwellings
- M4(3) - wheelchair user dwellings⁽⁹³⁾

93 The Building Regulations 2010, Approved Document M: Access to and use of buildings, 2015 edition.

9.88 Our evidence demonstrates that setting a requirement for half of new homes to be accessible and adaptable will make a positive contribution to the anticipated requirements⁽⁹⁴⁾. All major schemes should ensure this target is met unless there are specific extenuating circumstances. It is recognised that this requirement may not be practicable for some smaller schemes, for example in conversions of existing stock. In these instances, a revised requirement will be negotiated having regard to site-specific circumstances.

9.89 Compliance with the standard will be assessed through the Building Regulations process. However, any preceding planning application should ensure that schemes have been designed so as to enable this requirement to be met.

Gypsies and Travellers

Policy HO12: Gypsy and Traveller provision

The following site, as shown on the policies map, is allocated for permanent accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers (including those who have ceased to travel permanently):

| Site | Capacity |
|------------------------------------|---------------|
| HO12/1 Land north of Graveley Road | 11-16 pitches |

Planning permission for the allocated use will be granted where:

- i. An identified need continues to exist at the time of any application; and
- ii. The site-specific considerations are properly addressed and / or incorporated into the proposal.

Planning permission for any other uses will be refused. The council is willing, if necessary, to consider using its Compulsory Purchase Order powers under section 226 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, if it appears that the site is not otherwise going to be delivered.

| Site name | Site considerations |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Land north of Graveley Road | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider phased development and release of site to meet future needs across the plan period; ● Investigate need for removal, relocation or incorporation of adjacent bus stop to facilitate site access; ● Mitigation of any surface water flood risk through use of SuDs or other appropriate mechanisms; ● Retention and / or enhancement of screening to create a strong boundary, particularly along the northern edge of the site; ● Appropriate internal layout including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demonstrating that appropriate guidance and standards have been taken into account |

| Site name | Site considerations |
|-----------|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensuring an appropriate balance between privacy of individual pitches and natural surveillance across the site as a whole ● Room for vehicular circulation, including the movement of caravans; ● Minimise risk of conflict between vehicles and people; ● Consideration of health and safety including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● appropriate separation distances; and ● safe areas for play ● Appropriately scaled amenity (or other) buildings; ● Maximise the use of trees, hedgerows or other appropriate soft landscaping to define site boundaries and, where practicable, to demarcate internal areas. The extensive use of high walls or close-board fencing will not be considered appropriate. |

Site specific considerations for Gypsy and Traveller allocation identified in Policy HO12

9.90 Gypsies and Travellers are people who have a nomadic way of life. Some groups travel more than others. Our evidence suggests a requirement for between 11 and 16 additional permanent pitches over the plan period to 2031⁽⁹⁵⁾. This is reflected in the requirements of Policy SP7. Once a target has been set, local plans should identify the sites that will be used to meet requirements for at least the first five years. Where possible, sites or broad locations should be identified for the whole of the plan period.

9.91 A site search was carried out in 2014⁽⁹⁶⁾. This identified a number of sites which might be suitable for future Gypsy and Traveller use. Since completion of that study, further investigations have taken place. These have led to the conclusion that the land to the north of Graveley Road, adjacent to the Borough boundary, would be the best location to meet future Gypsy and Traveller accommodation requirements⁽⁹⁷⁾.

9.92 The Green Belt boundary has been amended in this location to accommodate the proposed site as part of the review under Policy SP10. It is considered that the site is well contained and screened and can be accommodated without significant harm to the wider purposes of Green Belt. Notwithstanding this point, the site is located at the edge of the Borough, beyond the existing and proposed limits of built-up development. The use of hard, urbanising features should not exceed what is reasonably required.

9.93 Because of the low pitch requirement identified, our evidence recognises the need for on-going monitoring and review. In particular it notes that the small level of need may be able to be addressed by transit provision to cover the combined county area. Any application to develop the site for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation must be supported by up-to-date evidence that takes these issues into account. Until the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Study is reviewed (anticipated in 2018), in assessing the need for additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches the Council

95 Stevenage Borough Council Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Study (DCA, 2013)

96 Gypsy and Traveller Site Search (SBC, 2014)

97 Housing Technical Paper (SBC, 2015)

will define Gypsies and Travellers as: *Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin including persons who, on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependent's educational or health needs or old age, have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently.*

9.94 In developing proposals for this site, the site-specific criteria set out above should be met. The site is large enough to meet all of the identified requirements for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation over the plan period. It may be appropriate to phase the release of the site (broadly) in-line with anticipated need. Subject to the caveats in paragraph 9.95, our current evidence suggests a requirement for:

- Five or six pitches over the period to 2021;
- A further three to five pitches between 2021 and 2026; and
- A further three to five pitches by 2031.

Policy HO13: Gypsy and Traveller provision on unallocated sites

Planning permission for accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers (including those who have ceased to travel permanently) or Travelling Showpeople on unallocated sites will only be granted where the proposal:

- a. Satisfies a demonstrated need for accommodation and follows a sequential approach to site identification;
- b. Is located within
 - i. a reasonable distance of existing services and community facilities including shops, schools, health facilities and passenger transport;
 - ii. close proximity to the primary road network with good access to the major road network; and
 - iii. connectable distance of essential utilities infrastructure
- c. Provides, or is capable of providing, an appropriate buffer between any adjacent uses to safeguard the amenity of both residents and neighbours;
- d. Satisfies any other of the site-specific criteria identified under Policy HO12 insofar as they reasonably relate to the proposed site; and
- e. Complies with any other relevant policies of this plan

9.95 It is considered that the site allocated by Policy HO12 is sufficient to meet all permanent Gypsy and Traveller needs arising within the plan period. However, circumstances do change and unforeseen applications for Gypsy and Traveller provision in alternate locations may arise over the plan period.

9.96 Such applications will need to be accompanied by up-to-date evidence of need. In demonstrating a sequential approach, applicants should give priority to sites on previously developed land, followed by undeveloped sites not in the Green Belt. Sites in the Green Belt will be regarded as inappropriate development, in line with national guidance, and will only be permitted where very special circumstances can be demonstrated. Until the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation

Study is reviewed (anticipated in 2018), in assessing the need for additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches the Council will define Gypsies and Travellers as: *Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin including persons who, on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependent's educational or health needs or old age, have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently.*

9.97 In undertaking a sequential test, it will be necessary to consider potential sites and areas beyond the Borough boundary. This takes into account the tightly bounded nature of Stevenage.

9.98 Any sites should have reasonable accessibility⁽⁹⁸⁾. A number of the site considerations in Policy HO12 would be equally applicable to any applications on alternate sites or land and should be taken into account. In considering any proposals, and as with any application for development, this plan should be read as a whole. Sites will not be permitted where they would conflict with other policies, objectives or allocations.

98 Recognising our site search concluded that, in relative terms, sites around the town will generally be quite close to key services

10 Good design

Design

Policy GD1: High quality design

Planning permission will be granted where the proposed scheme (as applicable):

- a. Respects and makes a positive contribution to its location and surrounds;
- b. Improves the overall ease of movement within an area for all users;
- c. Creates a safe environment that designs out crime;
- d. Creates, enhances, or improves access to, areas of public open space, green infrastructure, biodiversity and other public realm assets;
- e. Does not lead to an adverse impact on the amenity of future occupiers, neighbouring uses or the surrounding area;
- f. Complies with the separation distances for dwellings set out in this plan;
- g. Minimises the impact of light pollution on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation;
- h. Incorporates high quality boundary treatments when located on the street frontage;
- i. Complies with other relevant policies and has regard to guidance which may influence site layout and design, including (but not necessarily limited to):
 - i. Requirements relating to active frontages in Policy EC5;
 - ii. The parking and access standards in Policy IT5 and the Parking Provision SPD;
 - iii. Site-specific considerations identified in Policies HO1, HO2, HO3 and HO4;
 - iv. Housing mix requirements in Policies HO8, HO9 and H10;
 - v. Accessibility requirements in Policy HO11;
 - vi. SuDs and flood risk considerations in policies FP1 and FP2
 - vii. Open space standards in Policy NH7; and
 - viii. Conservation area guidance in Policy NH10;
- j. Meets the nationally described space standards;
- k. Makes adequate provision for the collection of waste; and
- l. Has regard to the Stevenage Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document and any other appropriate guidance.

10.1 High quality design is an important component of the NPPF. The NPPF is clear that good design should form an integral part of any development proposal and permission be refused for any poorly designed developments.

10.2 Policy GD1 sets out the generic design requirements that will be applied to all development. Our expectation is that all development will make a positive contribution to the aims and aspirations of this plan.

10.3 Scheme design will be influenced by a range of factors, including other policy requirements set out in this plan. Proposals should demonstrate a holistic approach that has taken all these issues into account, with no requirements being added as an 'afterthought'. Design and Access statements will be scrutinised to understand how the chosen scheme has been developed. Specific standards relating to separation distances for new and existing dwellings (including extensions) are contained in Appendix C.

10.4 Nationally described space standards are an optional Government standard that local authorities can choose to implement⁽⁹⁹⁾. They aim to ensure new developments provide adequate space for residents and families to live. A review shows that many permitted schemes in Stevenage already meet or exceed the levels at which the standards have been set. To ensure this continues to be the case, proposals for the creation of new dwellings will be assessed against the requirements, which are set out in Appendix C.

10.5 A design guide for Stevenage was adopted as a SPD in 2009. Proposals should have regard to the advice it contains and the quantitative standards suggested. The standards will be kept under review over the lifetime of the plan. The Council may consider the introduction and use of other appropriate guidance, such as design codes. Where adopted, these will be a material consideration.

11 Healthy communities

Neighbourhood centres and local shops

Policy HC1: District, local and neighbourhood centres

The following site, as shown on the policies map, is identified as a District Centre:

HC1/1 Poplars

The following sites, as shown on the policies map, are identified as Local Centres:

| | | | |
|-------|------------------|-------|------------|
| HC1/2 | Bedwell Crescent | HC1/6 | Oaks Cross |
| HC1/3 | The Glebe | HC1/7 | The Oval |
| HC1/4 | The Hyde | HC1/8 | Roebuck |
| HC1/5 | Marymead | | |

The following sites, as shown on the policies map, are identified as Neighbourhood Centres:

| | | | |
|--------|----------------|--------|----------------|
| HC1/9 | Canterbury Way | HC1/13 | Mobbsbury Way |
| HC1/10 | Chells Manor | HC1/14 | Popple Way |
| HC1/11 | Filey Close | HC1/15 | Rockingham Way |
| HC1/12 | Hydean Way | | |

Planning permission for development proposals in these centres will be granted where:

- The proposal is in keeping with the size and role of the centre;
- District and Local Centres would continue to provide a range of retail, light industrial (use class B1(b)), health, social, community, leisure, cultural and / or residential uses and retain at least 50% of ground-floor units and floorspace in the main retail area as Class A1 (shops) use;
- Neighbourhood centres would continue to provide a range of small-scale retail, health, social, community, leisure, cultural and / or residential uses and maintain at least one unit in Class A1 (shops) use;
- The proposal does not prejudice our ability to deliver a comprehensive redevelopment scheme; and
- An impact assessment has been provided, where required by Policy TC13, and it has been demonstrated that there will be no significant adverse impact.

Planning permission will be granted as an exception to the above criteria only where:

- Satisfactory on- or off-site provision is made to replace a loss of use(s) relevant to the status of the centre;

- ii. It can be demonstrated that there is no longer a need for a particular facility;
- iii. The particular facility, or any reasonable replacement is not, and will not, be viable on that site;
- iv. The proposals provide overriding benefits against other objectives or policies in the plan; or
- v. It can be demonstrated that a unit has been unsuccessfully marketed for its existing use, or has remained vacant, over a considerable period of time.

11.1 Policy SP9 states that local and neighbourhood centres will be identified, protected and regenerated to provide a network of day-to-day shops alongside businesses, social facilities and homes.

11.2 Changes in lifestyles over the last 50 years, such as the increase in car ownership and the emergence of large superstores, mean that many people can now travel further and more easily to obtain food and services. However, local facilities continue to play an important role for day-to-day convenience and for those residents who have difficulty accessing superstores or the Town Centre. These centres also provide opportunities for more specialist retailers as well as other local facilities and services.

11.3 We recognise that a number of our centres are in need of investment and repair. The design and layout of some centres encourages anti-social behaviour and leads to a fear of crime. This stops some people from visiting them. Smaller-scale works have already been carried out at a number of centres to address these concerns, such as public realm improvements at The Glebe and The Hyde.

11.4 The regeneration of the centres is a high priority of the Council. Work is currently underway on the major redevelopment of Archer Road. This will provide much-needed new council housing, whilst re-providing the community facilities and services previously provided by the centre. A rolling programme of work will see at least seven more of these centres redeveloped within the plan period. These are identified as housing sites in Policy HO1.

11.5 Government guidance states that local authorities should develop a hierarchy of the shopping facilities in their area that is resilient to future economic changes⁽¹⁰⁰⁾. This should include local centres that meet people's day-to-day needs.

11.6 Within Stevenage, 'neighbourhood centres' traditionally describes all of the locally available shopping facilities. The NPPF is clear that small parades of shops should not normally be designated as centres. However, our strategic policy recognises the important role played by these types of facilities in Stevenage and includes an extra category in the retail hierarchy to make sure they are protected.

11.7 Based on the findings of our evidence studies, our own research, our aspirations for the future of these centres and government guidance, three types of centre are identified and designated.

11.8 Poplars is located on the east side of Stevenage. It is part of a neighbourhood which was developed in the 1980s and 1990s, after the Development Corporation had been wound up. It was privately developed and is anchored by a large supermarket.

11.9 This makes it significantly different to the town's other centres. However, unlike Stevenage's other large supermarkets, a number of complementary uses are also provided on-site. Poplars is therefore given its own designation, of a District Centre, in the retail hierarchy to reflect its unique composition. The general composition will be retained over the plan period.

11.10 Elsewhere in the town, larger centres provide a wider range of shops, services and community facilities. Examples include The Oval and The Hyde. These are "local centres" in accordance with Government advice. In determining planning permissions within local centres, we will expect them to operate within the following broad parameters:

- Between 500 and 4,000m² of Class A1-led floorspace in a parade or centre containing at least six units;
- Unit sizes of between 50 and 1,250m²;
- Residential accommodation in flats above the shops and / or additional free-standing residential blocks; and
- Two or more of the following:
 - a. Church or other place of worship;
 - b. Small employment workshops;
 - c. Pub;
 - d. Community Centre

11.11 Within the proposed local centres, at least 50% of floorspace and units in the main retail parade are currently in Class A1 (shops) use⁽¹⁰¹⁾. We will seek to maintain this share. Our baseline monitoring shows that only Marymead does not meet this figure⁽¹⁰²⁾. In this local centre, we will allow applications where there would be no further fall in the percentage of units.

11.12 Permissions will only be granted as an exception to this where A1 units have been actively marketed as such but remained vacant for a period of at least six months.

11.13 There are also a number of smaller centres. These do not necessarily meet the criteria above, but they provide valuable facilities for local residents. Examples include Canterbury Way and Rockingham Way. These are "neighbourhood centres" and will typically provide:

- Between 250 and 1,000m² of Class A1 (shops) - led floorspace in a parade containing between two and six units;
- Unit sizes of between 50 and 500m²;
- Residential accommodation in flats above the shops; and
- May include a pub and / or community centre.

101 Stevenage Retail Study (Applied Planning, 2014)

102 This is in terms of the number of units only: Five out of eleven (45%) units are in A1 use. The proportion of floorspace in A1 use exceeds the minimum threshold.

11.14 These parameters allow for some increase in both overall floorspace and the size of individual shop units in our local and neighbourhood centres over the plan period. This is in line with the retail strategy set out in Policy SP4.

11.15 Some of the smaller parades fall outside of the scope of this policy. Any applications in areas not identified above will be considered under Policy HC2.

Policy HC2: Local shops

Freestanding shops and small parades will generally be retained. Planning permission for the redevelopment of existing sites to alternate uses or for the change of use of individual units from Class A1 (shops) will be granted where:

- a. Satisfactory on- or off-site provision is made to replace a loss of use(s);
- b. It can be demonstrated that there is no longer a need for a particular facility or that alternate facilities are available locally;
- c. The particular facility, or any reasonable replacement is not, and will not, be viable on that site;
- d. The proposals provide overriding benefits against other objectives or policies in the plan;
or
- e. It can be demonstrated that a unit has been unsuccessfully marketed for its existing use, or has remained vacant, over a considerable period of time.

11.16 Beyond the centres identified in specific policies of this plan, there are a number of small parades or individual shop units⁽¹⁰³⁾. There will be a general presumption in favour of these units being retained, or reprovided, to ensure the continued provision of local facilities.

11.17 To satisfy criterion (e), applicants will be expected to demonstrate that units have been actively marketed but remained vacant for a period of at least six months.

Health, social and community facilities

Policy HC3: The Health Campus

The Health Campus is identified on the policies map.

Planning permission will be granted for appropriate Class D1 or C2 healthcare uses. Other use classes will be permitted where they provide ancillary facilities which support the site's principal function.

103 This includes, but is not necessarily limited to, the facilities at Archer Road, Austen Paths, Burwell Road, Fairview Road, Kenilworth Close, Lonsdale Road and Whitesmead Road which were all designated as centres in the 2004 District Plan

Other uses will not be permitted unless it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that the land is no longer required to meet long-term healthcare needs.

11.18 The Lister Hospital provides the main focus of the Health Campus. It was opened in 1972 and offers general and specialist hospital services for people across Hertfordshire and south Bedfordshire. A number of services have been centralised onto the Lister Hospital site in the last few years. Many of these have moved from the Queen Elizabeth II Hospital in Welwyn Garden City. This includes accident and emergency, maternity, acute elderly and acute mental health units.

11.19 This has led to significant development, transforming the existing hospital site. Around £170 million has been invested. Improvements include: a new surgical unit (called the Treatment Centre), an expanded maternity unit, a new multi-storey car park and major changes to the emergency and inpatient services. The Lister Hospital is the town's largest employer, providing more than 2,700 jobs. Ensuring a successful future for the hospital is critical to the future of the town.

11.20 Policy HC3 safeguards the existing hospital site, including the main hospital buildings, residential accommodation for hospital employees to the east, offices, training facilities and parking provision. This will allow the Lister Hospital to operate successfully throughout the plan period to 2031.

11.21 The hospital is supplemented by additional healthcare facilities to the north, which provide specialist care homes and mental health services.

11.22 Planning permission for appropriate healthcare related uses within this area will be granted, including ancillary facilities (the definition of which includes residential accommodation for staff).

11.23 A small parcel of undeveloped land within this campus, adjacent to the A602, provides the opportunity for additional healthcare related uses, including the expansion of the Lister Hospital.

Policy HC4: Existing health, social and community facilities

Planning permission that results in the loss or reduction of any existing health, social or community facility will be granted where:

- a. The existing facility can be satisfactorily relocated within the development proposal, or replaced in an appropriate alternative location;
- b. It can be demonstrated that there is no longer a need for the particular facility; or
- c. The facility, or any reasonable replacement, is not, and will not, be viable on that site.

Policy HC5: New health, social and community facilities

The following site, as shown on the policies map, is designated for new healthcare facilities:

HC5/1: Land at Ridlins Playing Fields

Planning permission will be granted for appropriate D1 healthcare uses. Other uses will only be accepted where they are required for ancillary facilities.

Planning permission for new health, social or community facilities, or to modernise, extend or re-provide existing facilities, on an unallocated site will be granted where:

- a. A need for the facility has been identified;
- b. The site is appropriate in terms of its location and accessibility; and
- c. The facility is integrated with existing health, social or community facilities, where appropriate.

Planning permission for play group provision within existing and proposed district, local and neighbourhood centres will be granted where it is integrated with other leisure and community uses, where practicable.

11.24 These policies refer to health, social and community facilities, as covered by the following Use Classes:

- C2
- D1⁽¹⁰⁴⁾
- D2 - community centres only.

11.25 Communities should have access to an appropriate range of health, social and community facilities. The provision of these can be an important element in creating sustainable communities and improving the quality of life for existing and new residents.

11.26 As a key concept of the original masterplan for the town, health, social and community facilities in Stevenage were provided locally, within walking distance of residents. Policy HC1 seeks to protect this concept. Where a need still exists for these facilities, it is important that they are retained, or replaced, either within the development proposal or in a suitable alternative location.

11.27 In some instances, it may be appropriate to consolidate existing health, social or community facilities, in line with locational requirements, and where it can be demonstrated that this would provide an improved service for residents.

11.28 In terms of healthcare, it is recognised that some GP practices are already working at, or above capacity. To help address this, planning permission was granted in June 2014 for a replacement doctor's surgery in Shephall. This will be built at the western end of the Ridlins Playing Fields. Policy HC5 continues to safeguard this site for healthcare uses.

104 Insofar as this use class reasonably relates to this type of facility. Facilities including (but not necessarily limited to) art galleries, museums, libraries, halls and church halls are not considered to be health, social or community facilities, in this context, and so are not covered by Policy HC4 and Policy HC5.

11.29 It is important to ensure that the standard of health, social and community provision is maintained in new developments, to provide for their own needs. It is recognised that facilities can only be reasonably expected to be provided where the development is of sufficient scale to support such facilities. Account will be taken of the level of existing services and an assessment made of the level of new services required as a result of the proposed development. The provision of on-site local facilities in the urban extension sites is required by the relevant site allocation policies.

11.30 New health, social or community facilities on appropriate sites, outside of these locations, will be permitted where a need has been identified. It is important that these facilities are easily accessible for all and, ideally, integrated with existing facilities.

Leisure and cultural facilities

Policy HC6: Existing leisure and cultural facilities

Development which results in the loss or reduction of any existing leisure or cultural facility will only be permitted if:

- a. The existing facility can be satisfactorily relocated within the development proposal, or replaced by a facility of equivalent or better quality and quantity, in an appropriate alternative location;
- b. Up-to-date evidence shows there is no longer a need for the particular facility; or
- c. The development is for alternative leisure or cultural provision, the needs of which clearly outweigh the loss.

Policy HC7: New and refurbished leisure and cultural facilities

Planning permission for new leisure facilities, or to modernise, extend or re-provide existing facilities, on an unallocated site will be granted where:

- a. A need for the facility has been identified;
- b. The site is appropriate in terms of its location and accessibility;
- c. With the exception of sports facilities, a sequential approach to site selection has been followed and it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that no suitable, available or viable sites exist in identified centres; and
- d. An impact assessment has been provided, where required by Policy TC13, and it has been demonstrated that there will be no significant adverse impact.

11.31 These policies refer to leisure and cultural facilities, as covered by the following Use Classes:

- D1⁽¹⁰⁵⁾
- D2 - excluding community centres
- Sui Generis - the theatre only.

11.32 Opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. A network of facilities exist across the town, which offer residents a wide choice of activities within the local area.

11.33 The loss of any of these existing facilities can result in deficiencies which are difficult to address, particularly with the shortage of developable land that Stevenage experiences. Policy HC6 seeks to guard against any unnecessary losses.

11.34 Our evidence on sports facilities within the Borough⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ provides an up-to-date assessment of all existing facilities and assesses whether further facilities, or improvements to existing, are required to meet the needs of the current population and the additional demand for services created by the planned housing growth.

11.35 The Assessment recognises that many of the town's facilities are ageing and do not meet modern standards. Where there is still demand for these facilities, they should be modernised, improved, extended or replaced, rather than being removed to make way for other uses.

11.36 The Sports Strategy does not assess all facilities covered by these policies - for example the cinema, theatre, museum are not included. If proposals were to result in the loss of any facilities not included within the Strategy, or any updated evidence base, a full needs assessment will be required.

11.37 New leisure and cultural facilities on unallocated sites will be permitted where a need has been identified. It is important that these facilities are easily accessible for all and integrated with existing facilities, where possible.

Policy HC8: Sports facilities in new developments

Planning permission for residential development will be granted where on-site sports provision (in accordance with other plan policies), and / or a commuted sum, is made in accordance with the standards set out in the Council's Sports Facilities Assessment and Strategy.

11.38 It is important to ensure that levels of sports facilities are maintained and supported by new developments.

105 Insofar as this use class reasonably relates to this type of facility. Facilities including (but not necessarily limited to) churches, clinics, health centres, day nurseries and non residential education centres are not considered to be leisure or cultural facilities in this context, and so are not covered by Policy HC6 and Policy HC7

106 Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy 2014-2031 (Morfoft, 2015)

11.39 Our evidence⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ identifies the highest priority (in relation to providing for healthy communities) for the council as being the replacement of facilities within the Arts and Leisure Centre and Stevenage Swimming Centre. This facility has high refurbishment costs and it is not financially beneficial to retain the facility. It recommends a new wet and dry leisure facility is provided within the town centre area, which can accommodate a slightly larger swimming pool and replace and expand the other sports facilities, as required.

11.40 As the theatre is located within the Arts and Leisure Centre, this will also require reprovision. A site for this facility has been identified within Policy TC7.

11.41 A number of other new facilities are also recommended by the Sports Strategy. These include new sports hall provision, skate parks and/or youth facilities at each of the urban extensions and a new cricket ground at Stevenage West. Many of the existing facilities also require refurbishment or expansion to meet future needs. For playing pitches, in particular, although sufficient capacity exists to support future needs, many require improvement works, and pitches may need to be remarked to serve alternative age-ranges. There is also a need to secure Community Use Agreements on all school sites.

11.42 Due to their size and nature, sports facilities often cannot be provided on-site. However, money is still required to improve, expand and provide new facilities to meet the needs of new residents.

11.43 The Council's sports facility standards are set out in the table below⁽¹⁰⁸⁾. The value of the contributions from housing developments across Stevenage will be the equivalent value of the area of sports facilities that would otherwise be provided by the development. This will be calculated using the latest Sport England facility cost information.

| Facility type | Borough wide standard per 1,000 population |
|--------------------------|--|
| Sports halls | 0.31 badminton courts |
| Swimming pools | 11.55m ² water space |
| Athletics tracks | 0.01 tracks |
| Fitness Facilities | 6.88 stations |
| Indoor bowls | 0.08 rinks |
| Outdoor tennis courts | 0.08 dedicated community outdoor courts |
| Outdoor bowls greens | 0.03 greens |
| Youth facilities | 0.08 open access MUGA |
| Artificial grass pitches | 0.03 large size AGPs |

107 Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy 2014-2031 (Nortoft, 2015)

108 As established in the Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy 2014-2031 (Nortoft, 2015)

| Facility type | Borough wide standard per 1,000 population |
|---------------|--|
| Grass pitches | 0.60 ha |

11.44 Any committed sum will be tied to a specific location and specific improvements, as identified within the most up-to-date assessment or delivery plan, to ensure that the additional demand upon sports facilities generated by the development are met. As detailed in paragraph 5.42, we are looking to implement CIL in Stevenage. Once implemented, standard charges will, instead, be collected to fund projects across the Borough.

Education

Policy HC9: Former Barnwell East secondary school

The former Barnwell East school site, as shown on the policies map, is reserved to meet secondary school needs.

The development of this site for anything other than education will only be permitted if satisfactory evidence has been provided to show the school is not, and will not, be required to meet education needs.

The school will be required to provide a sports hall, at least 4 courts in size, which offers public access through a Community Use Agreement, or a similar arrangement.

11.45 Hertfordshire County Council, as Local Education Authority, are responsible for the planning of secondary schools places for Stevenage.

11.46 Stevenage is currently served by six secondary schools and a Studio School.

11.47 In the last few years, building schemes at The Nobel School and Marriotts School (which included the co-location of Lonsdale Special School) have seen both schools rebuilt or significantly refurbished and expanded. Barnwell School, which serves the south of the town, has also received capital investment from the County Council to expand its buildings. Its occupation of the Barnwell East site (formerly known as Collenswood School) ceased at the end of the 2013/14 academic year, and it now operates over its existing main site and its neighbouring site, formerly Heathcote School.

11.48 Additional capacity resulting from development within the Borough will be accommodated through the reoccupation of the existing facility at Barnwell East, and via the expansion of existing secondary schools. The Barnwell East site is reserved for education use.

11.49 Our Sports Strategy⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ identifies a requirement for at least two additional 4 court sports halls within the plan period. It is recommended that one of these is provided at the new secondary school, to meet identified need. Long term community access to this, and all secondary school sites, will be encouraged to ensure that valuable facilities remain available to the public.

Policy HC10: Redundant school sites

Planning permission for the use of any unallocated redundant or surplus school buildings will only be permitted where the buildings are currently used for community activities, unless:

- a. The buildings housing the community activity are retained;
- b. The facilities can be satisfactorily relocated within the development proposal or replaced in an appropriate alternative location; or
- c. It can be demonstrated that there is no longer a need for such facilities.

School playing fields and their ancillary facilities will be required to be retained for open space use. Any loss of these facilities will be assessed against Policy NH1.

11.50 The dual use of some school buildings makes an important contribution to local social and community facilities in Stevenage; helping to address deficiencies in provision, improving access to local facilities and making better use of existing resources.

11.51 Where school buildings currently have a dual use, and the school facility is to be removed or replaced, any buildings which are currently used for community activities must be retained, or relocated in a satisfactory location. Buildings may only be developed where it can be demonstrated that there is no longer a need for the community facility.

11.52 School playing fields and their ancillary facilities should generally be retained for open space use, in line with Policy NH1.

11.53 One redundant playing field site, at the former Pin Green School, is allocated for residential development within this plan. The former school has already been redeveloped, and the playing fields do not have any community use or access. They were previously used for educational purposes only. The site is not designated as an area of open space⁽¹¹⁰⁾.

109 Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy 2014-2031 (SBC, 2015)

110 Open Space Strategy (SBC, 2015)

12 The Green Belt

Policy GB1: Green Belt

The following broad locations, as detailed on the policies map, are designated as Green Belt:

- Land bounded by Gresley Way, Broadwater Lane, the rear of properties at Goddard End, Broadhall Way, the A602 and Aston Lane;
- Land to the south east of the Borough, accommodating the Three Horseshoes public House and adjacent woodland.
- Land to the east of the Borough, bounded by Gresley Way;
- Land to the north of the Borough, bounded by Bury Cottages, Weston Road and the rear of properties at St Andrews Drive and St David Close;
- Land to the north west of the Borough, bounded by Graveley Road, the A1(M) and Stevenage Road;
- Land at Norton Green, bounded by the A1(M);
- Land at Junction 7 and to the south of this junction, bounded by the A1(M).

12.1 Much of the land around Stevenage forms a part of the Metropolitan Green Belt that surrounds London.

12.2 National guidance prevents most forms of development in the Green Belt unless there are 'very special circumstances'. This includes housing.

12.3 In many parts of the town, the built up area of Stevenage extends right up to the Borough boundary. We have not identified a Green Belt boundary in these locations because we cannot set policies or designations for land that is not in Stevenage Borough. It will be for the adjacent local authority to decide whether they think the Green Belt should come up to the edge of Stevenage. We are working with North and East Hertfordshire to create a connected Green Belt boundary all the way around the town that will meet our development and community needs beyond the plan period.

Policy GB2: Green Belt settlements

Planning permission for small-scale residential infilling, conversions and extensions within, or adjacent to, Norton Green and Todd's Green will be permitted subject to the following criteria:

- a. The development is on previously developed land or it does not create more than 5 additional dwellings;
- b. The development will be sympathetic to its surrounding environment (including the adjacent countryside) and will not negatively impact upon the character and appearance of the area;
- c. The development reflects surrounding properties in terms of size, scale and design; and
- d. No features essential to the character of the area will be adversely affected.

The partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, even if this goes beyond the strict definition of infilling, will also be permitted in these areas, subject to conditions b. to d. being met.

Elsewhere in the Green Belt, inappropriate development will not be permitted. Exceptions to this are defined in Paragraphs 89-91 of the NPPF.

12.4 The NPPF states that the construction of new buildings within the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate. However, it does set out some exceptions to this, one being limited infilling in villages, and limited affordable housing for local community needs, and another being the partial or complete redevelopment of brownfield sites.

12.5 The small settlements of Todd's Green and Norton Green are washed over by the Green Belt. These small village-like settlements are on the edge of the Borough, and are rural in character. Although great importance is placed on retaining the rural character of these areas, they do have some potential in terms of helping to meet our housing needs. Our evidence⁽¹¹¹⁾ identifies a need for larger, aspirational homes (4+ bedrooms). Our research on aspirational homes⁽¹¹²⁾ identifies edge of town locations, particularly Todd's Green and Norton Green, as broad locations where aspirational homes would be appropriate. Carefully designed infilling, on a small scale, and redevelopment of brownfield sites could help to fulfil these objectives.

12.6 Elsewhere within the Green Belt, inappropriate development should not be approved except in very special circumstances. This includes the development of new homes. Applications will be assessed against the requirements of the NPPF.

111 Strategic Housing Market Assessment, 2014

112 Aspirational Homes Research, SBC, 2010

13 Flooding and pollution

Climate change

Policy FP1 Climate change

Planning permission will be granted for developments that can incorporate measures to address adaptation to climate change. New development, including building extensions, refurbishments and conversions will be encouraged to include measures such as:

- Ways to ensure development is resilient to likely future variations in temperature;
- Reducing water consumption to no more than 110 litres per person per day including external water use;
- Improving energy performance of buildings;
- Reducing energy consumption through efficiency measures;
- Using or producing renewable or low carbon energy from a local source; and
- Contributing towards reducing flood risk through the use of SuDS or other appropriate measures.

13.1 Climate change has been reported to represent 'by far' the greatest threat to our natural environment, social wellbeing and economic future⁽¹¹³⁾.

13.2 Climate change is a strategic cross cutting theme that relates to many aspects of the environmental, economic and social issues that we address in this document, with many policy areas in this Local Plan relating to it.

13.3 Developments can address temperature fluctuations by ensuring that buildings are well insulated and are ventilated with natural air movement. They should also take full advantage of natural light and heat from the sun to help minimise the need for additional energy for lighting and heating.

13.4 The Environment Agency have identified that Stevenage lies within an area of 'Water Stress'⁽¹¹⁴⁾. Therefore, the more stringent target of 110 litres per person per day has been adopted for all new developments in Stevenage in line with NPPG. All new development should ensure that stringent water management systems are incorporated into their design.

13.5 In order to improve the energy performance of buildings, both new and existing, developers should adopt more energy efficient measures in order to contribute to the overall energy performance of the development. This could include, for example:

- The use of photo voltaic panels;

113 Town and Country Planning Association 2009. Planning and Climate Change Coalition: Position Statement - October 2009

114 As identified in the Rye Meads Water Cycle Study Review Adopted September 2015

- Micro wind generators; and
- The installation of ground source heat pumps.

13.6 At a strategic level, developments should incorporate SuDS in order to help reduce flood risk. The most sustainable SuDS contribute to reducing flood risk and pollution, and provide landscape and wildlife benefits. These would include, for example:

- Living roofs and walls;
- Basins and ponds;
- Filter strips and swales; and
- Infiltration devices, such as soakaways.

Flood risk

Policy FP2: Flood risk in Flood Zone 1

Planning permission for all major development sites will be granted where:

- a. An appropriate surface water Flood Risk Assessment is submitted. The Flood Risk Assessment must demonstrate, as a minimum:
 - i. An estimate of how much surface water runoff the development will generate;
 - ii. Details of existing methods for managing surface water runoff, e.g. drainage to a sewer; and
 - iii. Plans for managing surface water and for making sure there is no increase in the volume of surface water and rate of surface water runoff.
- b. The use of SuDS has been maximised on site so as not to increase flood risk, and to reduce flood risk wherever possible; and
- c. It can be demonstrated that flood resilience and flood resistance construction can be designed into the proposed development scheme.

13.7 Flooding is a natural process, which helps to shape the natural environment. However, it can also have significant negative impacts, causing damage to property and even loss of life. Flooding events are likely to increase in the future, both in number and in magnitude. This is in part due to climate change and we need to ensure that we can adapt to these changes and protect the town, as far as is reasonably practicable. It is important, therefore, that our planning policies take into account present and future flood risk.

13.8 National guidance requires us to preclude development in areas of flood risk and reduce the risk of flooding overall⁽¹¹⁵⁾. The Environment Agency has a statutory responsibility for flood management and flood defence in England and provides an advisory service to this end. Hertfordshire County Council, as the Lead Local Flood Authority, will be consulted on proposals in a flood risk area and for all sites over one hectare.

13.9 Groundwater flooding is not considered to pose a significant problem to Stevenage but any development should be mindful of the effects of deep foundations on shallow groundwater flows in fluvial sands and gravels in valley bottoms.

13.10 Our evidence⁽¹¹⁶⁾ identifies different areas of flood risk in the town, categorised as:

- Flood Zone 3, which is further subdivided into
 - Flood Zone 3b - functional floodplain
 - Flood Zone 3a - high probability
- Flood Zone 2 - medium probability
- Flood Zone 1 - low probability

13.11 The latest flood risk maps should be referred to for detailed zone locations.

13.12 We will steer new development to areas of the lowest probability of flooding by applying the sequential approach identified in our Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. Preference will be given to development located in Flood Zone 1 (the area with the lowest risk of flooding).

13.13 Proposals should avoid adding to the causes of flooding, both fluvial and surface water. The increase in impermeable surfaces through large scale development, such as that on sites over one hectare, can result in an increase in surface water runoff.

13.14 Proposals should maximise the use of SuDS to reduce the risk of flooding and minimise any negative impacts on buildings and land uses that may suffer from flooding. SuDS direct surface water run off from increased rainfall, back into suitable ground locations, mimicking natural drainage systems. In doing so, they help reduce the risk of flooding by easing the pressure on the storm water drainage network.

13.15 A site can accommodate a wide range of different SuDS techniques. These can range from individual properties incorporating permeable paving in driveways, to larger developments incorporating ponds, wetlands and green roofs and/or walls. SuDS can also improve water quality and enhance the amenity and biodiversity value of the surrounding area.

13.16 The need for SuDS is likely to increase to meet environmental challenges such as climate change and population growth.

13.17 Proposals should adopt the SuDS hierarchy. In instances where proposals are unable to maximise SuDS on site, evidence will be required to demonstrate how and why this might not be viable or practicable to implement. The developer will also be required to provide alternative mitigation either on site, or elsewhere in the Borough.

| <i>Most Sustainable</i> | <i>SUDS technique</i> | <i>Flood Reduction</i> | <i>Pollution Reduction</i> | <i>Landscape & Wildlife Benefit</i> |
|--------------------------|---|------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| | Living roofs | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Basins and ponds - Constructed wetlands - Balancing ponds - Detention basins - Retention ponds | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Filter strips and swales | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Infiltration devices - soakaways - infiltration trenches and basins | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Permeable surfaces and filter drains - gravelled areas - solid paving blocks - porous paviers | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | Tanked systems - over-sized pipes/tanks - storms cells | ✓ | | |
| <i>Least Sustainable</i> | | | | |

SuDS Hierarchy

13.18 The Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) and its associated SuDS Policy Statement should be consulted when considering the drainage system.

Policy FP3: Flood risk in Flood Zones 2 and 3

Planning permission will be granted where:

- a. It can be demonstrated that the functional floodplain, also known as Flood Zone 3b, is protected;
- b. It can be demonstrated that a sequential approach is taken at site level;
- c. An appropriate fluvial flood risk assessment is submitted which demonstrates;
 - i. Whether a proposed development is likely to be affected by current or future flooding from any source;
 - ii. That the development will not increase flood risk elsewhere;
 - iii. That the measures proposed to deal with these effects and risks are appropriate;
 - iv. The evidence for us, as the local planning authority, to apply (if necessary) the Sequential Test; and
 - v. That the development will be safe and pass the Exception Test, if applicable.
- d. The use of SuDS has been maximised on site so as not to increase flood risk, and to reduce flood risk wherever possible;
- e. A natural buffer zone adjacent to any watercourse is included as part of the development. The buffer zone should be a minimum of eight metres wide from the top of the bank of the watercourse along the entire length of the watercourse on site;
- f. Any culverted watercourse present on site can be re-naturalised; and
- g. It can be demonstrated that flood resilient and flood resistant construction can be designed into the proposed development scheme.

13.19 Flood Zones 2 and 3 are not extensive in the town. Broadly speaking, they run along the Stevenage and Aston End Brook but only through the southern end of the town. Proposals for Flood Zone 2 or 3 will have to demonstrate that there is no other reasonably available site in a lower flood risk category in the Borough.

13.20 As well as the measures identified above (for proposals in Flood Zone 1), additional measures will be required to ensure flood risk is minimised.

13.21 A fluvial Flood Risk Assessment will be required to demonstrate how the proposal meets the Policy criteria.

13.22 On occasions where the developer is unable to maximise the natural buffer zone adjacent to the watercourse, the developer must provide mitigation elsewhere on site, or elsewhere in the Borough. A developer wishing to build within eight metres of the top of the bank of a watercourse will require Flood Defence Consent from the Environment Agency. This consent may not necessarily be granted.

13.23 Development proposals which do not involve deculverting or, indeed, propose culverting of watercourses, will have an adverse impact on the town's river corridors and water meadows. Opening up river corridors can help to improve the chemical and biological quality of a watercourse. This, in turn, improves habitats for biodiversity and also contributes to open space and health and wellbeing in the town. The developer will need to provide mitigation elsewhere in the Borough. This may involve the deculverting of an alternative length of watercourse.

13.24 River corridors and flood storage reservoirs (FSRs) play an important role in controlling the surface water run off from the town, as they allow excess run off during storms to be temporarily stored. Protecting river corridors and FSRs from inappropriate development and culverting is therefore important so as not to increase flood risk in the town.

Policy FP4: Flood storage reservoirs and functional floodplain

The following sites, as shown on the policies map, are designated flood storage reservoirs and also form part of the functional floodplain (Flood Zone 3b) of Stevenage.⁽¹¹⁷⁾

| | | | |
|-------|-----------------|--------|--------------------------|
| FP4/1 | Aston Valley | FP4/7 | Fairlands Valley Lakes |
| FP4/2 | Bragbury End | FP4/8 | Meadway |
| FP4/3 | Broad Oak | FP4/9 | Ridlins Wood |
| FP4/4 | Burymead | FP4/10 | Sainsburys (Coreys Mill) |
| FP4/5 | Camps Hill Park | FP4/11 | Wychdell |
| FP4/6 | Elder Way | | |

Planning permission will be refused for any development that would result in any of the flood storage reservoirs being removed, reduced, severed or their function compromised.

Where appropriate, we may require developments to contribute towards either a new flood storage reservoir, or towards the maintenance, improvement or extension of the existing flood storage reservoirs.

13.25 The FSRs found within and adjacent to the town attenuate storm runoff from impermeable areas and are integral to the drainage system of the town.

13.26 The Development Corporation planned to incorporate these numerous small FSRs to reflect their value as public open space in the urban environment.

13.27 The FSRs also form part of the towns Functional Floodplain. Functional Floodplain is defined as, but not restricted to, 'land which would flood with an annual probability of 1 in 20 (5%) or greater in any year, or is designed to flood in an extreme 1 in 1000 (0.1%) or greater in any year flood'⁽¹¹⁸⁾

13.28 National guidance⁽¹¹⁹⁾ notes that the only appropriate uses for land in Flood Zone 3b is water-compatible uses and essential infrastructure.

Pollution

Policy FP5: Contaminated land

Planning permission will be granted for development on brownfield sites if an appropriate Preliminary Risk Assessment (PRA) is submitted which demonstrates that any necessary remediation and subsequent development poses no risk to the population, environment and groundwater bodies.

13.29 Pollution refers to the release of contaminants into the air, ground or water. It includes solids, liquids and gases as well as noise, vibration, heat and light.

13.30 The NPPF (para 109) sets out how we, as the local planning authority, should prevent both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability; and remediate and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

13.31 Much of the development that is proposed in Stevenage takes place on brownfield sites. Brownfield land is defined as land that has been previously developed. Development on brownfield land is encouraged as it eases the pressures on greenfield sites. However, previous land uses on brownfield sites could have resulted in the land becoming contaminated. In addition, given the

118 NPPF: Technical Guidance (2012)

119 NPPF: Technical Guidance (2012) - Table 2: Flood Risk vulnerability classification

history of the development of the New Town, some greenfield sites in and around the town may have been used as spoil heaps as the town was built. Such sites should be given due consideration when considering development in such areas.

13.32 Through the adoption of a precautionary approach, the possibility of contamination should be assumed in relation to all development sites on, or adjacent to, previous industrial land.

13.33 The PRA should be carried out with reference to the Contaminated Land Statutory Guidance (April 2012). This is not a onerous task and is, at its highest level, essentially a site history of the development site so that it can be established if, and what, further work is required. The PRA should include, as a minimum:

- Desk study;
- Site investigation; and
- Additional desk study and exploratory site investigation (if necessary)

13.34 The underlying geology of the town is a combination of impermeable clay overlaying areas of exposed permeable chalk. In instances where contamination is identified where clay underlies the site, the chalk below the clay is protected, to an extent. However, where contamination is found in areas directly above the chalk, pathways can be created which could result in any pollutants present being washed through the chalk into the groundwater system and then out into the river system.

13.35 The town also has a number of Source Protection Zones (SPZs) which give an indication of the time it takes for pollutants to travel from a given point to a potable water abstraction point. These zones are divided into:

- SPZ1 - inner zone;
- SPZ2 - outer zone; and
- SPZ3 - total catchment

13.36 SPZ1 is the area where contamination poses the most risk as it immediately surrounds a potable water abstraction point. The risk lessens as you pass through SPZ2 to SPZ3. It is important to address any contamination on sites in SPZs and to also steer development, that may involve contaminative installations, to areas of lowest risk.

13.37 Our evidence⁽¹²⁰⁾ shows that the chalk aquifer is predominantly unconfined and is therefore susceptible to groundwater contamination from the surface. The use of a chalk aquifer for public water supply purposes will necessitate the use of oil interceptors and/or the separation of roof drainage from the runoff from road surfaces and vehicle parking areas to reduce the risk of pollution. Whilst the permeable local geology makes the use of infiltration SuDS highly effective, it also increases the risk of contaminants entering the groundwater earlier than would necessarily be expected.

Policy FP6: Hazardous installations

Planning permission for development proposals involving the use, storage or movement of hazardous substances will be granted where:

- a. There are no additional health and safety risks to users of the site or the surrounding area;
- b. There are no additional threats to the local environment, particularly air quality, water and wildlife; and
- c. The proposal does not cause long-term land contamination.

Where any of these criteria are not met, planning permission will only be granted where steps can be taken to mitigate any adverse impacts to an acceptable level.

Planning permission for development proposals adjoining existing or proposed hazardous installations, or adjoining sites where hazardous substances are present, will only be granted where it can be demonstrated that there is not a health and safety risk to the users of the proposed development.

13.38 A hazardous installation is a development that involves using, storing or moving hazardous substances, which include, but is not limited to, substances (solid, liquid or gas) classified as toxic, very toxic, corrosive, harmful or irritant.

13.39 Pollution occurs when these or other hazardous substances contaminate the land or air.

13.40 Planning permission must be obtained for the storage or use of hazardous substances. The Borough Council will consider whether this use is appropriate in the proposed location, and how it would affect the land and human population nearby.

Policy FP7: Pollution

All development proposals should minimise, and where possible, reduce air, water, light and noise pollution. Applications for development where pollution is suspected must contain sufficient information for the Council to make a full assessment of potential hazards and impacts.

Planning permission will be granted when it can be demonstrated that the development will not have unacceptable impacts on:

- a. The natural environment, general amenity and the tranquillity of the wider area, including noise and light pollution;
- b. Health and safety of the public; and
- c. The compliance with statutory environmental quality standards.

13.41 Air, water, light and noise pollution arising from new development can individually and cumulatively have a significantly damaging impact on the countryside, on peoples' living environment and on wildlife. Whilst lighting is desirable for safety, recreation and the enhancement of some buildings, inappropriate lighting can cause sky glow, glare and light spill and represents energy waste.

13.42 We will seek to ensure that levels of pollution are kept to a minimum and are acceptable to human health and safety, the environment and the amenity of adjacent or nearby land users. Environmental Health legislation regulates many forms of pollution, but it is clearly preferable to prevent conflict from new development arising in the first place. The weight given to each criterion will depend on the particular circumstances and relevant control authorities will be consulted as necessary.

13.43 Careful consideration should be given to whether artificial lighting is needed. Light encroaching beyond the area in which it was intended can create a distracting glare and can have an adverse effect on the local environment, particularly wildlife, as their nocturnal patterns can be disturbed.

13.44 If artificial light is required, then it should be designed to ensure that only the necessary amount of light is provided for the required task and that it is properly controlled or mitigated, to avoid light pollution. Hours or days of use can be limited or the use of sensitive screening may be appropriate.

Policy FP8: Pollution sensitive uses

Planning permission for pollution sensitive uses will be granted where they will not be subjected to unacceptably high levels of pollution exposure from either existing, or proposed, pollution generating uses.

Planning permission in areas having the potential to be affected by unacceptable levels of aircraft noise will be subject to conditions or planning obligations to ensure an adequate level of protection against noise impacts.

13.45 Pollution sensitive uses, such as housing, schools and hospitals, should ideally be separated from pollution generating uses, such as industrial units and airports, wherever possible.

13.46 Stevenage is located in close proximity to London Luton Airport and is, therefore, affected by aircraft noise generated from it. The direction of the runway means that some planes fly over Stevenage to take off and land. However, national guidance defines the levels of noise experienced as being acceptable. An application has been granted for work to facilitate the growth of London Luton Airport. This would see the airport cater for up to 18 million passengers per annum before the end of our Local Plan period.

13.47 Noise contours identified in the London Luton Noise Action Plan, 2013 - 2018, extend in close proximity to the western extent of the proposed development west of Stevenage. Development in this area, particularly, will need to ensure that any noise impacts are mitigated.

14 The natural and historic environments

Green infrastructure

Policy NH1: Principal Open Spaces

The following sites, as defined on the policies map, are designated as Principal Open Spaces:

Principal Parks

| | | | |
|-------|------------------------|--------|--------------------|
| NH1/1 | Fairlands Valley Park* | NH1/6 | Peartree Park* |
| NH1/2 | Town Centre Gardens* | NH1/7 | Ridlins Park* |
| NH1/3 | King George V* | NH1/8 | St. Nicholas Park* |
| NH1/4 | Hampson Park* | NH1/9 | Millennium Gardens |
| NH1/5 | Shephalbury Park* | NH1/10 | The Bowling Green |

Principal Amenity Greenspaces

| | | | |
|--------|----------------------------------|--------|------------------------------------|
| NH1/11 | Chells District Park* | NH1/22 | Archer Road* |
| NH1/12 | Canterbury Way* | NH1/23 | The Noke* |
| NH1/13 | Meadway* | NH1/24 | Ramsdell |
| NH1/14 | Bandley Hill* | NH1/25 | Clovelly Way A |
| NH1/15 | Burymead* | NH1/26 | Chester Road / Canterbury Way |
| NH1/16 | Campshill Park* | NH1/27 | Caernarvon Close / Balmoral Close* |
| NH1/17 | Blenheim Way / Pembridge Gardens | NH1/28 | Chepstow Close* |
| NH1/18 | York Road B & C* | NH1/29 | Shephall Green |
| NH1/19 | Letchmore Road* | NH1/30 | Blenheim Way / Stirling Close* |
| NH1/20 | Trent Close | NH1/31 | Holly Copse |
| NH1/21 | Bedwell Park* | | |

Principal Woodlands

| | | | |
|--------|----------------------|--------|------------------------------|
| NH1/32 | Whomeley Wood | NH1/43 | Mobbsbury Park |
| NH1/33 | Monks Wood | NH1/44 | Sishes Wood |
| NH1/34 | Ridlins Wood | NH1/45 | Shackleton Spring Woodland |
| NH1/35 | Lanterns Wood | NH1/46 | Sinks Spring |
| NH1/36 | Ashtree Wood | NH1/47 | Hanginghill Wood |
| NH1/37 | Wellfield Wood | NH1/48 | Wiltshire Spring Wood (west) |
| NH1/38 | Martins Wood* | NH1/49 | Hertford Road Wood |
| NH1/39 | Great Collens Wood | NH1/50 | Almond Spring |
| NH1/40 | South Pestcotts Wood | NH1/51 | Blacknells Spring Wood |
| NH1/41 | Loves Wood | NH1/52 | Whitney Drive Wood |
| NH1/42 | Abbot's Grove | | |

Planning permission will be granted where proposals:

- a. Would not result in the loss of any part of a Principal Open Space;
- b. Would not have an adverse impact upon any Principal Open Space within, or adjacent to, the application site; and
- c. Reasonably provide, or reasonably contribute towards the maintenance or improvement of, Principal Open Spaces and allotments.

Planning permission will be granted for small scale leisure and recreation developments within a Principal Open Space where they support its continued use and maintenance. New or replacement facilities that meet the general definitions of Principal Open Spaces will be afforded the same protections as the sites identified in this policy.

14.1 Principal Open Spaces are the destination parks, other parks and gardens, principal amenity greenspaces and principal woodlands along with the children's play areas within each⁽¹²¹⁾. Based on our evidence, the most important open spaces in the Borough have been identified and allocated. These are the sites that:

- Have a significant draw within Stevenage or their neighbourhood;
- Are destinations in their own right, places where people would go to spend time with a specific purpose;
- Are not incidental open space;
- Are not principally defined by organised sports activities; and
- May contain a variety of facilities and attractions aimed at a wide demography.

14.2 In many cases, these open spaces will draw visitors from a relatively wide area. This is particularly true of the bigger spaces. However, it is likely that these same spaces will also perform a local amenity function.

14.3 Fairlands Valley Park is the largest area of open space in Stevenage. Retaining this area as undeveloped land was part of the original masterplan for the New Town. It provides a facility used by residents from all across the Borough (and beyond). It performs a regional role in providing recreational pursuits, but is just as likely to have people using it from neighbouring streets to meet everyday needs

14.4 The Town Centre Gardens provide valuable space in close proximity to both the main retail area and existing and proposed high-rise residential uses. The refurbishment of the gardens was completed in 2011, though there remains an aspiration to provide better connections across the dual carriageway of St George's Way (see Policy IT7).

14.5 The remaining Principal Parks serve a wider than local role within the town. They offer a variety of functions including play areas for a broad age range, trim trails, skate facilities, varied semi-natural environments and other features which make them attractive destinations.

121 Sites in Policy NH1 denoted by an asterisk (*) contain childrens' play areas which are also protected under this policy

14.6 Amenity space refers to informal recreation spaces as well as green space in and around housing which enhances the appearance of the area. The Principal Amenity Greenspaces serve a neighbourhood purpose and often contain play spaces. They are all over 0.5ha in size. This category includes Chells Park, Meadway and Canterbury Park because, although they provide football pitches, people also use the sites for other uses such as dog walking or informal play.

14.7 This plan safeguards an access corridor across a substantial proportion of the Meadway Playing Fields (see Policy IT2). It is not presently anticipated that this access will be developed during the lifetime of this current plan. However, in the event that proposals are brought forward earlier than anticipated, the loss of Principal Open Space at Meadway would be permitted as an exception to this policy, subject to the re-provision of any lost facilities either within any development to the west of the A1(M) or another, appropriate and nearby location.

14.8 The Principal Woodlands are the major pieces of wooded land within the town boundary with access for the public. Many of them have additional designations such as local Wildlife Site status (see Policy NH2).

14.9 Applications for development which have an adverse impact upon the town's Principal Open Spaces will be refused.

14.10 Development will be expected to make reasonable contributions towards Principal Open Space. On the largest schemes this may take the form of new, on-site provision (see Policy NH7). Where this occurs, the provided space(s) will subsequently be afforded the same protections as the sites identified in this policy. However, in most instances, the Council will seek reasonable contributions towards the maintenance and enhancement of existing spaces.

14.11 No allotment sites are allocated under this policy. Although an important resource, they are subject to a separate regime when it comes to disposal which provides adequate protection⁽¹²²⁾. Notwithstanding this, we will require appropriate contributions towards allotment provision under this policy. Stevenage is currently well provided for and demand for plots is high. However, this popularity has been cyclical and the town's allotments will be subject to periodic review outside of the Local Plan process to ensure provision meets demand.

14.12 Sports pavilions, play areas and other small scale recreational developments can play an important part in sustaining the role and function of our Principal Open Spaces. The Council has been carrying out a programme of repairs, improvements and replacements to bring facilities up to standard. Planning permission will generally be granted where small-scale development is required to support the function and continued use of a Principal Open Space.

Policy NH2: Wildlife Sites

The following sites, as defined on the policies map, are designated as wildlife sites:

| | | | |
|-------|---------------|--------|-------------------------|
| NH2/1 | Abbot's Grove | NH2/20 | Monks Wood West |
| NH2/2 | Almond Spring | NH2/21 | Pestcotts Spring & Wood |

122 The Council owns all allotment sites within the Borough. Legislation relating to the provision, safeguarding and disposal of allotments is set in a variety of acts

| | | | |
|--------|-----------------------------------|--------|---------------------------------|
| NH2/3 | Ashtree Wood | NH2/22 | Poplars Meadow and Pond South |
| NH2/4 | Barnwell School and Rectory | NH2/23 | Ridlins Mire |
| NH2/5 | Blacknells Spring | NH2/24 | Ridlins Wood |
| NH2/6 | Broadwater Marsh West | NH2/25 | Shackledell Grassland (2 sites) |
| NH2/7 | Elder Way Flood Meadow | NH2/26 | Sishes Wood |
| NH2/8 | Elm Green Pastures | NH2/27 | Six Hills Common |
| NH2/9 | Exeter Close | NH2/28 | St Nicholas Churchyard |
| NH2/10 | Fishers Green Wood | NH2/29 | Stevenage Brook Marsh |
| NH2/11 | Garston Meadow | NH2/30 | Symonds Green |
| NH2/12 | Great Collens Wood | NH2/31 | Valley Way Wood |
| NH2/13 | Hanginghill Wood | NH2/32 | Warren Springs |
| NH2/14 | Kitching Green Lane | NH2/33 | Wellfield Wood |
| NH2/15 | Loves Wood | NH2/34 | Whitney Drive Wood |
| NH2/16 | Margaret's Wood & Spoil Bank Wood | NH2/35 | Whitney Wood |
| NH2/17 | Martins Way | NH2/36 | Whomerley Woods Road Verge |
| NH2/18 | Martins Wood | NH2/37 | Wiltshire's Spring |
| NH2/19 | Monks & Whomerley Woods | | |

Planning permission will be granted where proposals:

- Would not result in substantive loss or deterioration of a Wildlife Site; and
- Reasonably contribute towards the maintenance or enhancement of Wildlife Sites in the vicinity of the application site.

Any wildlife sites or Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS) that are ratified by the Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust (HMWT)⁽¹²³⁾ following adoption of this plan will be afforded the same protections as the sites identified in this policy. Any Wildlife Sites or RIGS (or parts thereof) which are subsequently deselected by HMWT will no longer be subject to the provisions of this policy.

14.13 There are no European or nationally designated sites, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) or National Nature Reserves (NNRs) in Stevenage. However, there are a significant number of locally important sites. A register of local wildlife sites is maintained and updated each year by the Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre. A comprehensive review of sites within the Borough was carried out in 2013⁽¹²⁴⁾ and has been used to identify the sites that are protected through the Plan.

123 Including any successor body

124 Stevenage Wildlife Sites Review (Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust, 2013)

14.14 Sites identified or designated as Wildlife Sites are afforded protection as sites of substantive nature conservation value. Development on or affecting these sites will be resisted, except where the primary objective is the conservation and / or diversification of any recognised biodiversity asset.

14.15 Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS) are considered regionally important for their educational or historical value and are given the same level of protection as wildlife sites. There are presently no RIGS in Stevenage.

14.16 Many of the woodland areas are recognised as ancient woodland sites. This is a nationally agreed definition and means that the land has been wooded since at least 1600 AD. The species of tree and the composition of the wood however are not necessarily natural, having been altered by management and new plantings over the centuries. Most of these were farm woodlands that were retained within the New Town as landscape features and areas for recreation. They were mainly composed of neglected hornbeam coppice with standard ash and oak trees.

14.17 Management of the Town's woodlands is carried out in line with a series of five-year plans which are drawn up and agreed with the Forestry Commission. The Town's woodlands will be managed in order to provide recreation and amenity for local residents and also to ensure their survival in a manner benefiting both the landscape of the Town and local wildlife. In recent years the value of the locally native hornbeam woodland to wildlife has been recognised. There is now a programme of re-coppicing and reinstatement.

Policy NH3: Green Corridors

The following routes, as defined on the policies map, are designated as Green Corridors:

Ancient Lanes

| | | | |
|-------|--------------------|--------|---------------------|
| NH3/1 | Aston Lane | NH3/10 | Meadway |
| NH3/2 | The Avenue | NH3/11 | Narrowbox Lane |
| NH3/3 | Botany Bay Lane | NH3/12 | Old Walkern Road |
| NH3/4 | Bragbury Lane | NH3/13 | Sheafgreen Lane |
| NH3/5 | Broadwater Lane | NH3/14 | Shephall Lane |
| NH3/6 | Chells Lane | NH3/15 | Shephall Green Lane |
| NH3/7 | Dene Lane | NH3/16 | Shephards Lane |
| NH3/8 | Fishers Green Lane | NH3/17 | Watton Lane |
| NH3/9 | Lanterns Lane | NH3/18 | Weston Lane |

Structurally Important Routes

| | | | |
|--------|---------------|--------|--|
| NH3/19 | Broadhall Way | NH3/22 | Gunnels Wood Road |
| NH3/20 | Fairlands Way | NH3/23 | Martins Way (Grace Way to Gresley Way) |
| NH3/21 | Grace Way | NH3/24 | Monkswood Way |

Other Green Corridors

| | | | |
|--------|---|--------|---------------|
| NH3/25 | Gresley Way | NH3/27 | Six Hills Way |
| NH3/26 | Martins Way (Hitchin Road to Grace Way) | | |

Planning permission will be granted where proposals:

- a. Would not have a substantive adverse effect upon a Green Corridor;
- b. Retain and sensitively integrate any Green Corridor which must be crossed or incorporated into the site layout;
- c. Provide replacement planting, preferably using locally native species, where hedgerow removal is unavoidable; and
- d. Reasonably contribute towards the improvement of Green Corridors in the vicinity of the application site

14.18 Green Corridors are protected as a means of linking and connecting to the town's open spaces as well as facilitating movement by pedestrians and cyclists. They differ in character and perform different roles, but are equally important in creating a network of green space throughout the Town. Green Corridors can promote the movement of people by more sustainable forms of transport, but also provide routes and networks to enable the diversification and sustenance of biodiversity.

14.19 When the New Town was built, many existing lanes and hedgerows in the areas of the countryside being developed were kept. A number of these now form part of the car-free cycle and pedestrian network of the town. These Ancient Lanes, and their associated hedgerows, need to be protected from future development as they cannot be replaced.

14.20 The Structurally Important Routes are major highways within the built up area of Stevenage that include significant areas within and alongside the highway that provide open space, landscaping and/or cycleways. They are primarily for human movement and are particularly conducive to cycling because of the segregated routes.

14.21 The Other Green Corridors are also road side areas, but they differ from the landscaped roads defined by the Structurally Important Routes. Gresley Way recognises the route between Six Hills Way and Broadhall Way, containing within it the Aston Brook and a well vegetated strip that runs towards Ridlins Mire. Six Hills Way is included following three successful experiments – at Six Hills Common, Monks Wood and Ashtree Wood – into grassland habitat creation conducted between HMWT and the Borough Council.

14.22 All three types of Corridor offer substantial opportunity to encourage alternative means of travel and healthier lifestyles. Work is being carried out within the Council to use them to develop shorter round routes and promote these to residents, and also to investigate the possibility of a connected route around the Town which would not only pursue these health and sustainability objectives but open up different parts of the Town to different people.

14.23 It may occasionally be necessary for a major development to cross, abut or incorporate a Green Corridor. Where this is necessary, disruption must be minimised and the remaining elements of the corridor sensitively integrated into the new development as a permanent feature.

Contributions may also be appropriate, particularly in strategic (greenfield) developments, as a means of preserving existing lanes outside the urban area and enhancing and extending current routes into new areas of the town.

14.24 Beyond these defined routes, a number of public rights of way exist in the Borough. These are protected and controlled under a separate statutory regime. However, diversion applications to facilitate development are made to the Borough Council as the Local Planning Authority. The strategic development sites to the west and north of Stevenage, in particular, contain a number of existing rights of way. Any applications to modify or divert these routes will be dealt with separately to any planning application. However, it is our general expectation that existing public rights of way will be incorporated into the green infrastructure of any development proposals maintaining their existing route and alignment wherever possible.

14.25 This includes those footpaths and bridleways which link to the Stevenage Outer Orbital Path (StOOP). This is a 27-mile route which circles Stevenage using footpaths and other routes that are open to the public. All of StOOP lies outside of the Borough boundary. However, it is connected to Stevenage by eight 'link paths' which use public rights of way within our administrative area.

Policy NH4: Green Links

The following routes, as shown on the policies map, are designated as Green Links:

1. The Old Greens: Meadway to Fishers Green and Symonds Green;
2. The Avenue / Forster Country: Bury Mead to St. Nicholas Church;
3. Fairlands Valley: Hampson Park via Fairlands Valley Park to (a) Roebuck and (b) Shephall Green;
4. Chells: Gresley Way to Narrow Box Lane and Nobel School;
5. Collenswood: Gresley Way via Collenswood to Fairlands Valley Park / Chells Way;
6. Bandle Hill: Gresley Way via Ridlins Park and Bandle Hill to Collenswood;
7. Shephalbury: Gresley Way via Ridlins Wood and Loves Wood to Shephalbury Park;
8. Water meadows: Broadhall Way to Hertford Road;
9. Grace Way: Along the length of Grace Way between Fairlands Way and Martins Way; and
10. Great Ashby: From Wellfield Wood and St Nicholas Park through Great Ashby to the Borough boundary at Severn Way.

Planning permission will be granted where proposals:

- a. Would not create a substantive physical or visual break in a Green Link;
- b. Would not otherwise have a material adverse effect on the recreational, structural, amenity or wildlife value of a green link;
- c. Reasonably provide extensions of, or connections to, existing Green Links through the provision of on-site open space; and
- d. Reasonably contribute towards the maintenance, improvement or extension of Green Links.

14.26 Stevenage New Town was designed so that important features of the local landscape such as Fairlands Valley and areas of woodland were preserved as well as providing open spaces in each of the neighbourhoods. As the Town has developed, this has resulted in a network of open spaces, which connects the neighbourhoods of the town and the surrounding countryside.

14.27 The protection of the links between green spaces is as important as protecting the individual spaces in upholding the integrity of the new town as it was conceived.

14.28 Green Links are collections of spaces that, taken together, are worthy of protection for their connectivity and their recreation, amenity or wildlife value. The previous Local Plan defined eight Green Links throughout the Town that helped to define the urban structure of the Town by reference to adjacent green spaces. The spaces were connected, but not necessarily accessible or walkable, and in this sense they performed a different role to the Green Corridors and the individual treatment of open spaces within the hierarchy of spaces.

14.29 This Plan identifies ten Green Links. This includes the eight green links previously identified in the 2004 District Plan (subject to some minor changes) and two new links along Grace Way and through Great Ashby and St Nicholas which have been identified following the completion of the Green Space Strategy.

14.30 Where development at or near a Green Link significantly compromises the purpose of the link, permission will be refused. In other circumstances, the Council may seek contributions in order to compensate for, or mitigate against, any loss. This might include the way in which developments address the Green Link and capitalise on any open and green areas nearby, or use open spaces within development to give a wider sense of openness or structure.

Policy NH5: Trees and woodland

Proposals which affect, or are likely to affect, existing trees, will require an arboricultural report. Existing trees must be protected and retained where possible, and sensitively incorporated into developments.

Planning permission for proposals where the loss of trees is demonstrated to be unavoidable will be granted where:

- a. Sufficient land is reserved for appropriate replacement planting and landscaping;
- b. Replacement trees or planting are provided which are:
 - i. Of equal or better quality than the trees which are lost;
 - ii. Sensitively incorporated into the development; and
 - iii. Where appropriate, locally native species of similar maturity; and
- c. In the case of a loss of woodland:
 - i. It can be demonstrated that any adverse affects can be satisfactorily mitigated;

- ii. The need for the use of the site outweighs the amenity of the woodland; or
- iii. It can be demonstrated that there would be a net gain in the quality of any remaining woodland through the enhancement of the recreational, amenity, landscape and/or nature conservation value of the remaining woodland and that there would be provision for its improved long-term management.

14.31 Significant areas of woodland were retained by the masterplans for the New Town to help create an attractive environment within Stevenage. Many of these areas are protected, either in their own right as Principal Open Spaces and wildlife sites (see Policies NH1 and NH2) or as part of the network of Green Links and Green Corridors identified across the town (see Policies NH3 and NH4).

14.32 However, it is important that all woodlands and trees of amenity value are retained where this is practicable and desirable. An arboricultural report will be required where trees are to be affected. This should provide details about the location and characteristics of existing trees and clearly indicate which are to be removed or retained.

14.33 Without sensitive planning, mature trees can be permanently damaged during construction or create long-term problems for the occupiers of new developments such as shade, storm damage and subsidence. Where new planting takes place, trees may not mature and achieve a similar canopy, ground cover or ecological value if inappropriate species or techniques are used.

14.34 Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) are used to protect important specimens. Consent is required to fell or carry out any tree surgery work on a TPO'd tree. Where individual trees, groups of trees or woodlands of particular value are under threat, the Council will consider making new TPOs. In considering TPO applications, the Council will have regard to expert advice, relevant British Standards and any other appropriate information.

Policy NH6: General protection for open space

Planning permission for development of any existing, unallocated open space (or part of any open space) will be permitted where:

- a. The loss of the open space is justified having regard to:
 - i. The quality and accessibility of the open space;
 - ii. The existence, or otherwise, of any interventions to improve quality or access;
 - iii. Whether the open space is serving its function or purpose; and
 - iv. Whether alternate space(s) would remain available for community use; and
- b. Reasonable compensatory provision is made in the form of:
 - i. Replacement provision of a similar type, size and quality;
 - ii. The upgrade of other, existing open space; or
 - iii. Exceptionally, a commuted sum to secure open space provision elsewhere.

14.35 It is inevitable that some open spaces will come under pressure from development proposals over the lifetime of this plan. Although many sites and areas are given specific protections under other policies of this plan, large amounts of open space remain that have no formal policy designation. It is important to ensure that the most valuable open spaces continue to be protected and open spaces only succumb to development where a positive outcome can be demonstrated.

14.36 The general presumption is that only those spaces which are of a poor or very poor quality will be considered for disposal. A number of sites of this nature are detailed in the evidence base. However, the circumstances around any site may change over time and all schemes that seek to utilise unallocated open space will be scrutinised.

14.37 Proper consideration will need to be given to the value of open spaces and the potential for improvement with some intervention. This will need to be balanced against the merits of any particular proposal. It is acknowledged that some development can act as a catalyst for the improvement of open spaces. Community engagement will be key in assessing the value of open space.

14.38 Some of the more peripheral parts of the urban area are more deficient in provision than other parts of the Town. Corey's Mill, Symonds Green and Chells fall into this category and the provision and loss of open spaces here over the plan period will be scrutinised with particular attention.

14.39 The Council will seek compensation for any losses of open space in the form of a like-for-like re-provision or an upgrade to another local space delivered by the developer or by way of a commuted payment. Commuted payments will be determined by the Council using a standard calculation. In determining the appropriateness of alternate open spaces, or locations for compensatory provision, a maximum distance threshold of 400m will apply.

Policy NH7: Open space standards

Planning permission for residential development will be granted where:

- a. On-site open space provision is made in accordance with the standards and thresholds set out in the Council's Green Space Strategy;
- b. Any such provision results in usable and coherent areas of an appropriate size; and
- c. Appropriate arrangements are made to ensure the long-term maintenance of the open space.

Where a development is phased, or a site is either divided into separate parts or otherwise regarded as part of a larger development, it will be considered as a whole and the appropriate standards will apply.

Where an applicant successfully demonstrates that (any element of) the required provision cannot reasonably be achieved on site, a commuted sum will be sought.

14.40 Open space standards have been a key part of planning for many years. However, in more recent times, reliance on them has diminished. Places have become more flexible in their use and application, rather than dogmatically meeting targets. This has resulted in wide variations in the application of standards across the country, even between similar places.

14.41 The Council will take a pragmatic approach to the provision of open space, sports and recreation typologies over the plan period. This will ensure that a balance is reached which meets future requirements on a town-wide basis whilst simultaneously respecting other policy objectives. There may be opportunities to 'trade' provision with certain schemes over-providing against certain typologies and under-providing against others.

14.42 That said, there remains a role for standards in providing a basis for the provision of open space in new developments. Having a standard provides some certainty for developers in terms of what the Council will expect and a basis for negotiation. It allows consideration of the future in a context of existing provision and availability.

14.43 The Council's current standards are set out in the table below⁽¹²⁵⁾. It is recognised that providing open space on small sites can lead to spaces that are not functional or valued in the communities they are intended to serve and difficult to maintain. As a result, and in an effort to encourage the better use of land (avoiding the prospect of having 'space left over after planning' adopted as open space), the Council will only require the on-site provision of formal open space above the defined thresholds.

| | Borough-wide standard per 1,000 population (ha) | Minimum thresholds for on-site provision | |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|----------------------------------|
| | | Development population | Open space size ⁽¹²⁶⁾ |
| Parks and gardens | 0.88ha | 5,000 | 4.40ha |
| Amenity greenspace | 0.92ha | 240 | 0.22ha |
| Allotments | 0.14ha | 4,200 | 0.59ha |
| Natural and semi-natural greenspace | 1.78ha | 1,000 | 1.78ha |
| Children and young people | 0.82 sites | 900 | 1 site |

125 As established in the Green Space Strategy (SBC, 2015)

126 The minimum threshold for provision is generally set at 75% of the average recorded site size within each typology. Children's provision is required from the point where the standard demands 0.75 of a site. Requirements for children and young peoples' provision will be rounded to the nearest whole number.

14.44 Where provision cannot be made on site (including where only part of the provision can be made), the Council will seek alternative provision at a nearby location, a commuted sum to enable provision to be made nearby, or seek improvements to open space nearby. Any commuted sum will be tied to a specific location and specific improvements that ensure that the additional demand upon open spaces generated by the development are met.

14.45 Any new open spaces in excess of one hectare in size secured through this policy will thereafter be considered as Principal Open Spaces. Smaller areas of amenity space will be subject to the general protections afforded to open space.

14.46 Play areas constitute an important element of this provision. National Playing Field Association (NPFA) guidelines for play areas are expected to be met where the provision threshold is exceeded. This requires a minimum size of 400m² in order to create usable spaces. This may not be achievable in smaller or high-density developments. Where this can be proven, contributions in lieu may be acceptable.

14.47 It is important that any new open spaces, play areas and allotments are provided in a suitable location and are usable for all members of the community. Long-term management of these facilities must be arranged. Where sites are adopted by the Borough Council a sum sufficient to ensure maintenance for a period of at least ten years will be required.

14.48 Development populations will be calculated by reference to up-to-date statistics. Where large-scale developments are intended to be phased over a number of years, forward projections of the population and / or households may be considered. The following population rates will be used as a baseline, recognising that newer information will be made available over the lifetime of the plan⁽¹²⁷⁾.

| Dwelling size | Private housing | Affordable housing |
|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Studio or 1-bed | 1.4 persons per dwelling | 1.2 persons per dwelling |
| 2-bed | 1.9 | 2.2 |
| 3-bed | 2.5 | 2.9 |
| 4+ bed | 3.1 | 3.9 |

14.49 Notwithstanding the advice in this policy, contributions towards open space may still be required under the general provisions of other policies in this plan. Similarly, areas of incidental open space and landscaping will be encouraged to ensure good design on all schemes, though these will not be adopted by the Council for maintenance purposes nor count towards open space provision.

Policy NH8: North Stevenage Country Park

Within that part of the Rectory Lane and St Nicholas Conservation Area which lies within the Green Belt, proposals that facilitate improved public access and / or the creation of a country park will be supported in principle where they also support the aims and purposes of the existing policy designations.

14.50 The land to the north of Stevenage, beyond Rectory Lane and Weston Lane is known colloquially as 'Forster Country' for its literary connections to writer E.M Forster. The house at Rooks Nest⁽¹²⁸⁾ and the surrounding land inspired his writings. The Rectory Lane & St Nicholas Conservation Area was widened in 2007 to embrace this setting. The open area that remains within both the conservation area boundary and the Green Belt measures over 45 hectares.

14.51 The Council will seek to protect the openness and accessibility of this area, potentially through the means of a country park. This protection will recognise the literary connection of the land to E.M. Forster. 'Forster Country' is presently agricultural land outside the built-up area of the town traversed by a number of public rights of way but with no formal facilities. As such, it is not included in the analyses of open spaces in the Green Space Strategy. Pursuing a more formal management regime on this land may provide scope for (parts of) it to be considered as amenity greenspace and / or natural and semi-natural open space.

14.52 The provision of new public open space in this area will comprise the open space provision for the North of Stevenage development allocated under HO3, but could also allow for some offsetting of open space requirements arising from other developments in the plan period, or from the town as a whole, and any proposals will be viewed in this context. This includes consideration of any developments beyond the borough boundary in North Hertfordshire adjacent to the northern edge of the town.

14.53 The land to the west of the revised Green Belt boundary is allocated for housing development. Any scheme should demonstrate that both the land allocated from development and this area has been considered holistically, from North Road to Weston Road. In doing so, it is recognised that:

- The land within the conservation area would be unsuitable for intensive recreational use (such as sports pitches) or intensive management regimes (such as conversion to formally laid-out parkland); while
- The quantity of open land here is well in excess of that which would be required of any new development to the north of Stevenage following application of the open space standards in Policy NH7.

14.54 Small-scale developments which facilitate public access and use of this land, whilst respecting the purposes of Green Belt and the need to maintain and enhance the conservation area will be supported.

Archaeology

Policy NH9: Areas of archaeological significance

The following sites, as shown on the policies map, are identified as areas of archaeological significance:

| | | | |
|-------|-----------------------------|--------|--------------------|
| NH9/1 | Whormerley Wood | NH9/9 | Symonds Green |
| NH9/2 | The Six Hills | NH9/10 | Broadwater Farm |
| NH9/3 | Shephall Village | NH9/11 | Wychedell |
| NH9/4 | Hampson Park | NH9/12 | Bragbury End |
| NH9/5 | Shephalbury | NH9/13 | The Bury |
| NH9/6 | Martins Wood and Allotments | NH9/14 | Brick Kiln Road |
| NH9/7 | The Old Town | NH9/15 | Broomin Green Farm |
| NH9/8 | Fishers Green | | |

Where a development proposal affects an area of archaeological significance or has the potential to affect important archaeological remains on adjoining sites, developers will be required to submit the results of an archaeological field evaluation.

If in situ preservation of important archaeological remains is considered preferable, development proposals will be required to demonstrate how those remains will be preserved and incorporated into the layout of that development.

Where in situ preservation of important archaeological remains is not feasible, planning conditions or obligations will ensure that appropriate and satisfactory provision is made for the investigation and recording of archaeological remains that will be damaged or lost before development commences and for the subsequent analysis and publication of results and, where appropriate, excavation. Where appropriate the management, enhancement and public presentation of archaeological remains and their setting will be sought.

Any area of archaeological significance that is identified following the adoption of this document will be afforded the same level of protection as those listed within this policy.

14.55 The most important archaeological and historical sites are known as Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs). SAMs are identified by Historic England. They are protected by law and any works on them require special permission from the Government. There are three SAMs in Stevenage: The Six Hills Roman barrows, Whormley Wood moated site and the Old Malt Houses and Kiln, in the High Street. These are shown on our policies map.

14.56 There are also a number of areas in Stevenage which, although not nationally recognised or designated, are considered to be locally important because of the (potential for) archaeological remains that are contained within them. Fifteen areas of archaeological significance in Stevenage have been identified by Hertfordshire County Council. Two of these also contain SAMs, indicating the archaeological potential of the surrounding area.

14.57 Where development will affect any of these areas, prospective developers will be required to undertake an archaeological field evaluation of the site, in line with Government guidance and in consultation with the County Council's Historic Environment Unit. However, in many areas, small-scale infill development, such as domestic extensions, and other minor works will pose little or no threat to any remains and homeowners will rarely be expected to secure archaeological recording.

14.58 During the development of the New Town area of Stevenage, the investigation of archaeological finds was sporadic. This means that new development has significant potential to uncover archaeological remains. In the event of previously unknown archaeological remains being uncovered after works have commenced, both the council and Historic England should be informed. Should the remains be deemed important enough to schedule, Scheduled Monument Consent will be required.

Conservation

Policy NH10: Conservation areas

The conservation area boundaries are shown on the policies map.

Development proposals, within, or affecting a conservation area should have regard to the guidance provided by the relevant Conservation Area Management Plan Supplementary Planning Document.

14.59 Stevenage contains seven conservation areas. These have been designated due to their particular historic or architectural significance.

14.60 Particular care will be required when considering the scale, layout, design and materials of development proposals within or adjacent to conservation areas, to ensure that the character and appearance of the heritage asset is preserved, and preferably enhanced. Features that characterise the heritage asset should be reflected in any new development. However, our Management Plans recognise that replication of the existing style is not necessarily appropriate and guidance on architectural style should not confine opportunities for innovative design.

14.61 Conservation Area Management Plans for each area have been adopted as SPDs. These provide guidance to enable effective management and change, and to secure the preservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of the area. They are based on the Conservation Area Appraisals produced by BEAMS and best practice advice from Historic England⁽¹²⁹⁾. Developers will need to demonstrate how they have complied with the guidance provided by the Management Plan.

129 Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management, Historic England, 2011



14.62 National guidance and legislation will also be used to determine these proposals.

15 Delivery and monitoring

15.1 The policies in this plan show how we want Stevenage to develop and grow over the next fifteen years. This section says what we will do to make this happen (delivery). It says how we will measure if our policies are having the right effect (monitoring). We have identified the indicators we will monitor and set targets where possible. We have not set targets for some indicators because other matters outside of our control will also decide how the results change.

Infrastructure and delivery

15.2 It is a key test of local plans that they are deliverable. The Local Plan is supported by a wide-ranging evidence base which demonstrates how and when the sites and proposals in this plan can be brought forward. Our Strategic Land Availability Assessments (SLAA) for both housing and employment demonstrate commitment from relevant landowners to ensure their sites are delivered. The IDP examines the cumulative impacts of providing 7,600 homes over the plan period and identifies a series of interventions⁽¹³⁰⁾.

15.3 Partnership working is key to successful delivery. The Duty to Co-operate places a legal duty on the Council to interact with other authorities, agencies, service providers and regulators. This is supplemented by positive engagement with other bodies that are not prescribed by the regulations. In developing the local plan and its evidence base, Stevenage Borough Council has engaged on a pro-active and ongoing basis with numerous organisations, whose assistance or approval will be required to deliver the plan. This includes (but is not limited to):

- **North Hertfordshire District Council** and **East Hertfordshire District Council** as the authorities directly adjoining Stevenage Borough to ensure emerging proposals are considered on a consistent and holistic basis and that the cumulative impacts of our plans are properly understood;
- **Hertfordshire County Council** as (variously) waste and minerals planning authority, highway authority and authority responsible for education. Our plan and policies map, where relevant and necessary, reflect proposals in those parts of the statutory Development Plan for which the county council retain responsibility. Mitigation schemes to ensure appropriate capacity on the local highway network and in the education system have been included;
- **Highways England** as the body responsible for the trunk road network, including the A1(M) which is the key strategic road link to and from Stevenage;
- **Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)** as the partnership between businesses and local authorities that covers Stevenage and sets priorities for investment through its Growth Plan;
- **Stevenage First Town Centre Task Force** as the partnership between the Borough Council, LEP and other agencies formed to unlock the development opportunities in and around the town centre; and
- The **Environment Agency** whose position as statutory regulator of the water environment has required positive interaction, particularly around issues relating to water and wastewater infrastructure.

15.4 The amount of new development being planned for is significant. It cannot occur without significant investment in infrastructure and supporting facilities. Key items and facilities are set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. Key delivery bodies are identified and costs are provided where known. The delivery of these schemes will be monitored on an on-going basis in our Authority Monitoring Reports.

Monitoring

15.5 We are required by law to monitor the effectiveness of our policies and plans. We produce a comprehensive Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) on an annual basis, at the end of each financial year (March 31st). The most recent is available on our website.

15.6 Changes to legislation in the last few years mean that we now take more responsibility for monitoring at a local level:

- The purpose of monitoring is now to share information with the local community rather than central government.
- We can set the time period that our monitoring reports to cover. This must not be longer than 12 months.
- We are responsible for our own performance management and can choose which indicators and targets to include in the report.

15.7 As a result of this, our monitoring report can focus on locally important issues.

15.8 Monitoring will show how we will measure the effects of our new plan. It will help to tell us whether our policies are working or having the right effect, and will let us know when things are not going so well. It will also show how we are meeting the Duty to Cooperate.

15.9 Monitoring should help us to decide if we need to review the plan or parts of it.

15.10 A monitoring framework has been drawn up for the Local Plan, this shows how specific policies will be monitored:

| Objective | Policy | Target | Indicator(s) |
|-------------------------|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| Sustainable development | Reduce deprivation and improve quality of life | - | Index of multiple deprivation |
| | | For average earnings to increase over the plan period | Average weekly earnings for residents |
| | | - | Housing affordability |
| | | - | Resident satisfaction |
| | Support facilities and services that encourage people to live, work and spend leisure time in Stevenage | To reduce the distance travelled to work | Distance travelled to work |

| Objective | Policy | Target | Indicator(s) |
|-------------------------------|--|--|--|
| A strong, competitive economy | Provide sites for new B-Class employment floorspace | At least 140,000m ² employment floorspace to be completed 2011 - 31 | Employment floorspace completions |
| | | - | Employment land supply |
| | | - | Claimant count |
| | | - | Number of jobs |
| | Protection of the Employment Areas | To Protect the Gunnels Wood and Pin Green Employment Areas | New business start ups |
| A vital town centre | Preserve the viability and vitality of the retail hierarchy | - | Employment land up-take |
| | Support the type and range of retail required to meet identified need | 7,600m ² of additional convenience retail floorspace by 2031 | Retail vacancy rates |
| | Reserve the Primary Frontage for A1 Use | For at least 80% Primary Frontage to be in A1 Use | Retail, office and leisure completions |
| Infrastructure | Require new development to meet the demands it creates | - | A1 Retail |
| Sustainable transport | Require new development to meet the demands it creates | - | Developer contributions |
| | Create conditions for significant increase in passenger transport | To increase the use of passenger transport | Mode of travel to work |
| | Direct high density development to the most sustainable locations | For 100% of residential completions to be within 30 minutes of key services | Accessibility of services |
| High quality homes | Require new development to provide relevant plans and assessments | For all major applications to include a Travel Plan | Travel Plans |
| | Provide sites for new residential development | At least 7,600 new homes to be completed 2011-2031 | Housing Completions |
| | 45% of new homes to be on Previously Developed Land | 45% of new homes to be on Previously Developed Land | Housing completions on PDL |
| | Maintain at least a five-year supply of land for housing | - | Housing supply |
| | To deliver up to 40% affordable homes, where viability permits | For at least 20% of all new homes to be affordable | Affordable housing completions |
| | To re-balance the housing stock by delivering a mix of housing types and sizes | For all major sites to comply with the mix identified in the SHMA | Affordable housing supply |
| | - | Housing Mix | Aspirational homes |

| Objective | Policy | Target | Indicator(s) |
|--|---|---|--|
| | Provide sites for new Gypsy and Traveller provision | At least 11 new Gypsy and Traveller sites to be provided | Gypsy and Traveller provision |
| Good design | New developments are effective in designing out crime | For the overall crime rate in Stevenage to be reduced | Crime rates |
| | New development to meet water usage standards | The design achieves a maximum of 110 litres per person per day including external water use | None - Building Regulation Approval will not be granted unless this is complied with |
| Healthy communities | Avoid the loss of any health, social or community facilities | To see no decrease in D1, D2, C2 Uses across the town | Retail, office and leisure completions |
| | For new health, social and community facilities to be located within identified centres, in accordance with the sequential test | - | |
| Climate change, flooding and pollution | Reduce or mitigate against flood risk | For all Flood Storage Reservoirs to be retained | Number of Flood Storage Reservoirs |
| | | To grant no permissions against Environment Agency advice | Environment Agency advice |
| | | For all schemes to incorporate SUDS | Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems |
| Green infrastructure and the natural environment | Protection of Principal Open Spaces | No reduction in the total area of Principal Open Space | Principal Open Spaces |
| | Protection of wildlife sites | No reduction in the number or area of designated sites through development | Wildlife Sites |
| | Protection of Green Corridors | No reduction in the total area of designated sites through development | Green Corridors |
| | Protection of Green Links | No reduction in the total area of designated sites through development | Green Links |
| The historic environment | Preserve and enhance conservation areas | For no conservation areas to be 'at risk' | Conservation areas |
| | Preserve and enhance listed buildings | For no listed buildings to be 'at risk' | Listed Buildings |

15.11 One of the key elements of our monitoring work is an extensive survey of residential and commercial developments, to identify completion rates across the Borough. We also produce a SLAA each year to update the supply of land that is available to meet the targets of our Plan.

15.12 If there is an insufficient supply of land, or other policy targets are not being met, it may be necessary to carry out a review or a partial review of the Local Plan.

15.13 The Council will continue to work with neighbouring planning authorities, to enable their Plans to come forward, and to ensure strategic needs are being met. The results of this work will be recorded within the AMR.

15.14 We will also monitor the wider effects of the plan through the SA. The SA sets out a list of indicators that we will use to measure the social, economic and environmental impacts of the plan. Some of these indicators may also form part of the monitoring framework for the plan.

A Superseded policies

Policies from the District Plan, to be replaced by Stevenage Borough Local Plan Policies

The schedule below indicates how, where and when [if at all] policies contained within the saved Stevenage District Plan Second Review (2004) will be replaced. Those policies which were not saved by the Secretary of State in December 2007 do not appear in the schedule.

| District Local Plan Second Review Policy to be replaced | Replacement Policy contained within the Stevenage Borough Local Plan |
|--|--|
| TW1: Sustainable development | Policy SP2: Sustainable development in Stevenage |
| TW2: Structural open space | Policy SP12: Green infrastructure and the natural environment Policy NH1: Principal Open Spaces Policy NH6: General protection for open space Policy NH7: Open Space Standards |
| TW4: New neighbourhood centres | Policy SP4: A vital Town Centre Policy SP9: Healthy communities Policy HO2: Stevenage West Policy HO3: North of Stevenage Policy HO4: South-east of Stevenage Policy TC11: New convenience retail provision |
| TW6: Green Belt | Policy SP10: Green Belt Policy GB1: Green Belt |

| District Local Plan Second Review Policy to be replaced | Replacement Policy contained within the Stevenage Borough Local Plan |
|---|---|
| | Policy GB2: Green Belt settlements |
| TW7: Local Rural Areas | <i>No equivalent policy</i> |
| TW8: Environmental Safeguards | Policy SP6: Sustainable transport Policy SP8: Good design Policy IT5: Parking and access Policy GD1: High quality design |
| TW9: Quality in design | Policy SP8: Good design Policy GD1: High quality design |
| TW10: Crime prevention | Policy SP8: Good design Policy GD1: High quality design |
| TW11: Planning requirements | Policy SP5: Infrastructure |
| H2: Strategic housing allocation – Stevenage West | Policy HO2: Stevenage West |
| H3: New Housing Allocations | Policy HO1: Housing allocations Policy HO3: North of Stevenage Policy HO4: South-east of Stevenage |
| H6: Loss of residential accommodation | Policy HO6: Redevelopment of existing homes |
| H7: Assessment of windfall residential sites | Policy HO5: Windfall sites |
| H8: Density of residential development | Policy SP6: Sustainable transport Policy GD1: Good design |
| H12: Special needs accommodation | Policy HO10: Sheltered and supported housing Policy HO11: Accessible housing |
| H14: Benefits of affordability | Policy HO8: Affordable housing tenure, mix and design |

| District Local Plan Second Review Policy to be replaced | Replacement Policy contained within the Stevenage Borough Local Plan |
|--|---|
| E2: Employment areas | Policy EC2a: Gunnels Wood Employment Area Policy EC2b: Gunnels Wood Edge-of-Centre Zone Policy EC6: Pin Green Employment Area |
| E3: Employment sites | Policy EC1: Allocated sites for employment development |
| E4: Acceptable uses in employment areas | Policy EC2a: Gunnels Wood Employment Area Policy EC2b: Gunnels Wood Edge-of-Centre Zone Policy EC3: Gunnels Wood Industrial Zones Policy EC4: Remainder of Gunnels Wood Policy EC6: Pin Green Employment Area |
| E5: Retail and leisure proposals in employment areas | <i>No equivalent policy</i> |
| E6: Unit sizes within employment areas | Policy EC3: Gunnels Wood Industrial Zones Policy EC4: Remainder of Gunnels Wood Policy EC6: Pin Green Employment Area |
| E7: Employment uses outside employment areas and homeworking | Policy EC7: Employment development on unallocated sites |
| T6: Design standards | Policy GD1: High quality design |
| T8: Integration of transport modes | Policy SP6: Sustainable transport Policy TC4: Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area Policy IT6: Sustainable transport |
| T11: Rail freight provision | <i>No equivalent policy</i> |
| T12: Bus provision | Policy IT5: Parking and access |

| District Local Plan Second Review Policy to be replaced | Replacement Policy contained within the Stevenage Borough Local Plan |
|--|--|
| T13: Cycleways | Policy IT5: Parking and access Policy IT7: New and improved links for pedestrians and cyclists |
| T14: Pedestrians | Policy IT5: Parking and access Policy IT7: New and improved links for pedestrians and cyclists |
| T15: Car Parking Strategy | Policy IT5: Parking and access |
| T16: Loss of residential car parking | Policy IT8: Public parking provision |
| TR1: Town centre | Policy TC1: Town Centre Policy TC2: Southgate Major Opportunity Area Policy TC3: Centre West Major Opportunity Area Policy TC4: Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area Policy TC5: Central Core Major Opportunity Area Policy TC6: Northgate Major Opportunity Area Policy TC7: Marshgate Major Opportunity Area |
| TR3: Retail frontages | Policy TC8: Town Centre Shopping Area |
| TR4: Loss of retail floorspace | Policy TC8: Town Centre Shopping Area |
| TR7: Loss of office accommodation | <i>No equivalent policy</i> |
| TR8: Protection of leisure, social and community uses | Policy TC2: Southgate Major Opportunity Area Policy TC3: Centre West Major Opportunity Area Policy TC5: Central Core Major Opportunity Area Policy TC7: Marshgate Major Opportunity Area Policy HC6: Existing leisure and cultural facilities |
| TR9: Town centre car parking | Policy IT5: Parking and access |

| District Local Plan Second Review Policy to be replaced | Replacement Policy contained within the Stevenage Borough Local Plan |
|---|--|
| | Policy IT8: Public parking provision |
| TR10: Railway station parking | Policy IT8: Public parking provision |
| TR11: Replacement residential accommodation | <i>No equivalent policy</i> |
| TR14: New neighbourhood centres | Policy HO2: Stevenage West Policy HO3: North of Stevenage Policy HO4: South-east of Stevenage Policy TC11: New convenience retail provision |
| TR15: New free standing shops | <i>No equivalent policy</i> |
| EN9: Archaeology and development | Policy NH9: Areas of archaeological significance |
| EN10: Green Links | Policy NH4: Green Links |
| EN11: Provision of new and extended Green Links | Policy NH4: Green Links Policy NH7: Open space standards |
| EN12: Loss of woodland | Policy NH5: Trees and woodland |
| EN13: Trees in new developments | Policy NH5: Trees and woodland |
| EN15: Ancient lanes and associated hedgerows | Policy NH3: Green Corridors |
| EN16: Countryside Heritage Site | Policy NH1: Principal Open Spaces Policy NH2: Wildlife Sites |
| EN17: Wildlife Sites and Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS) | Policy NH2: Wildlife Sites |
| EN18: Natural habitats in adjoining local authorities | <i>No equivalent policy</i> |
| EN21: Other sites of nature conservation importance | <i>No equivalent policy</i> |
| EN27: Noise pollution | Policy FP7: Pollution |
| EN28: Aircraft noise | Policy FP7: Pollution sensitive uses |

| District Local Plan Second Review Policy to be replaced | Replacement Policy contained within the Stevenage Borough Local Plan |
|---|---|
| EN29: Light pollution | Policy FP7: Pollution |
| EN31: Hazardous installations | Policy FP5: Contaminated land Policy FP6: Hazardous installations |
| EN32: River corridors and water meadows | Policy FP2: Flood storage reservoirs and functional floodplain |
| EN36: Water conservation | Policy FP1: Climate change |
| EN37: Telecommunication equipment developments | <i>No equivalent policy</i> |
| EN38: Energy conservation and supply | Policy FP1: Climate change |
| L1: Major leisure facilities in the Town Centre Inset Area | Policy TC3: Centre West Major Opportunity Area Policy TC4: Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area Policy TC5: Central Core Major Opportunity Area Policy TC7: Marshgate Major Opportunity Area |
| L2: Major leisure facilities outside the Town Centre Inset Area | Policy HC7: New and refurbished leisure and cultural facilities |
| L3: Stevenage Leisure Park | Policy EC1: Allocated sites for employment development Policy TC3: Centre West Major Opportunity Area Policy HO1: Housing allocations |
| L4: Loss or reduction of existing leisure facilities | Policy HC6: Existing leisure and cultural facilities |
| L5: Modernisation, enhancement or redevelopment of leisure facilities | Policy HC6: Existing leisure and cultural facilities |
| L6: Leisure facilities in neighbourhood centres | Policy HC1: District, local and neighbourhood centres |
| L9: Play centres | <i>No equivalent policy</i> |
| L10: Principal open spaces | Policy NH1: Principal Open Spaces |

| District Local Plan Second Review Policy to be replaced | Replacement Policy contained within the Stevenage Borough Local Plan |
|--|--|
| L11: Fairlands Valley Park | Policy NH1: Principal Open Spaces |
| L12: Loss of playing fields and other outdoor sports facilities | Policy HC6: Existing leisure and cultural facilities |
| L13: Redundant school playing fields | Policy HC10: Redundant school sites |
| L14: Children's play space | Policy NH1: Principal Open Spaces Policy NH7: Open space standards |
| L15: Outdoor sports provision in residential developments | Policy NH7: Open space standards |
| L16: Children's play space provision in residential developments | Policy NH7: Open space standards |
| L17: Informal open space provision in residential developments | Policy NH7: Open space standards |
| L18: Open space maintenance | Policy NH7: Open space standards |
| L19: Loss of allotments | <i>No equivalent policy</i> |
| L20: New allotment provision | Policy NH1: Principal Open Spaces Policy NH7: Open space standards |
| L23: Horse and pony route | <i>No equivalent policy</i> |
| L26: Guest houses | <i>No equivalent policy</i> |
| SC1: Retention of social and community facilities | Policy HC4: Existing health, social and community facilities |
| SC4: Social, community and leisure provision sites | Policy HC5: New health, social and community facilities |
| SC5: Social and community provision in new developments | Policy HC5: New health, social and community facilities |
| SC6: Care in the community | Policy HO10: Sheltered and supported housing |
| SC9: Redundant school buildings | Policy HC9: Former Barnwell East Secondary School Policy HC10: Redundant school sites |
| SC10: Travellers site | Policy HO12: Gypsy & Traveller provision |

| District Local Plan Second Review Policy to be replaced | Replacement Policy contained within the Stevenage Borough Local Plan |
|--|--|
| | Policy HO13: Gypsy & Traveller provision on unallocated sites. |
| SC11: Cemetery extension at Weston Road | <i>No equivalent policy</i> |
| SC13: Provision in major new developments | Policy TC2: Southgate Park Major Opportunity Area Policy HO2: Stevenage West Policy HO3: North of Stevenage Policy HO4: South-east of Stevenage |
| SC14: Nursing homes and residential homes | Policy HO10: Sheltered and supported housing |
| SC15: Development at the Lister Hospital | Policy HC3: The Health Campus |
| OT4: New developments in the High Street | Policy TC9: High Street Shopping Area |
| OT5: Primary shopping frontage | Policy TC10: High Street Primary and Secondary Frontages |
| OT6: Secondary shopping frontages | Policy TC10: High Street Primary and Secondary Frontages |
| OT9: Advertisements | <i>No equivalent policy</i> |
| OT11: Service accesses onto Primett Road and Church Lane | <i>No equivalent policy</i> |
| OT14: Primett Road car parks | Policy IT8: Public parking provision |
| NC1: Large neighbourhood centres | Policy HO1: Housing allocations Policy HC1: District, local and neighbourhood centres |
| NC2: Small neighbourhood centres | Policy HO1: Housing allocations Policy HC1: District, local and neighbourhood centres |
| NC6: Redevelopment of the neighbourhood centres | Policy HO1: Housing allocations Policy HC1: District, local and neighbourhood centres |

| District Local Plan Second Review Policy to be replaced | Replacement Policy contained within the Stevenage Borough Local Plan |
|--|--|
| SW1: Development area | Policy HO2: Stevenage West |
| SW2: Master plan | Policy HO2: Stevenage West |
| SW3: Planning requirements | Policy SP5: Infrastructure Policy HO2: Stevenage West |
| SW4: Design guidance | Policy SP8: Good design Policy HO2: Stevenage West Policy GD1: High quality design |
| SW5: Transport principles | Policy IT1: Strategic development access points Policy IT2: West of Stevenage safeguarded corridors Policy IT4: Transport assessments and travel plans Policy IT5: Parking and access Policy IT6: Sustainable transport Policy IT7: New and improved links for pedestrians and cyclists Policy HO2: Stevenage West |
| SW6: Improvements to transport infrastructure | Policy SP5: Infrastructure Policy IT5: Parking and access Policy IT6: Sustainable transport Policy IT7: New and improved links for pedestrians and cyclists Policy HO2: Stevenage West |
| SW7: Potential use of existing A1(M) crossings | Policy IT1: Strategic development access points |
| SW8: Development along access corridors | Policy EC5: Active frontages and gateways |

| District Local Plan Second Review Policy to be replaced | Replacement Policy contained within the Stevenage Borough Local Plan |
|--|--|
| SW10: Loss of employment land | <i>No equivalent policy</i> |
| SW11: Natural, semi-natural and historic environment | Policy HO2: Stevenage West Policy NH2: Wildlife Sites Policy NH3: Green Corridors Policy NH4: Green Links Policy NH5: Trees and woodland Policy NH7: Open space standards |
| SW12: Employment land | Policy EC1: Allocated sites for employment development Policy HO2: Stevenage West |
| SW13: Managed small business units | Policy EC1: Allocated sites for employment development Policy HO2: Stevenage West |
| SW14: Retail provision | Policy TC11: New convenience retail provision Policy HO2: Stevenage West |
| SW15: Outdoor sports facility provision | Policy HO2: Stevenage West Policy HC8: Sports facilities in new development |
| SW16: Major leisure facilities | Policy HO2: Stevenage West Policy HC8: Sports facilities in new development |
| SW17: Allotment provision | Policy NH7: Open Space Standards |
| SW20: Surgeries and clinics | Policy HO2: Stevenage West |
| SW21: Emergency services | Policy HO2: Stevenage West |
| SW22: Cemetery provision | <i>No equivalent policy</i> |

B Mobility Strategy

Overview

This Mobility Strategy for Stevenage makes commitments to tried, tested and innovative initiatives in Mobility and Behaviour, that do not just mitigate the demands from the Local Plan growth but will accelerate the more efficient use of transport infrastructure within the town. It enables growth, not just for this Local Plan but beyond, with a reduced reliance on the car and more active and integrated communities.

It steers away from the historic, and now contra-policy, predict and provide car commuter peak as a proxy for transport and Mobility. Instead of prioritising road building schemes to satisfy a theoretical short lived car commuter demand, the strategy is to design for and prioritise Mobility as a whole. It is to create even more attractive choice in movement than already exists, committing funds to physical improvements to the higher capacity cycle network, which can be up to seven times more effective in terms of unit road space compared with car use, invest in public transport and make huge inroads in influencing behaviour by significant funding of new measures to promote and use the mobility options that already exist and will improve.

The commuter peak periods are the times of the day when the highway network is under the most pressure. The National Travel Survey (NTS) shows that in the AM peak hour (08:00-09:00), 25% of all movement is for commuting and business purposes and 50% is associated with education⁽¹³¹⁾. Therefore, three quarters of all movement in the AM peak hour are focussed on just these two activities. In the PM peak hour (17:00-18:00), over 40% of all movement is associated with these purposes.

In addition to this, Stevenage has a high level of internalisation of jobs, with many local residents taking up available jobs in Stevenage. Therefore, commuting distances will be short for many residents. A high proportion of all trips, not just commuter trips, are less than 5 miles.

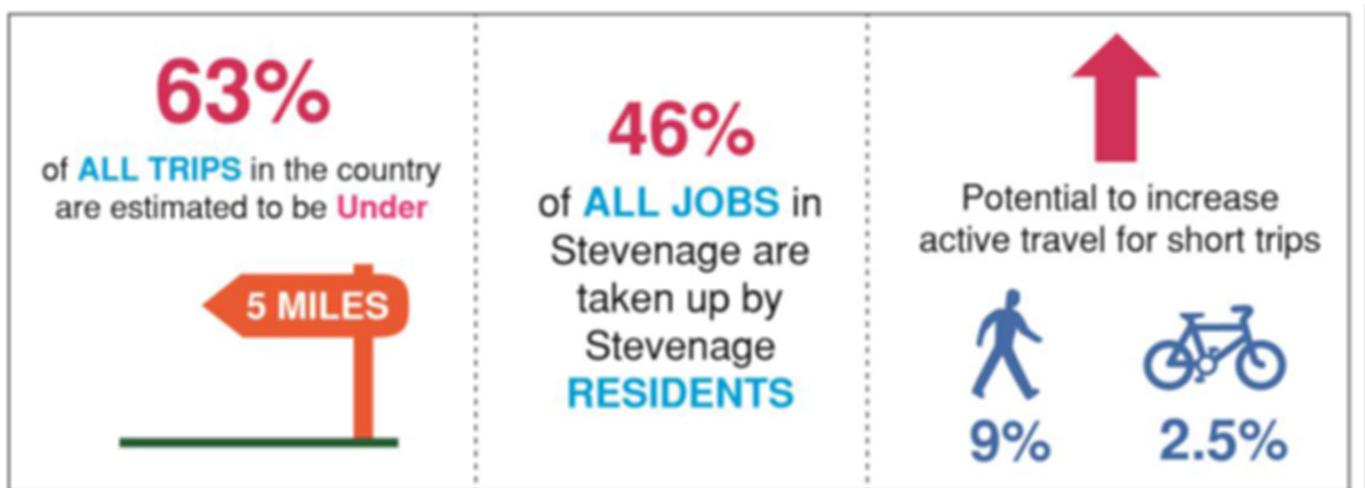


Figure 4.1 Propensity to Increase Active Travel for Short Trips

131 National Travel Survey Table NTSS0502 Trip Start Time by Trip Purpose (Monday to Friday) England

Given this, the strategy is to be cognisant of these trip purposes and to target in particular short trips made by car that could easily be made by active travel and public transport instead.

Active Travel Strategy

Existing Situation

Stevenage's cycle network was modelled on Dutch infrastructure and by the 1970s, when the network was finalised, Stevenage was held up as proof that the UK could build a Dutch-style cycle network.

Stevenage's good active travel infrastructure can easily become excellent with further investment. The cycle routes have the capacity to accommodate significant movement by bicycle, becoming material economic conduits for movement. **Appendix i** is the cycle map of the whole Stevenage network.

Proposed Strategy

Stevenage Borough Council will place a high priority on active travel. For the purposes of this Local Plan and beyond, it will plan on the basis that the proportion of travel by active travel will increase, that commuter peak car demand will remain broadly static and therefore that the proportion of travel by car driver will decrease.

The strategy is to further encourage this shift through the creation of an active travel /car differential whereby it is more attractive to cycle for short journeys than drive.

The existence of the extensive, segregated cycle infrastructure means that Stevenage is better equipped than many towns to facilitate safe and convenient cycling and encourage this change in emphasis.

In Hertfordshire, it has been estimated that 63% of all journeys are less than 5 miles. Not only has Stevenage been designed with cycling in mind, but the majority of trips are of a distance that can comfortably be accommodated by a choice of means of mobility.

The strategy will focus on the following aspects:

- **Cycle Strategy:** an up to date cycling strategy will be prepared for Stevenage that will set out the strategy, measures and timescales for implementation. The strategy will consider all potential cycle trip purposes, including commuting, cycling to school and recreational cycling.
- **An upgraded cycle network:** the highest priority for investment will be the upgrade of the existing cycle network, which has suffered from a historic lack of investment. This will include improved surfacing, improved lighting, addressing missing links in the network and changes to priority where cycleways meet the highway in order to create continuous routes. In accordance with Policy IT5 of the Local Plan, developers will be required to provide safe, direct and convenient routes within the development, and link to existing cycleway and pedestrian networks.

- **Wayfinding:** the former active travel Wayfinding Strategy that was developed, but not implemented, will be reviewed and updated where necessary. An Action Plan for its implementation will be included in the updated Cycle Strategy.
- **Cycle Storage:** a review of existing cycle parking available to the public within Stevenage will be undertaken. The review will identify any gaps in existing cycle parking provision in terms of appropriate locations at trip ends as well as the quality of cycle parking. In addition, in accordance with Policy IT5 of the Local Plan, developers will be required to provide secure cycle parking as part of any development coming forward.
- **Cycle Training:** Positive actions to influence behaviour are education in, and awareness of, opportunities, including the opportunity to make best use of the active travel infrastructure. Cycle training, including for those of an early age, will help to broaden horizons and provide confidence.

Public Transport Strategy

Existing Situation

Public transport (buses and trains) is well used in Stevenage. Approximately 6% of travel to work is by bus, and 7% by train. However, the existing bus and railway station have been underinvested for some time and require an upgrade in provision. The bus-rail transfer is currently relatively poor as the existing bus station is not located adjacent to the railway station to provide a seamless interchange.

Proposed Strategy

As part of the regeneration of the Town Centre it is proposed to close the existing bus station and replace it with new bus interchange at the railway station. It is also proposed to significantly improve bus connections into and through Stevenage, which will enable more employees in the town centre and Gunnels Wood employment area easily access their place of work.

Through the Thameslink expansion, Stevenage will be directly connected, by fast services, to the heart of central London and a variety of destinations south of London, including Gatwick Airport. Services will also stop at Farringdon for easy connections onto the Elizabeth Line (i.e. Crossrail) to Heathrow, Canary Wharf and beyond. With new trains on both commuter and intercity services, by 2018 there will be a step change in the accessibility and attractiveness of travel by rail to/from Stevenage. The Local Plan identifies (Policy TC4 iv) a proposal for a radically improved Stevenage railway station, with National Rail having plans for a 5th platform, as part of a broader central area regeneration scheme. This will also help to drive a shift in travel onto rail.

Car Parking strategy

Proposed Strategy

Parking is no longer a stand-alone issue, but has become a key aspect of both transport and land use planning. Control over the availability of parking spaces is a key policy instrument in influencing car trips. The supply and pricing of car parking has a fundamental influence on the way people



travel. Research has shown that even where good alternatives to the car exist, if cheap and convenient car parking is available then people with access to a car will tend to choose this mode of travel.

The 2004 Parking Strategy will be updated as part of the development of the Stevenage Mobility Strategy as a tool for encouraging greater activity in the town centre whilst minimising the demand for commuter car parking.

Stevenage Borough Council will take the lead in this by critically reviewing and managing its own staff car parking strategy.

Car Sharing

Existing Situation

Hertfordshire County Council currently operates a Liftshare car-pooling scheme, which has over 1,000 members.

Proposed Strategy

Stevenage Borough Council will develop car-pooling within the Stevenage community, and expect new development, where appropriate, to invest in the development and encouragement of this type of mobility. It will stay abreast of the significant emerging European research in this field, and seek the implementation of the most effective elements of this growing, and particularly socially inclusive, method of mobility.

Workplace Travel Planning

Existing Situation

2011 Census data provides an insight into the main modes of travel for people working in Stevenage. This shows that 69% of people who work in Stevenage drive a car, 11% travel by public transport and 13% walk or cycle.

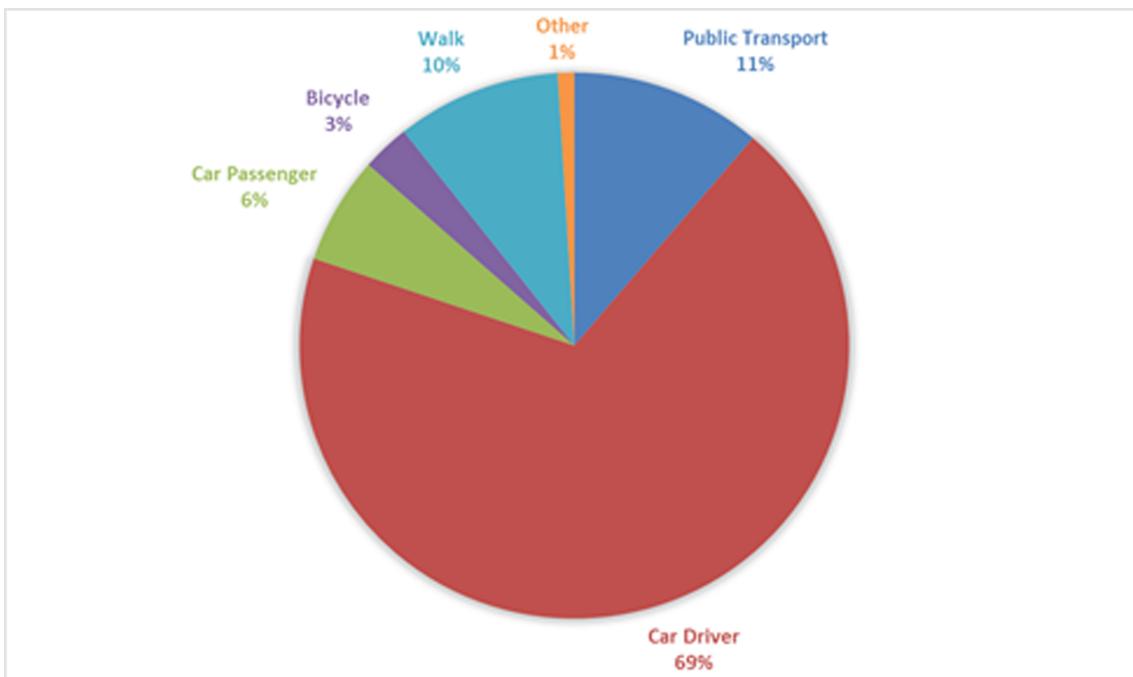


Figure 4.2 Mode of Travel to Work for People Working in Stevenage (2011 Census)

The Hertfordshire 2015 Household Survey provides a useful insight into how far people travel to work and by which mode. Of particular interest are those trips that are under 3 miles, and therefore have the easiest potential to be made by sustainable modes. Figure 4.3 illustrates the mode share of journeys to work under 3 miles.

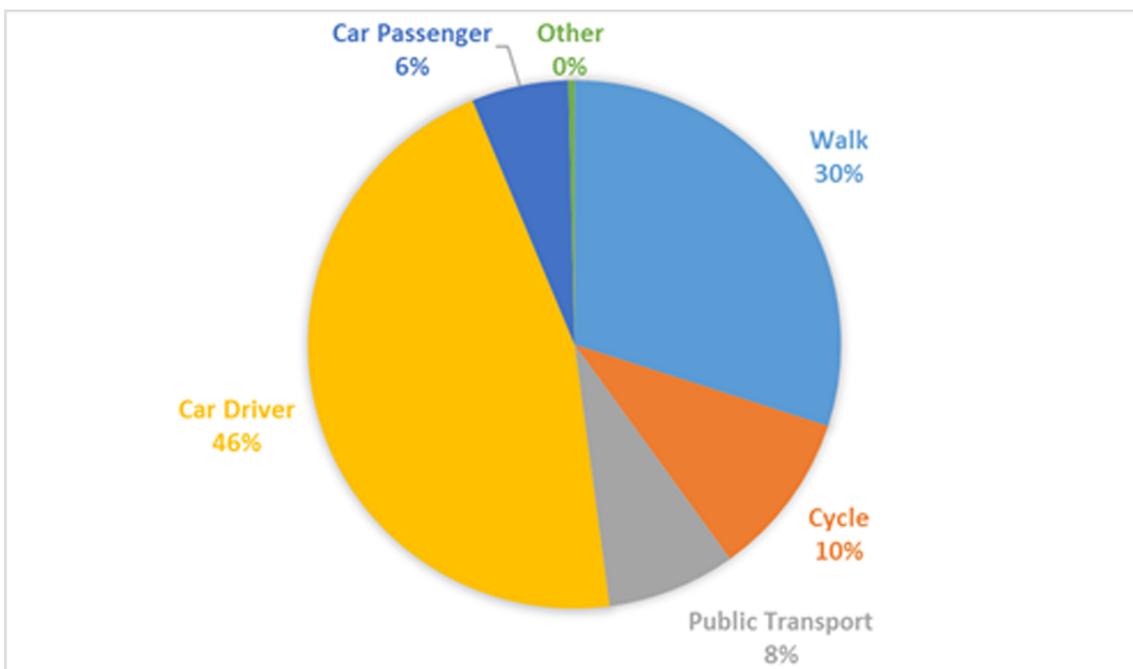


Figure 4.3 Mode of Travel for Journey to Work Trips under 3 miles

The survey showed that 22% of journeys to work in Hertfordshire are within 3 miles and that over half (52%) of these journeys are made by car. There is a significant potential for mode shift for these short trips to be made by active travel, public transport or more efficient use of the car.

Proposed Strategy

Gunnels Wood, between the A1(M) and the town centre, is by far the largest employment site in Stevenage. The area is made up of a large range of businesses, from small and medium businesses through to some very large employers including GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) and MBDA. Around 19,000 employees work on the estate for approximately 300 different businesses and it is set to intensify as part of the Local Plan.

The concentration of this many people, makes it an ideal area to target travel behaviour change through a range of travel planning measures. Major employers in this area, including GSK, are already part of the SmartGo Stevenage scheme, which offers a range of travel benefits and services to help make travel cheaper and easier for employees.

The strategy is to concentrate infrastructure and behavioural influence initiatives in these concentrated areas of employment, which include the Council office in Stevenage. There are some significant mobility benefits to be had in this way, and a strong evidential basis already in the UK for the effectiveness of this.

Education Travel Planning

Existing Situation

With regards to education trips, the Hertfordshire 2015 Household Survey shows that 40% of trips (all school ages) are made by car and the remaining 60% by non-car modes.

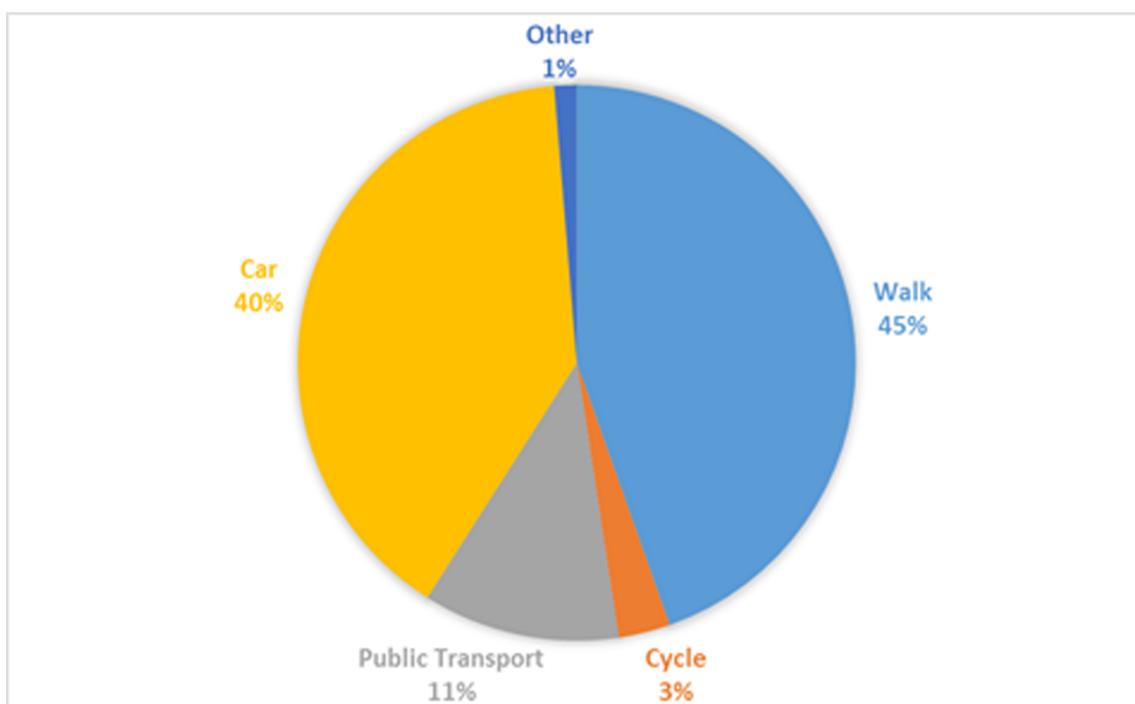


Figure 4.4 Mode of Travel for Education Trips (All School Ages)

Short car trips have the greatest propensity to change to active travel. The short educational trips (under 3 miles) make up the vast majority of education related trips (over 70%) and, 30% of these are currently made by car. Therefore, any shift away from the car for these trips would have a positive effect on travel, particularly in the morning peak period.

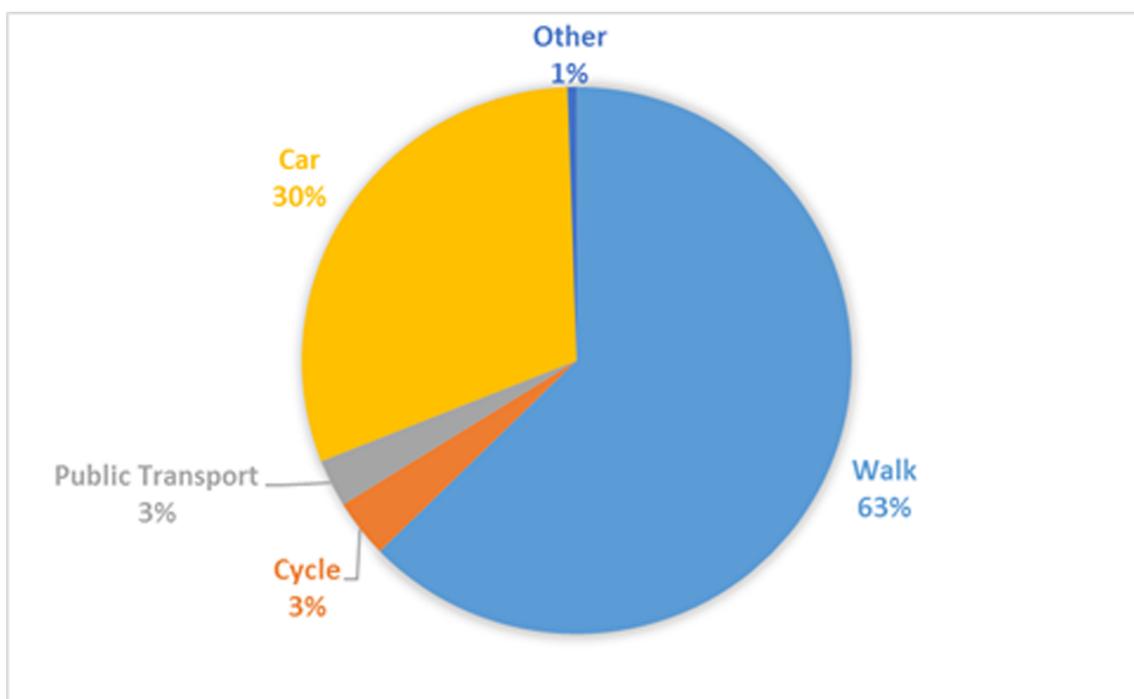


Figure 4.5 Mode of Travel for Education Trips under 3 miles

Proposed Strategy

The Transport Strategy for Stevenage will focus on encouraging a change in behaviour away from the car for education trips. There is a good evidential base⁽¹³²⁾ for the effectiveness and benefits of education related interventions on school related travel, to the extent that positive behavioural initiatives can have a substantial effect on the propensity to travel to school by healthy and sustainable means. The strategy is to promote a plethora of measures, including:

- Development and enforcement of School Travel Plans;
- Bikeability cycle training in schools; and
- Continued development of education facilities within easy access by non-car modes.

Highway Network Management

Proposed Strategy

For car travel in Stevenage to be sustainable, many people will need to travel by other means. It is unrealistic to expect traffic to flow unimpeded at peak times, or to design to accommodate that desire.

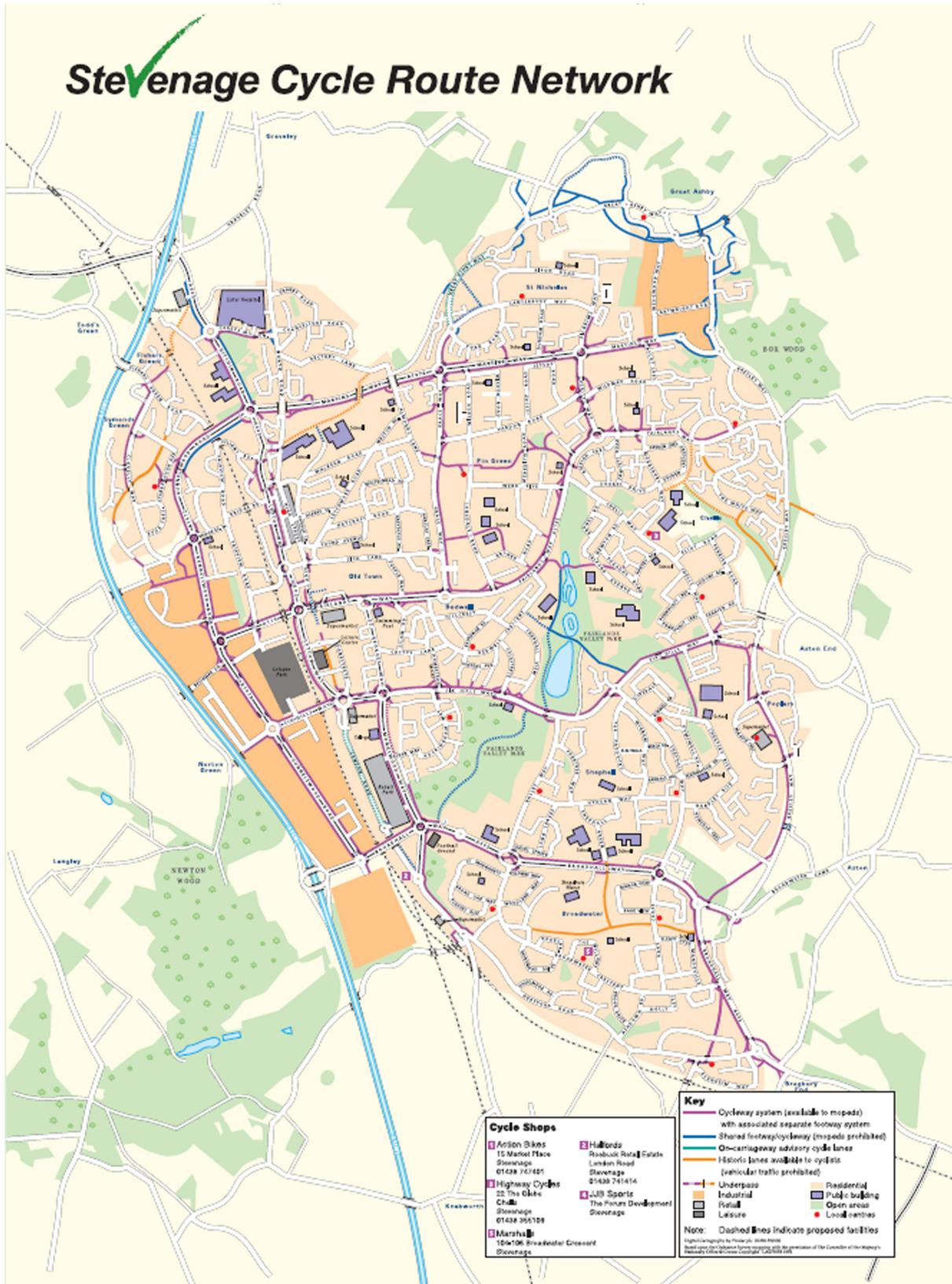
132 DfT Modeshift STARS; NICE Guidance "What can local authorities achieve by encouraging walking and cycling"; Living Streets "Making the Case for Investment in the Walking Environment, A Review of the Evidence"



The strategy is to prioritise delivery of the overall mobility network. In some cases, that might mean reallocation of road space between modes, and this may include junction or road improvements.

In terms of traffic capacity, the Council will identify pinch points on the network in the first instance, and prioritise funding for road capacity improvements to relieve those pinch points in the context of the overarching mobility strategy. The IDP identifies the pinch points currently forecast by the traffic modelling exercise and assigns costs and priorities to those measures.

Appendix i: Stevenage Cycle Route Network



C Space standards and separation distances for dwellings

Space standards

Nationally described space standards are an optional Government standard that local authorities can choose to implement⁽¹³³⁾. These are summarised below

| Number of bedrooms (b) | Number of bed spaces (persons) | 1 storey dwellings | 2 storey dwellings | 3 storey dwellings | Built-in storage |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| 1b | 1p | 39 / 37 | N/a | N/a | 1.0 |
| | 2p | 50 | 58 | N/a | 1.5 |
| 2b | 3p | 61 | 70 | N/a | 2.0 |
| | 4p | 70 | 79 | N/a | |
| 3b | 4p | 74 | 84 | 90 | 2.5 |
| | 5p | 86 | 93 | 99 | |
| | 6p | 95 | 102 | 108 | |
| 4b | 5p | 90 | 97 | 103 | 3.0 |
| | 6p | 99 | 106 | 112 | |
| | 7p | 108 | 115 | 121 | |
| | 8p | 117 | 124 | 130 | |
| 5b | 6p | 103 | 110 | 116 | 3.5 |
| | 7p | 112 | 119 | 125 | |
| | 8p | 121 | 128 | 134 | |
| 6b | 7p | 116 | 123 | 129 | 4.0 |
| | 8p | 125 | 132 | 138 | |

Table 3 Minimum gross internal floor area and storage (m²)

Separation distances

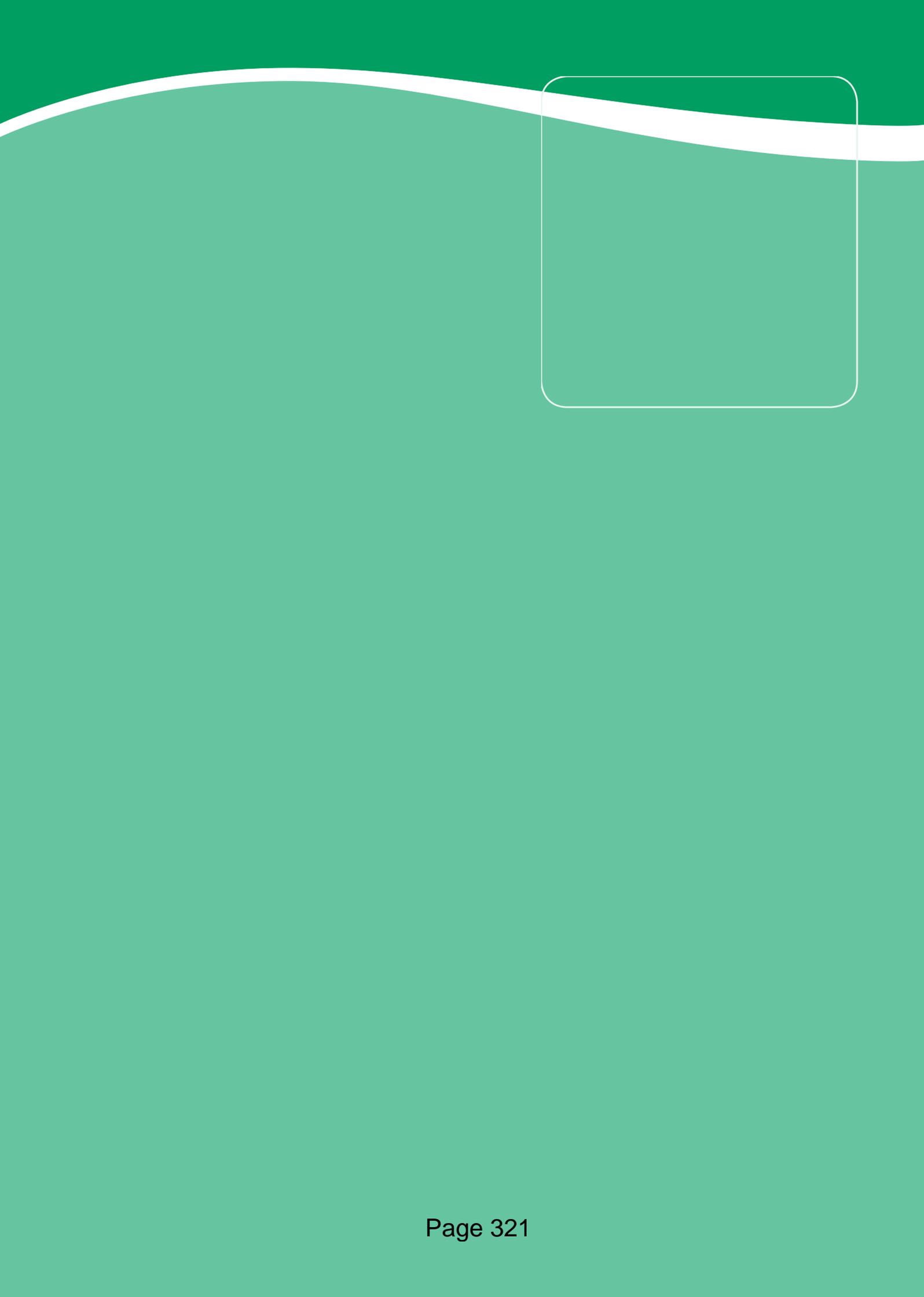
Privacy is an important aspect of residential environments and it is necessary to ensure that a reasonable degree of privacy for residents is provided, both within their habitable rooms and garden areas. The position of new dwellings, and the arrangement of their rooms and windows, should not create significant overlooking of other dwellings' windows or private garden areas, nor should

they lead to any overbearing impacts or adversely affect the residential amenities of existing dwellings. Hence, the minimum separation distances set out below should be achieved unless the design of any new buildings and / or disposition of windows mitigates against any overlooking.

Similarly, extensions should be designed and orientated in relation to that of neighbouring properties so that they do not adversely affect the outlook from neighbouring dwellings or result in any significant overlooking to neighbouring houses and gardens. The minimum separation distances set out below will be equally applied to proposals for extensions:

| No of storeys | Type of separation | Minimum distance (metres) |
|--|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Between existing and new 2 storey or a mix of 1 and 2 storey dwellings | Back to back | 25m |
| | Back to side | 15m |
| Between new 2 storeys or mix of 1 and 2 storey | Back to back | 20m |
| | Back to side | 12m |
| Over 2 storeys between existing and new dwellings | Back to back | 35m |
| | Back to side | 25m |
| Between new dwellings over 2 storeys in height | Back to back | 30m |
| | Back to side | 20m |

Table 4 Separation distances for dwellings



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Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Councillor Sharon Taylor OBE
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Dear Sharon

Stevenage Borough Council's Local Plan

A request was received from Mr Stephen McPartland MP to intervene in the Stevenage Local Plan (the "Plan"). The request raised a number of issues including Plan policies and supporting text covering the regeneration of Stevenage train station and town centre.

On the 13 November 2017, Stevenage Borough Council (the "Council"), pursuant to the powers in section 21A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, was directed not to take any step in connection with the adoption of the Plan, while the issues identified above were considered further.

I have now had the opportunity to consider the issues and your Council's representations. In light of recent assurances from your Council on the provision of additional clarity and certainty on matters including community and wider stakeholder engagement, accountability and governance, I have decided to withdraw the holding direction on the Stevenage Local Plan, on the understanding that, your Council will:

- Timetable the preparation a statutory Area Action Plan for the Stevenage 'Station Gateway' area (identified in the Local Plan as site TC4). The timetable will be published in your Local Development Scheme document before or at the same time as the Local Plan is adopted, and the should specify the adoption of the Area Action Plan in December 2020 or sooner.
- Publish for public consultation a Master Plan for the regeneration of the Stevenage Town Centre sites identified in the Local Plan as TC5 and TC2.
- Designate a lead Councillor and lead official to be responsible for progressing the preparation and implementation of the Area Action Plan, and for the implementation of the Local Plan itself,
- Provide monthly updates to MHCLG on preparation of the Area Action Plan,
- Remove references in the Local Plan to a new train station before adoption.

I am committed to supporting Stevenage achieve its full potential and will ensure my department offers you the advice and support needed to facilitate tangible delivery on the ground. I am happy to ask Homes England to provide support, advice and delivery capability to ensure that the regeneration proceeds effectively. And you will have seen the announcement on the Stronger Towns Fund. My officials stand ready to discuss how Stevenage could potentially benefit from this, and what the department can do more broadly to assist Stevenage.

Separate to the above issues, I remain keen to see progress on the regeneration of the town centre. You have agreed that the Council will work with the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and other stakeholders to create a new, independent, unincorporated partnership body to oversee the town centre regeneration. This partnership will have an independent Chair and will replace Stevenage First. To ensure robust scrutiny, local businesses, the local Member of Parliament, and for a limited period a senior MHCLG official, will be invited to join the partnership's board.

Finally, when your Council review its Local Plan, which should be done in line with paragraph 33 of the National Planning Policy Framework, I would take this opportunity to encourage you to bring forward higher density developments on previously developed land within Stevenage's existing built up area.

My officials will be in touch with your officers shortly to discuss next steps.



RT HON JAMES BROKESHIRE

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

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