

Public Document Pack



EXECUTIVE

Date: Wednesday, 18 January 2023

Time: 2.00pm

Location: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Contact: Ian Gourlay (01438) 242703

committees@stevenage.gov.uk

Members: Councillors: R Henry (Chair), J. Thomas (Vice-Chair), S Barr,
L Briscoe, J Hollywell, Mrs J Lloyd and S Speller.

AGENDA

PART I

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. MINUTES - 7 DECEMBER 2022

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 7 December 2022 for signature by the Chair.

Page Nos. 5 - 14

3. MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND SELECT COMMITTEES

To note the following Minutes of meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees –

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 23 November 2022

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 13 December 2022

Environment & Economy Select Committee – 15 December 2022

Page Nos. 15 - 30

4. TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION PLACEMENT AND PROCUREMENT POLICY

To consider a revised SBC Temporary Accommodation Placement and Procurement Policy, which has been updated to reflect changes in homelessness legislation and case law.

Page Nos. 31 - 50

5. JOINT HOUSING FOR OLDER PEOPLE STRATEGY UPDATE

To consider an update on the Joint Housing for Older People Strategy (HOPS).

Page Nos. 51 - 62

6. STEVENAGE DESIGN GUIDANCE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT - ADOPTION

To consider the adoption of the Stevenage Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which seeks to maximise the delivery of high-quality design from development in Stevenage and improve the health and wellbeing of the town and its residents, as well as providing sustainable development and mitigating climate change.

Page Nos. 63 - 276

7. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) - FINAL BUDGET AND RENT SETTING 2023/24

To update Members on the final proposals on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budgets and rent setting for 2023/24, to be considered by Council on 25 January 2024.

Page Nos. 277 - 322

8. DRAFT GENERAL FUND AND COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2023/24

To consider the Council's draft 2023/24 General Fund Budget, Council Tax Support Scheme and draft proposals for the 2023/24 Council Tax.

Page Nos. 323 - 414

9. DRAFT CAPITAL STRATEGY 2022/23 - 2026/27

To consider the Draft Capital Strategy 2022/23 – 2026/27.

[REPORT TO FOLLOW]

10. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

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

11. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

To consider the following motions –

1. That under Section 100A 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.

12. PART II MINUTES - EXECUTIVE - 7 DECEMBER 2022

To approve as a correct record the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 7 December 2022 for signature by the Chair.

Page Nos. 415 - 422

13. SUNDRY DEBT AND HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENTS WRITE OFFS GREATER THAN £10,000

To consider writing off Sundry Debts and an Housing Benefit overpayment deemed irrecoverable which are properly due to the Council and are greater in value than £10,001.

Page Nos. 423 - 428

14. 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 Wednesday, 18 January 2023 – <http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/have-your-say/council-meetings/161153/>

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 7 December 2022

Time: 2.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Present: Councillors: Baroness Taylor of Stevenage, OBE (Chair), Richard Henry (Vice-Chair), Sandra Barr, Lloyd Briscoe, Jackie Hollywell, Mrs Joan Lloyd, Simon Speller and Jeannette Thomas.

Start / End Start Time: 2.00pm
Time: End Time: 5.10pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no apologies for absence.

There were no declarations of interest.

Baroness Taylor announced that this would be the final Executive meeting she would be chairing as Leader of the Council. She was pleased to report that Councillor Richard Henry had been elected as Leader of the Labour Group (w.e.f. 1 January 2023), and that his nomination to become Leader of the Council would be proposed at the Council meeting to be held on 14 December 2022. She wished Councillor Henry every success in his new role.

Baroness Taylor stated that it had been her pleasure and privilege to have chaired the Executive for the past 16+ years. She thanked all of the Council's officers for their professionalism, hard work and advice throughout that time, and she praised them for their tireless work in support of the Borough's residents and businesses. She then thanked her fellow Labour Group members of the Executive for their continued support, especially in the light of the challenging financial circumstances over the years due to reductions in Government funding for local authorities.

2 MINUTES - 16 NOVEMBER 2022

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 16 November 2022 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

3 MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND SELECT COMMITTEES

It was **RESOLVED** that the following Minutes of meetings of the Select Committees be noted –

Environment & Economy Select Committee – 20 October 2022

4 COST OF LIVING CRISIS RESPONSE

The Executive considered an update report on the progress that the Council had made in implementing the action plan agreed in October 2022 in response to the national cost of living crisis.

Baroness Taylor confirmed that the Council was continuing to work with its partners, including the Stevenage Together Partnership, to try and mitigate some of the negative impacts that the cost of living crisis was having on residents and businesses, as well as on SBC services and budgets.

Baroness Taylor commented that there had been some positive measures announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Government's Autumn Budget Statement, but it would still be a difficult period with high inflation and increasing costs. The Council had already seen increases in rent arrears, domestic abuse referrals and requests for Discretionary Housing Fund support payments.

Baroness Taylor stated that changes announced by the Government to re-evaluate business rates could have a positive impact for local businesses. From an SBC perspective, there was the flexibility to increase Council Tax by a further 3%, although this additional income would only contribute a relatively small amount to the Council's overall budget deficit.

Baroness Taylor referred to the Cost of Living Action Plan approved by the Executive in October 2022. Progress had been made on a number of areas, as set out in the report. In particular, she drew attention to Stevenage Warm Spaces Network which promoted opportunities in Council-owned buildings across the Borough, as well as some offered by other public sector partners and the voluntary sector. The scheme was being promoted online, via community noticeboards, through the Council's Chronicle magazine, and through community partners.

Baroness Taylor explained that further cost of living updates would be reported as part of the quarterly performance and budget monitoring reports to the Executive, with the next of these scheduled for March 2023.

The following comments were made by Members:

- in respect of the statement in Section 7 of the report regarding the potential duplication of work of the Cost of Living Member Group and Environment & Economy Select Committee on the cost of living crisis, consideration could be given to a diluting and softening of the demarcation between Executive and scrutiny functions with regard to this issue;
- residents struggling with inflationary increases on bills were urged to apply for support under the Council Tax Support Scheme to see if they fulfilled the eligibility criteria;
- officers were requested to investigate and confirm whether or not Cold Weather payments were still available for certain residents for when temperatures

- dropped below a certain level; and
- attention was drawn to the Stevenage Community Trust who offered help to residents through an application for a heating grant (application forms were available from the Council, Citizens Advice Bureau, schools and Family Centres).

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the updates to the Cost of Living Action Plan, attached at Appendix A to the report, be noted.
2. That the Council continues to work with key local partners, including through the Stevenage Together Partnership, to develop a co-ordinated response across agencies to support residents, businesses and community groups.
3. That further cost of living updates be reported as part of the quarterly Corporate Performance and Budget Monitoring reports, the next of which for Quarter 2 of 2022/23 will be in March 2023.
4. That it be noted that the potential for reduced income from fee-based services and people struggling to pay council tax and/or rent, coupled with increased demand for services and higher costs, could significantly impact on the Council's short and medium-term finances, and that this will continue to be closely monitored and reported to Executive as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and budget setting process.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

5 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE QUARTER 2 2022/23

The Executive considered a report in respect of Corporate Performance for Quarter 2 of 2022/23.

The Chief Executive gave a presentation concerning the Quarter 2 report, and summarised the Future Town Future Council (FTFC) performance highlights throughout the Quarter, under the headings of Transforming Our Town; More Social and Affordable Housing; Co-operative and Neighbourhoods; Making Your Money Count; and a Clean, Green, Safe and Thriving Town.

The Chief Executive reported that, as at Quarter 2, of the 63 Corporate Performance Indicators, 34 were at Green status; 7 were at Amber; 14 were at Red; and 8 were outstanding (mainly relating to voids, household waste and community safety), the reasons for which he outlined in his presentation.

The Chief Executive presented the improvement activities for the customer services and voids red indicators, and explained the performance challenges being experienced with regard to the human resources and other red indicators.

The following comments were made by Members:

- in respect of voids performance, it was felt that there should be an improved pre-void inspection regime when mutual exchanges or transfers are proposed, to ensure that properties are left in a good condition prior to exchange/transfer; and
- officers would look again at Adverts/Job Specifications for Customer Service Centre posts in respect of promoting part-time/job share, as well as full-time, employment opportunities.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the delivery of priorities which form the Future Town Future Council Programme (Appendix A to the report) and service performance across the key themes for Quarter 2 2022/23 (Appendix B to the report) be noted.
2. That the strategic risk updates outlined in the report be noted.
3. That the performance challenges in relation to housing voids, customer services and human resources be noted, and the planned measures to improve performance be endorsed.
4. That the Executive Action Tracker, as set out at Appendix D to the report, be noted.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

6 COUNCIL TAX BASE 2023/24

The Executive considered a report in respect of the proposed Council Tax Base for 2023/24.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT advised that the report projected the tax base for levying the 2023/24 Council Tax by all preceptors. This included an estimate of new properties likely to liable for the charge, together with an assessment of discounts likely to be given. The tax base included an assumption that council tax support given would increase by 5% next year as a result of the current economic conditions.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT stated that the 2023/24 tax base had been estimated based upon there being 28,654.5 equivalent “Band D” properties, which was then reduced to 28,153.1 equivalent “Band D” properties after making allowances for a 98.25% collection rate.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That, in accordance with the Local Authorities (calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by Stevenage Borough Council for the year 2023/24 will be 28,654.5 equivalent “Band D” properties, reduced to 28,153.1 “Band D” properties after making allowance for a 98.25% collection

rate.

2. That the 2023/24 Council Tax Base be approved, subject to any changes made to the Council Tax Support (CTS) Scheme for 2023/24, the Executive having approved the CTS Scheme at its meeting held on 12 October 2022 for recommendation to Council.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

7 DRAFT HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET SETTING AND RENT REPORT 2023/34

The Executive considered a report in respect of the draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget and Rent Setting for 2023/24.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Housing Development advised that the Council was grappling with HRA finances at a time of great turbulence. The coming winter would see an escalation in fuel poverty, further pressure on household incomes which along with other matters would lead to there being more uncertainty for the future. This affected support chains and the services provided to tenants

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Housing Development stated that the tragic recent death of a child in Rochdale due to damp and mould in the property where he lived brought to the fore the need to maintain a proactive Housing Management service, with appropriate resources.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Housing Development commented that the Housing Team had been working closely with Finance colleagues to assess the overall impact of rent setting and charges for 2023/24. Accordingly, a number of areas of short-term growth had been factored into the HRA for 2023/24 to meet additional service requirements. The included additional capacity to address damp and condensation and repair cases.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Housing Development explained that complaints handling had improved, and this improvement would be driven further in order to meet a new regulatory requirement from the Social Housing Regulator. Compliance (particularly in relation to building and fire safety) would be a particular focus, with the Council being required to report a range of measures from 1 April 2023.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Housing Development advised that the Housing Income Team had been bolstered since the Covid pandemic. Rent arrears had increased in the first half of 2022/23, but not to the level that other housing providers had experienced.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Housing Development stated that the Council would continue to strive to maintain its housing development programme, building new and affordable Council homes.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT advised that rents would normally be calculated on the current agreed formula of September CPI plus 1%. However, as the September CPI was at 10.1% and would have resulted in a 11.1% increase, the Government announced a rent cap of 7% as part of its Autumn Statement. It was therefore recommended that the HRA rents on dwellings be increased by 7%, which represented an average increase of £7.24 for social rents, £11.82 for affordable rents and £8.42 for Low Start Shared Ownership homes per week (based on a 52-week year).

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT stated that the net rental income increase for 2023/24 was estimated to be £3.3Million, which included the impacts of estimated right to buys, a significant number of expected new properties and properties taken out of management (awaiting redevelopment).

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT explained that service charges were not subject to the rental increase of 7%, but were based on cost recovery. It was recommended that service charge costs should increase with inflationary pressures and changes in usage. The report highlighted the large anticipated increase in utility charges next year, in particular the rise in gas costs, for those customers who utilised communal heating systems

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT commented that the cost of living crisis and the unprecedented increase in the cost of utility supplies had had a dramatic impact on service charges. The budget was modelled forecast on the basis of recovering the full cost of these increases in order to maintain a level playing field with those tenants who had to fund their utility costs independently. However, over the coming weeks, those accounts with the highest increases would be carefully considered, noting that any subsequent policy changes may have a budgetary impact on the HRA.

The Executive noted that 4,927, or 61%, of homes did not receive a service charge. 2,339, or 29%, would have increases below £2.50 per week. However, a significant minority were facing service charge increases above this amount with 475, or 6%, of tenants facing an increase of over £20 per week. The highest increase would see an additional £43 per week, or £2,236 per annum.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT advised that new loans totalling £10.2Million and £32.4Million were expected to be taken in the current and next financial years for 2022/23 and 2023/24. However, the timing of when to take the new borrowing would be reviewed, weighing up the cost of carry and the prevailing PWLB rates. The interest payable in 2022/23 and 2023/24 was estimated to be £7.338Million and £8.699Million, respectively.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT stated that the HRA balances were projected to be £0.4Million by the end of 2023/24, however this was £6.4Million lower than it was in the 2019 HRA Business Plan, and by 2026/27 balances were projected to be £11Million lower than the full 30 year Business Plan at £16.2Million. A review of the Business Plan would be undertaken in 2023 to consider the funding of the relative priorities. However, the current balances were deemed to be at a sufficient level for the 2023/24 budget to be set.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the HRA rent on dwellings be increased, week commencing 3 April 2023, by 7% which is an average increase of £7.24 for social rents, £11.82 for affordable rents and £8.42 for Low Start Shared Ownership homes per week (based on a 52-week year). This has been calculated in line with the Government's change to rent policy announced in the Autumn Statement, as set out in Paragraph 3.3 of the report.
2. That Council be recommended to approve the 2023/24 HRA budget, as set out in Appendix A to the report.
3. That the 2023/24 growth options, as set out in Section 4.7 of the report, be approved.
4. That Council be recommended to approve the 2023/24 Fees and Charges, as set out in Appendix B to the report.
5. That Council be recommended to approve the 2023/24 service charges.
6. That Council be recommended to approve the minimum level of reserves for 2023/24, as shown in Appendix C to the report.
7. That the Rent Increases Equalities Impact Assessments, appended to the report in Appendix D, be noted.
8. That Council be recommended to approve the increase to the 2022/23 Working Budget by £884,400, to fund pressures detailed at Paragraph 4.3.1 of the report.
9. That the increase in tenant service charges to recover increased utility costs for the last 12 weeks of 2022/23, as set out in Paragraph 4.3.5 of the report, be approved.
10. That it be approved that, due to the current volatility of the market, utilities charges be kept under close review throughout 2023/24.
11. That the contingency sum of £250,000, within which the Executive can approve supplementary estimates, be approved for 2023/24 (unchanged from 2022/23).

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

8 URGENT PART I BUSINESS

Use of Ibis Hotel as accommodation for Asylum Seekers

The Leader (Baroness Taylor) advised that, on 3 December 2022, the Council was notified that the Home Office wanted to work with Hertfordshire County Council and

Stevenage Borough Council to determine which cohort would best fit the Ibis Hotel site up until 16 December 2022, noting that it had a maximum bedspace of 178. This was in addition to the 183 asylum seekers already placed by the Home Office in the Novotel Hotel adjacent to Junction 7 of the A1(M).

The Leader stated that neither she nor officers believed that the use of the Ibis Hotel was acceptable, and felt that it would bring significant challenges for public sector providers, for local communities, and for those accommodated.

The Leader commented that there was already stretched educational and health provision in the Borough and nationwide, which would be stretched further by the use of hotels by the Home Office for the above purpose. She recognised the Council's shared obligation to provide a safe environment for those seeking asylum, but considered that it was unacceptable that disruptive, challenging and inappropriate proposals for the use of large scale hotels within Stevenage were still being brought forward by the Home Office.

The Leader was surprised that the Home Office was prepared to use the Ibis Hotel for the accommodation of asylum seekers, which they had discounted some months ago. The Home Office had completely disregarded the work of the Regional Strategic Migration Partnership.

The Leader stated that she had no confidence in the Home Office's pledge that the Ibis Hotel would only be used for the purpose until 16 December 2022. She had also learned that the Home Office had signed a booking contract with the hotel owners in Mid November 2022, but had failed to notify the Council, the Local MP, or partner authorities of its pending use until 3 December 2022. As a result, the Council and its partners had been unable to put any support provision in place for the asylum seekers.

The Leader explained that the hotel would contain single male asylum seekers, a decision which had been taken with no regard to the community safety concerns already raised by the Council and its partner organisations since the Novotel had been identified as a similar contingency hotel.

The Leader advised that, in response to the Home Office notification, the Chief Executive had respectfully, but firmly, asked Home Office officials to remove the Ibis site for future consideration beyond 16 December 2022. The Council had also called for an urgent meeting with the Home Secretary and the Local MP to make the strength of local views known. This was in addition to a request that the Home Secretary (or her representative) visits the Novotel Hotel in Stevenage to see how unsuitable it was for the placing of asylum seekers.

The Leader expressed a further concern that moving existing hotel use into a dedicated form of hotel provision could breach planning regulations, noting that legal challenges had been launched elsewhere in the country. As a result, the Council was seeking legal advice on this matter.

The Leader also drew attention that no new burdens funding had been provided to the Council and its partners by the Home Office to support the asylum seekers, in

particular local health screening services. She added that inspections would be undertaken by the SBC Environmental Health Service and Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue Service to ensure that the hotel premises was a safe place to accommodate the asylum seekers.

The Leader referred to the Labour Group's motion being submitted to the Council meeting on 14 December 2022 urging the Government to carry out an urgent review of the policy of using hotels for the accommodation of asylum seekers. The motion also calls on the Government to work with local authorities to develop more sustainable options for the accommodation of asylum seekers, including for example the use of Ministry of Defence modular buildings, alongside properly resourced support packages that met the needs of individual asylum seekers. Also for a review of the asylum seeker application process to speed up decision making, and to ensure that appropriate infrastructure is in place before decisions were made.

The following comments were made by Members:

- a further reason why the Ibis Hotel was an inappropriate location was its distance from any green/open space areas in the town;
- it was confirmed that hotels used for the accommodation of asylum seekers were able to refuse approaches from the Home Office, but that it should be borne in mind that such use would provide guaranteed income for the hotels, some of which may be seeking to recover losses incurred as a result of under-occupation throughout the Covid pandemic;
- concerns regarding the potential lack of hotel accommodation for overnight business people as a result of two hotels in Stevenage being used to accommodate asylum seekers; and
- concerns regarding the impact on Knebworth Park of the current use of the Novotel Hotel (in terms of the reduced number of visitors, some of whom may have stayed overnight at the hotel). Similarly, the impact of cancelled weddings and Christmas and other events at the hotel.

9 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That under Section 100A 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 the reasons for the following reports being in Part II were accepted, and that the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

10 PART II MINUTES - EXECUTIVE - 16 NOVEMBER 2022

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes of the Executive held on 16 November 2022 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

11 LEISURE SERVICES AND ACTIVE COMMUNITIES MANAGEMENT CONTRACT

The Executive considered a Part II report seeking approval to award the Council's Leisure Services and Active Communities Management Contract for the period 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2033, following the outcome of an extensive procurement process.

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

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

12 REGENERATION PROGRAMME UPDATE AND SG1 PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

The Executive considered a Part II report in respect of progress on the delivery of the Council's "Transforming the Town Centre" regeneration programme, including the delivery of projects supported through the Stevenage Town deal funding package; and proposals to re-negotiate parts of the SG1 project Development Agreement to enable delivery of this project.

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

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

13 MAKING YOUR MONEY COUNT OPTIONS 2023/24 (PART 2)

The Executive considered a Part II report recommending approval of Making Your Money Count (MYMC) budget options for 2023/24, following on from the MYMC report submitted to the November 2022 Executive meeting.

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

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

14 URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None.

CHAIR

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 23 November 2022

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Present: Councillors: Lin Martin-Haugh (Chair), Rob Broom, Jim Brown, Michael Downing, Bret Facey, Wendy Kerby, Andy McGuinness, Sarah Mead, Claire Parris, Loraine Rossati, Anne Wells and Chris Howells.

Substitutes: Councillors: Stephen Booth and Chris Howells.

Start / End Start Time: 6.00pm
Time: End Time: 7.20pm

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Phil Bibby CC and Robin Parker CC. Councillors Chris Howells and Stephen Booth were in attendance as substitute Members.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 **MINUTES - 18 OCTOBER 2022**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 18 October 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 **PART I DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

2. **Minutes – 12 October 2022**

Noted.

3. **Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny and Select Committees**

Noted.

4. **Second Quarter Revenue Monitoring Report 2022/23 – General Fund and Housing Revenue Account**

In relation to repairs and voids, Members expressed concern that the funding was inadequate for the amount that was needed to bring properties up to a lettable standard.

Members also suggested that tenants should be reminded that although basic maintenance of a property was their responsibility, any substantial building works or repairs was the responsibility of the Council.

Members were advised that the Community Select Committee was currently undertaking a review of the Repairs and Voids Service.

5. 2022/23 Mid Year Treasury Management Review and Prudential Indicators

The Committee was informed that the report had been recommended to Council for approval.

In response to a question, the Strategic Director advised that the Council had never had any investments in Qatar nor any countries where there would be an ethical concern.

6. Urgent Part I Business

None.

4 URGENT PART I DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

None.

5 URGENT PART I BUSINESS

None.

6 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 involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1 to 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by SI 2006 No. 88.

2. That having considered the reasons for the following item being in Part II, it be determined that maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighed the public interest in disclosure.

7 PART II MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 18 OCTOBER 2022

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 October 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

8 **PART II DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

8. **Part II Minutes – Executive – 12 October 2022**

Noted.

9. **Making Your Money Count Options 2023/24**

The Strategic Director (CF) answered a number of Members' questions in respect of this item.

9 **URGENT PART II DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

None.

10 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 13 December 2022

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Present: Councillors: Lin Martin-Haugh (Chair), Rob Broom, Jim Brown, Michael Downing, Wendy Kerby, Graham Lawrence (substitute), Andy McGuinness, Sarah Mead, Claire Parris and Loraine Rossati.

Start / End Start Time: 6.00pm

Time: End Time: 8.17pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Phil Bibby CC, Bret Facey and Anne Wells. Councillor Graham Lawrence CC was substituting for Councillor Bibby.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES - 23 NOVEMBER 2022

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 23 November 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 PART I DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

2. Minutes – 16 November 2022

Noted.

3. Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees

Noted.

4. Cost of Living Crisis Response

The following comments were made by Members:

- the Citizens Advice Bureau was appreciative of the support provided by Council officers in dealing with cases related to the cost of living crisis;
- in respect of the comment made at the Executive meeting about the diluting/softening of the demarcation of the Executive and Scrutiny roles

with regard to work on the cost of living crisis, a Member disagreed with this comment and stated that the Executive and Scrutiny should keep to their respective and separate roles. The Member felt that there was always scope for collaboration, but that Scrutiny should not relinquish its powers to challenge and probe;

- a Member asked about how the Council targeted those who would be perhaps eligible for cost of living support, but who perhaps did not realise they were eligible. The Strategic Director (RP) replied that some grant support funds were administered by SBC and others by partner organisations. As well as online options, the Council was publishing information on noticeboards around the Borough. He commented that eligibility was, of course, dependent on individual circumstances and that Council officers would always endeavour to direct applicants to the appropriate support provider.

5. Corporate Performance Quarter 2 2022/23

The Committee was informed that the recruitment and retention of staff in the Customer Service Centre had been difficult. Measures that had been taken included an increase in the entry level salary for a Customer Service Advisor from Grade 2 to Grade 3. This had increased the number of recent applicants. A further measure was to try and recruit above the establishment level for the service in order to provide resilience for when staff left or were successful in being appointed to other positions within SBC.

Officers noted a Member's suggestion that consideration be given to offering employment to recently retired individuals, that could be trained to help out the Customer Service Centre (CSC), even if only on a part-time basis. A further suggestion from a Member was that the recorded telephone message should be made better use of, with bespoke key messages regarding the most frequent issues that people call the CSC about, giving the public an option to listen to more information and ways to resolve their problems.

6. Council Tax Base 2023/24

Noted.

7. Draft Housing Revenue Account Budget Setting and Rent Setting Report 2023/24

The Committee noted the significant pressures on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), both due to increased regulatory compliance requirements and inflation costs. A full review of the HRA Business Plan was scheduled for the Autumn of 2023.

8. Urgent Part I Business – Use of Ibis Hotel as accommodation for Asylum Seekers

The Committee was informed that the Leader of the Council had advised the Executive that the Council had been informed by the Home Office on 3

December 2022 that it would be using the Ibis Hotel in the Town Centre as a “spot” hotel for the accommodation of asylum seekers until 16 December 2022.

In reply to a series of Members’ questions, the Strategic Director (RP) commented as follows:

- the Refugee Council had not been involved in this arrangement as it was not a dispersal scheme. The Home Office had the expectation that the Council and its partner organisations would assist in the support arrangements for the asylum seekers;
- the asylum seekers were provided with some advice/guidance on the location of key services and amenities, but officers would look to strengthen/enhance the quality of the information provided;
- the Home Office was leading on communications with regard to the new arrivals, although it was important that the messaging from SBC was clear at a local level so that residents and businesses were fully aware of developments;
- representations had been made to the Home Office regarding the unsuitability due to their location of this (and the Novotel) hotel for the accommodating of asylum seekers;
- it appeared that hotels were being used due to the volume of asylum seekers arriving, the slowness in processing applications to remain (or otherwise) and the lack of availability of either more appropriate or dispersal accommodation;
- Government support funding and additional resources for local authorities was only available through the dispersal scheme. No additional funding had been provided for Borough/District Councils to assist/support the occupants of the Home Office’s spot/contingency hotels.
- a suggestion that the asylum seekers be provided with information where parks and play areas for children are would be passed on to the relevant officers from the Strategic Director
- no funding had been made available from the Home Office for “spot” hotel accommodation for either upper or lower tier authorities

4 URGENT PART I DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

None.

5 URGENT PART I BUSINESS

None.

6 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That, under Section 100A 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 involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in Paragraphs 1 to 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by SI 2006 No. 88.

2. That having considered the reasons for the following item being in Part II, it be determined that maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighed the public interest in disclosure.

7 PART II MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 23 NOVEMBER 2022

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 23 November 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

8 PART II DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

10. Part II Minutes – Executive – 23 November 2022

Noted.

11. Leisure Services and Active Communities Management Contract

The Operations Director answered a number of Members' questions in respect of this item.

12. Regeneration Programme update and SG1 Programme Implementation

The Assistant Director (Regeneration) answered a number of Members' questions with regard this item.

13. Making Your Money Count Options 2023/24 (Part 2)

The Strategic Director (CF) answered a number of Members' questions in relation to this item.

9 URGENT PART II DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

None.

10 URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None.

CHAIR

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Thursday, 15 December 2022

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Rob Broom (Chair), Adam Mitchell CC (Vice-Chair), Julie Ashley-Wren, Stephen Booth, Adrian Brown, Jim Brown, Michael Downing, Bret Facey, Claire Parris and Loraine Rossati.

Start / End Start Time: 6.00pm

Time: End Time: 7.18pm

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

There were no apologies for absence.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 **MINUTES - 17 NOVEMBER 2022**

It was **RESOLVED**: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 17 November 2022 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

3 **DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENT - COST OF LIVING SCRUTINY REVIEW**

A verbal presentation was given, which included:

- The draft scoping document should be considered for a scrutiny review of the cost-of-living crisis.
- There would be a focus on three elements of the impact of the cost-of-living crisis over three themed Committee meetings, these were:
 - Residents – exploring the impact on different demographics (January 2023).
 - Businesses – especially small to medium sized enterprises (SME's) highlighting energy crisis for businesses, material cost inflation, business rates (February 2023).
 - Council Services (March 2023).
- It was hoped by January that a range of people would be available to discuss their views.
- There had been discussion at a recent Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting about the effect on the Council, and this would be reviewed at the March 2023 Select Committee meeting.

The following points were made by a Member:

- The scoping document referenced SBC Lead contributors to the review, but some of the people mentioned were not SBC employees or Members, including the children centres that aren't run by SBC but were crucial.
- Vulnerable people were an important demographic group.
- Food banks weren't included on the report.

The Chair responded and agreed that children centres were crucial as they are not just for children but also had a wider social aspect. He also agreed that food banks were important, and the Council needed to concentrate on agencies that worked on cost-of-living issues. If it was necessary, this could be revisited later in the year.

A Member agreed that the work would provide a snapshot, but there was a need to act more quickly than in a space of a year. Obtaining figures for the number of those on benefits would be helpful.

The Chair commented that council tax is an indicator of hardship if people were struggling to pay. The Citizens Advice team would help the review as they would be able to share data that could be used as a comparable metric. The January Committee would be a session with 3 agencies in an hour and a half. It was important that the 3 agencies were afforded an appropriate amount of time to provide their views.

The following points were made by a Member:

- Critical areas need to be looked at first.
- Interest rates had gone up to 3.5%. There was concern about people paying rents and there was a shortage of rented properties in the town. There was a lot of pressure on home buyers and home renters.
- Talking to Human Resources would be useful but there was also a need to talk to unions and staff circles to pick up real experiences.
- A foodbank did not form part of the review, but there are other ground level organisations that could be involved in the review.

The Chair responded that there were other agencies out there, for example Spruce, the furniture recycling group who were doing excellent work in the community.

A Member commented that people with mortgages who had bought at the top of the market would likely have a fixed rate, so there was some stability.

A Member noted that schools would be a good place to look at as they tended to pick up on that demographic. People that worked in schools, such as teaching assistants, did not tend to qualify for universal credit but didn't earn enough to fully support themselves.

The Chair stated that these issues could be asked to the Citizens Advice team to get more information on. This review needed to focus on local issues. All Members had strong views on national topics, such as the welfare system, but the review should be focused on what was happening in Stevenage and what can be done locally.

A Member referred to the Equality Act and that different groups were being affected differently.

The Chair agreed that it was important to find out what was happening within the community. Further aspects like this could be reviewed later in the year.

A Member commented that summer 2023 would be an appropriate time to review the work on cost of living.

A Member commented that prices were not going down and wages weren't going up at the same rate of inflation. There would be a difference between earnings and outgoings for the foreseeable future. The Council needed to do winter planning for next winter in the summer of 2023, like colleagues in the Health service do.

4 **DRAFT REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY**

A verbal presentation was given, which included:

- The draft report and recommendations should be considered of the Environment and Economy Select Committee's review of the Council's response to the climate emergency.
- The report was a comprehensive record of what the Committee had covered, including most recently the conversations with HCC and the Youth Council.
- The possibility of future opportunities to involve Rothampstead Research in Harpenden on food growth and agriculture.

A Member commented that there needed to be at least one item on climate change at each Select Committee meeting to track the review's progress.

A Member asked when the review would next be looked at in 2023. It should be mentioned in the report that the Climate Change Act was in 1998 and the Council's first strategy was in 2010. It was good that there was now some data on CO2 emissions being quoted, but the annual results should be tracked so that people in the future could see what had happened.

The Chair agreed that there should be metrics that the review could readily look at.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that many Members had been involved in the review but not the overall document. It was hoped that the final report would be agreed at the January 2023 Committee meeting. This would then be submitted to the relevant Portfolio Holders, including the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change and the new Leader for a response within the statutory 2-month period. In June/July 2023 the Committee could look at what progress had been made on the recommendations. The 2018 baseline figures would be good to have in a visual format.

The Lead Officer for Climate Change responded that the data was published by the UK Government data. This data goes back to 2005. In the last climate change report, there was a graph from 2005-2020 and there was also a graph for the

contribution from different sectors. Transport data related to all vehicles. Industry, domestic and private was mainly due to energy consumption. Future reports could have further information in the footnotes and labels to make it easier to read. The Chair agreed that this would be a good idea.

A Member commented that there were concerns about how much the Council was committed to the Climate Change emergency. COVID had been an emergency, but climate change seemed a bit theoretical to some people. Now people were taking it more seriously. The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change had expressed views of it not being taken seriously enough, but things are now progressing. Another concern was public involvement. There was a group of people who had always been interested in the climate emergency, but there were others who were sceptical. It still wasn't something people saw as an emergency. The Chair agreed that this should be measured in some way.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that the annual report to the Executive gave progress compared to the baseline figures. A Member suggested that there should be a graph year to year to show this.

The Lead Officer for Climate Change responded that an online platform was currently being trialled to be constantly updated on climate change progress. It would be interactive and would hopefully be launched early next year. This would be available internally and externally.

A Member commented that the Council needed to make climate change real to people and show what progress had been made. There were different approaches to affect people's behaviour and these had to be realistic. Climate change sometimes disappeared from the public's consciousness and seemed quite theoretical.

A Member commented that climate change was essential to planning development. The Local Plan would be crucial to this. The Scrutiny Office stated that there was a paragraph in the report that dealt with the importance of the Local Plan.

The Chair agreed that climate change needed to be presented in a way that people felt they could engage with.

A Member agreed that engaging with people was important but commented that the Council had been talking to a relatively small amount of the population about this. From the views of a wider cross-section of the public, such as younger people, there was an impatience for action.

A Member raised points including:

- Litter picking and biodiversity was great and led to a better environment but it didn't lead to CO2 reduction or to reducing climate change.
- There was reference to future standards of housing, but future land use was missing from the paper. If the Council continued to approve planning applications – putting things in remote retail places and separating these from where people work and live, then this would be generating more transport

journeys and emissions.

The Chair mentioned that Stevenage was a quite compact urban area and shorter journeys were easier than in rural areas, but looking at planning use could be useful as there might be ways to make shorter journeys easier for people.

A Member commented that he did not agree with the Oxford approach of dividing the town up into '15-minute neighbourhoods'.

A Member commented that he failed to see the link between litter picking and biodiversity. Litter picking was more of a visual activity and was unsure how this affected biodiversity. He also mentioned that he understood that electric buses would contribute to 70% of the Council's aim to achieve net carbon zero by 2030.

A Member commented that the buses were not very reliable, which was probably why people use their cars more.

Another Member mentioned that there was a lack of bus drivers, and that more drivers were needed to deliver a proper service.

The Chair responded to the comment regarding biodiversity and stated that Stevenage was an exemplar for biodiversity and that biodiversity does matter and hoped that other Councils saw the work that had been done. Without it the Council would be behind on climate change.

A Member commented that the electric buses may contribute 70% carbon reduction, but did not contribute to 70% of our traffic. When it came to traffic and transportation, there needed to be dialogue with the County Council, as a lot of issues were related to school journeys and there needed to be a focus on children walking or cycling to school.

A Member commented that the review document would evolve as more was learnt.

A Member made some comments which included:

- There was concern around the use of words in the report and the missed opportunities if the Council was not proactive. The report was passive in the way it had been presented.
- Engagement and consultation were not necessarily the best way forward and the Council should use co-production with anyone who was interested in solving climate change problems to design and deliver solutions. The power of the community and voluntary sectors needed to be harnessed to deliver solutions together.
- The co-production approach could be used to help people reduce energy costs. By helping people to reduce energy costs this should reflect on changing behaviours.
- In respect of the Council's plan for the fleet transformation, what was the time period and how much would it cost?
- The Council should assist people in applying for grants to start a repairs café.

The Chair agreed that people needed support from the Council and its community team with grant applications. The Council needed to keep learning about and understanding climate change and this would need to be built into the Council and Member training programme.

The Lead Officer for Climate Change responded that the full climate change data from 2018/2019/2020 could be shared.

A number of Members commented on the state of the cycle paths in Stevenage. During bad weather the roads were made safe to use but often the cycle paths were not cleared. SBC was responsible for cleaning them and HCC was responsible for maintaining them.

The Chair agreed that some cycle paths were not accessible but there were a lot of bikes at the train station every morning so they were being used quite a bit. This was the same for schools.

A Member suggested that it would be interesting to get the data from all secondary schools on bike use.

The Scrutiny Officer informed Members that there had been a scrutiny cycling review in 2010.

A Member mentioned that a significant number of people were working from home and so were not travelling to work as frequently as in the past. However, this could be offset by the fact that heating homes all day would be using increased energy from fossil fuels.

The Lead Officer for Climate Change responded to a few comments made by Members which included:

- Biodiversity was important in keeping the circle alive and trees were very important in taking up carbon. It was relevant to the climate change agenda as maintaining a healthy environment would help take up carbon.
- She clarified that the EV buses would save up to 1700 tonnes of carbon emissions.
- There was work underway to produce a plan of what vehicles would need to be replaced for the Councils vehicle fleet. The plan would include timescales and costs.
- It was important to find out why statistics were going up or down, but there were other statistics and these would be correlated to and find out why there were changes in carbon emissions.

A Member stated that there was a downside to electric vehicles, in terms of mileage. Diesel buses often travelled about 1000 miles a day, and electric were unable to cope with this level of mileage. The use of hydrogen-powered vehicles could be investigated.

The Scrutiny Officer informed Members of a pilot happening in Aberdeen of electric vehicles and the data from this would be interesting.

A Member commented that hydrogen vehicles would still produce carbon emissions. Consideration could be given to other forms of transportation, such as trams.

It was **RESOLVED**: That the recommendations set out in the report be agreed, and the comments made by Members be taken on board by officers in the ongoing Climate Change Review.

5 **URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

There was none.

6 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

7 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was none.

CHAIR

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Meeting Executive
Portfolio Area Housing and Housing Development
Date 18 January 2023



TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION PROCUREMENT AND PLACEMENT POLICY

Authors Kelly Bates
Lead Officer Rob Gregory
Contributors Tracy Jackson, Keith Reynoldson
Contact Officer Kelly Bates

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to highlight the proposed changes to the Temporary Accommodation Procurement and Placement Policy, pursuant to the Council's statutory Housing obligations. The policy has been updated to reflect changes in homelessness legislation and case law. The revised policy is set out in Appendix A to the report.
- 1.2 The report highlights the changing social and financial landscape and the likely demands this will place on the need for temporary accommodation.
- 1.3 Executive's commitment to meet the growing demand for homelessness provision is set out in the report. It highlights the unchanged approach to predominantly using council owned housing stock to provide temporary accommodation and to only use hotels or nightly let provision where necessary.
- 1.4 The policy approach centres on providing suitable interim accommodation to those for whom the Council owes a homeless relief duty and subsequent temporary accommodation to those who the Council accepts a main housing duty

to. Accommodation is provided for the duration of time taken to conduct and conclude homelessness investigations and determine and discharge any subsequent housing duty.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the revised Temporary Accommodation Procurement and Placement Policy, as attached at Appendix A to the report, that has been updated to reflect legislative changes and case law, be approved.
- 2.2 That a review of service charges be undertaken to maximise income recovery and reduce operational burden.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Accommodation for homeless residents has been a continued pressure point for Council resources since 2018 (when the Homeless Reduction Act in 2017 came into effect). These pressures were exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent 'Everyone In' directive, issued to meet homeless accommodation requirements, during that time.
- 3.2 The situation in Stevenage mirrors the wider national picture regarding homelessness and temporary accommodation, with the number of households in temporary accommodation rising by 49% nationally between 2015 and 2022.
- 3.3 In 2019, the Executive approved the Council's Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-24. The strategy outlined four key priorities in order to meet the growing demand for homelessness provision and to ensure that which is provided, is suitable and has adequate support in place to prevent repeat homelessness. The strategy further set out the need to increase the volume of accommodation available; both for the homeless client group and for general needs accommodation, in order to provide settled housing for homeless duties to be discharged into.
- 3.4 To achieve the priorities set out in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy, the Temporary Accommodation Service continues to work with Investment and Housing Development. Since April 2020, they have collaboratively sourced 40 additional properties; increasing our operational unit supply by 75 (of which 27 are currently used as Housing First).
- 3.5 In July 2022, Executive's approved the Housing First Business Plan which outlined the approach for rough sleepers until the end of 2023/24, when the current fixed-term funding streams ended. Since April 2020, 134 individuals have been accommodated in total and been provided with some level of support based on need and 57 individuals have successfully moved on to permanent accommodation or further supported accommodation. These were all clients who were rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping in Stevenage. As a positive consequence, there had been a notable reduction in rough sleeping across the town. The official rough sleeper count for Stevenage was 14 in 2021 and 8 in 2022. The development of the Housing First service demonstrates the council's commitment to supporting people who we do not have a homelessness duty to accommodate.

- 3.6 The Council's continued collaborative work with both Herts County Council and accommodation providing partners at a strategic and operational level, further contributes towards the aspirations of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-2024 to eradicate rough sleeping within Stevenage on a long-term basis. The council will continue to support initiatives such as the provision of 3 additional crash pad places for young people, jointly funded by Herts County Council and all Hertfordshire districts and borough authorities.
- 3.7 The above work has supported a significant reduction in Bed and Breakfast placements in Quarter 3 of 2022/23 and work is currently underway at two further sites, Archways House and Dunn Close, which will deliver units as follows:

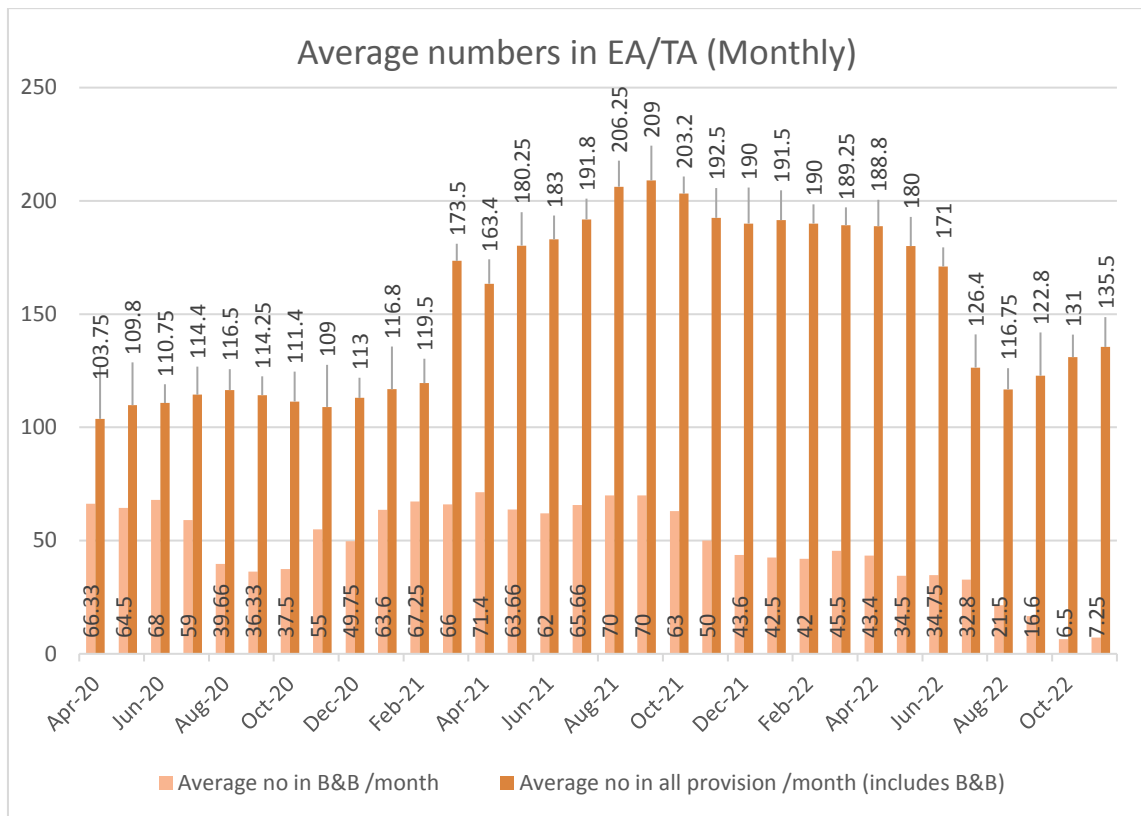
Location	Type	Units	Operational by
Archways House	Shared	23	before Q4 end 2022/23
	Self-Contained	0	
Dunn Close	Shared	21	Before Q4 end 2023/24
	Self-Contained	6	Before Q4 end 2023/24
Total Units Expected 2023/24		50	<i>Both sites will have on site office for staff</i>

- 3.8 Bed and Breakfast provision is diminishing; both locally and nationally, as the Home Office take up exclusive use for Asylum Seeker placements. As such, if the Council fails to source enough suitable in-house provision to meet the needs of its applicants, at the rate at which demand increases over the coming year and beyond, the Council will face costly alternatives and a likely increase in out of borough placements.
- 3.9 Owing to the current economic pressures and the high probability of the UK entering a lengthy recession, during which homelessness through repossession is likely to rise considerably, further significant increases are being predicted for 2023/24. There will also be additional pressure on the Council to source accommodation for Ukrainian refugees if Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) are unable to rematch families with new hosts.
- 3.10 At present, Stevenage Borough Council has 186 operational units of interim/temporary accommodation across the town (including 27 Housing First) consisting of a small number of specially adapted units and modular units, and a large number of shared and self-contained units that were formerly general needs properties.

Location	Type	units
Bedwell Crescent	Shared	3
Brent Court	Shared	3
Brick Kiln Road	Shared	8
Julians Road	Shared	8

Location	Type	units
Oaks Cross*	Shared	5
Oaks Cross (Modular/Pod)*	Self-Contained	11
Shephall View	Shared	7
The Muntings	Shared	5
Trumper Road	Shared	3
Valley Way	Shared	5
Walden End	Shared	2
Wellfield Court	Self-Contained	32
Wellfield House	Shared	6
York Road*	Shared	6
Dispersed houses/flats	Self-contained	82
<i>SUB TOTAL</i>		186
<i>Less 27 Housing First Units (*)</i>		159
Sub Total Shared Interim/Temp Accommodation Units		45
Sub Total Self-Contained Interim/Temp Accommodation Units		114
TOTAL INTERIM/TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION UNITS		159

- 3.11 The ongoing housing and cost of living crisis in the UK means that there is a shortage of affordable homes and rising prices, putting additional pressures on public services. An outline of the Council's homelessness duties and legislation is contained in the Legal Implications section 5.2 of this report.
- 3.12 The graph below shows the impact the pandemic had on SBC bed and breakfast usage and, although the 'everyone in' directive ceased in May 2021, the Council took the stance to increase Housing First provision and avoid sending people back to rough sleeping; this approach saw some remaining in bed and breakfast accommodation whilst further provision was sourced to relieve this new-found demand. The graph reflects reduction in usage for the periods where restrictions were eased and again at times where new stock was introduced (as referenced in paragraph 3.4). The Temporary Accommodation Team have successfully managed the introduction of new homelessness accommodation provision and in turn reduced bed and breakfast usage significantly. A small demand for bed and breakfast usage remains in cases where needs cannot be met in the Council's own provision, however the introduction of Archways House should mitigate the need for any future block bookings post January 2023.



3.13 The Council is having to be proactive in sourcing appropriate homelessness accommodation. This challenge becomes greater as demand increases over winter months and emergency local hotel provision is diminished due to block bookings of hotel bed spaces, in the Borough, made by the Home Office this winter.

3.14 Officers are working closely with neighbouring districts, other housing providers and housing support providers such as One YMCA, who now manage the Haven, to look at future solutions.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1 The Temporary Accommodation Procurement and Placement Policy was last reviewed in March 2016; since then, there have been significant changes to legislation, namely the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 (HRA17), along with changes to terminology and frameworks, requiring some minor amendments to reflect these changes.

4.2 The HRA17 introduced a 56-day relief duty period in which local authorities cannot conclude that an applicant is intentionally homeless. It further increased the number of stages at which a review can be requested and added a significant administrative burden; all of which has increased the time applicants

spend in interim accommodation, requiring local authorities to procure more provision to continue to meet demand of new applicants.

- 4.3 The previous policy referenced MHCLG guidance which has subsequently been replaced with guidance from DLUHC; the new policy reflects the updates.
- 4.4 Previously provision was separated into emergency and temporary housing with emergency being first stage and temporary being second stage (post acceptance of a homeless duty). Legislation now references interim accommodation to meet relief duty and temporary accommodation post main duty acceptance until the main duty is discharged.
- 4.5 The continued use of owned stock to support the delivery of the Council's statutory homeless function where possible, reduces the financial implications and further mitigates the risk of legal challenge.
- 4.6 The Council's responsibilities for homelessness accommodation present a cost to the Council's General Fund. Efforts have been undertaken to ensure an approach to charging and recharging costs is streamlined and consistent. There is further work to do on utility recharges given the different types of homelessness accommodation used. It is recommended that, given the increase in utility costs over the coming period, modelling is progressed in line with other housing provision. This is further explored under the financial implications.
- 4.7 The policy approach to predominantly using council owned housing stock to provide temporary accommodation and to only use hotels or nightly let provision where necessary is unchanged. The intentions of the policy and operational delivery remain the same; the report is coming before the Executive to approve the minor amendments.
- 4.8 Should the over-provision of Temporary Accommodation arise as a result of overestimated demand, self-contained units can be returned to General Needs accommodation.

5.1 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1.1 The homelessness functions undertaken by the Council are defined as General Fund services. However, in order to maintain a flexible response to housing need, all dwelling properties are managed and maintained within the Council's Housing Revenue Account. This allows the Council to reassign properties between licenses and tenancies and has helped reduce reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation. The HRA only has the expenditure and income from the running costs, rent and service charges related to the property. It does not incur any of the wider costs of the homelessness service such as the additional support services for this client group or equipping of the accommodation; further it does not contain the cost of bed and breakfast accommodation.
- 5.1.2 The Council has been unable to claim back £255K (to 1 December 2022) of housing benefit granted to those in of Bed and Breakfast accommodation because those rents are higher than allowed under legislation which doesn't apply to the council's own stock. The Council has also increased the 2022/23

budget for homelessness by a further £350K to meet the increased homeless need being experienced at the beginning of the year.

- 5.1.3 The Temporary Accommodation Team are working with the Hertfordshire Growth Board, using the Predictive Temporary Accommodation Model they have developed, to achieve accurate projections for temporary accommodation use over for the next financial year. The model has been designed for authorities in Hertfordshire to take a consistent approach when forecasting demand for 2023/24 allowing for percentage increases in homeless approach reasons
- 5.1.4 As part of the annual budgeting process the homeless accommodation charges have been reviewed and streamlined to support consistency across all homelessness provision; providing better alignment between actual costs, recovery and spend type. Appropriate weight has been given to ensure that the charges are realistic yet fair, with key focus on reducing the gap between spend and recovery and making operational management more efficient.
- 5.1.5 There is an element that the tenant must pay personally that is not covered by housing benefit. This mainly relates to utility costs and these are expected to increase substantially during the year. A further review of the utility charge modelling is recommended to maximise income recovery.
- 5.1.6 The Herts County Council contract of £83,442 to support adults with complex needs in temporary accommodation will be extended for a further 12 months from 1 April 2023. An additional £25K will also be allocated by Herts County Council to meet the demand and unmet support needs of households in homeless temporary accommodation managed by Stevenage Borough Council. This arrangement is in place whilst the County and Borough councils work collaboratively on developing a prospectus which will inform future commissioning plans for 2024/25.
- 5.1.7 The Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities has allocated Stevenage Borough Council the Homeless Prevention Grant as follows:
- 2022/23 £512,409
 - 2023/24 £518,126
 - 2024/25 £525,891
- 5.1.8 This grant has and will continue to be used to fund adequate staffing to support homeless prevention work and to further fund homeless prevention support options for example, clearing arrears to prevent homelessness/sustain tenure, exploration of an effective triage service and earlier intervention work to prevent families going into Temporary Accommodation.

5.2 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.2.1 Where the Council has reason to believe that an applicant may be homeless, or threatened with homelessness, it has a duty to make such inquiries as are necessary in order to satisfy itself:

- whether the applicant is eligible for assistance (this will depend on their immigration status); and
- if so, whether the Council owes any duty (and if so, what duty) to the applicant under the Housing Act 1996 (“HA 1996”)

5.2.2 Under Section 189A of the HA 1996 where the Council is satisfied that an applicant is both homeless (or threatened with homelessness) and eligible for assistance, it has a duty to carry out an assessment of their circumstances and then try to agree with them what steps they need to take to ensure they have and can retain suitable accommodation and what steps the Council needs to take under the HA 1996.

5.2.3 If an applicant is deemed to be homeless, eligible and in priority need then an “interim duty” is owed to accommodate the applicant under s188 HA 1996.

5.2.4 Further the Council owes the “full housing duty” under S193 HA 1996 to applicants who are in priority need and not intentionally homeless.

5.3 RISK IMPLICATIONS

5.3.1 Failure to source sufficient suitable in-house accommodation would result in significant cost implications from using hotel accommodation and an increased likelihood of this being out of area with additional transportation costs.

5.4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.4.1 The Temporary Accommodation Procurement and Placement Policy responds to the Council’s Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-24.

5.5 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

5.5.1 As part of the Council’s commitment to tackling climate change new housing provision is considered with regards to the environmental impact of that development. Schemes such as the Dunn Close Hostel include air source heat pumps and enhanced insulation to reduce the running cost for the scheme, therefore having a positive impact both in terms of cost, but also in terms of energy efficiency. This will be an ongoing consideration as new sites are acquired and developed.

5.6 STAFFING AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS

5.6.1 The staffing resource for Temporary Accommodation is currently funded from several funding streams:

Post	Funding stream	Funding ends
1 Temporary Accommodation Manager	Establishment	N/A

1 Senior Temporary Accommodation Officer	Establishment	N/A
6 Temporary Accommodation Officers	3 Establishment 3 linked to Homeless Prevention Grant	N/A Financial Year 2022/23, although should be secured through HPG confirmed for 2023/24
3 Temporary Accommodation Support Officers	1 Establishment 2 HCC Housing Related Support Funding	N/A Financial Year 2023/24
2 Temporary Accommodation Assistants	Establishment	N/A

5.6.2 A review of resources and the viable provision will need to be reviewed as funding streams end and other applications for funding are made.

5.7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.7.1 Rigorous consideration will ensure that proper appreciation of any potential impact of that decision on the Council's statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. As a minimum this requires decision makers to read and carefully consider the content of any Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) produced by officers.
- 5.7.2 The Equality Act 2010 requires the Council when exercising its functions to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 5.7.3 Officers consider that, given the specific needs of those who are, or are at risk of, street homelessness, the Temporary Accommodation Procurement and Placement Policy is likely to have a positive impact on protected characteristics including gender, disability (including mental health), sexual orientation, and race. It also recognises the positive impact on socio-economic inequalities.
- 5.7.4 A full equality impact assessment has been completed and is available as a Background Document. The assessment shows that the policy has an overall positive impact as the scheme increases the ability for people with limited housing options in Stevenage to live independently in high quality and safe accommodation. This enhances their opportunities in society and helps to enable them to live comfortably without fear of abuse or discrimination.

5.8 SERVICE DELIVERY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.8.1 This policy supports the Temporary Accommodation Service to deliver the Council's statutory homelessness function.

6 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

All documents that have been used in compiling this report, that may be available to the public, they do not contain exempt information, should be listed here:

[Homelessness & Rough Sleepers Strategy 2019-2024](#)

7 APPENDICES

Appendix A – Temporary Accommodation Procurement and Placement Policy – January 2023



**Temporary
Accommodation
Procurement and
Placement Policy**

January 2023

Temporary Accommodation Procurement and Placement Policy

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 8. Placement of Households
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Temporary Accommodation Procurement and Placement Policy

1. Introduction

1.1. The purpose of this policy is to set out how the Council will procure sufficient units of temporary accommodation (TA) to meet the anticipated demand during the coming year.

1.2. This will be done in accordance with the principles and values of the Council's corporate Procurement Strategy and the contract standing order process.

1.3. For the purposes of this document, procurement includes the act of:

- acquiring properties from the Council's own housing stock,
- making short term use of properties/sites identified for future development, where financially viable,
- purchasing open market acquisitions that meet forecasted needs based on trend analysis
- development of purpose-built accommodation in collaboration with the Development and Investment Teams

1.4. This policy will ensure a focus on value for money for the Council and its residents.

This document also sets out the Council's policy for the placement of households into interim/temporary accommodation, both in and out of borough. The policy applies to all households placed into interim accommodation by the Council under Section 188 (the Relief of Homelessness Duty) and those in temporary accommodation Section 193 (the Main Homelessness Duty) arising out of the Housing Act 1996. It also applies to any accommodation:

1. Secured under a power to provide interim accommodation pending a review or appeal
2. Secured to meet any duty owed to an intentionally homeless household
3. Secured to meet any interim accommodation duty pending the outcome of a local connection referral to another local authority

Temporary Accommodation Procurement and Placement Policy

- 1.5. In accordance with the Housing Act 1996, the Council will seek to accommodate homeless households within Stevenage as far as is reasonably practicable, and with proper consideration of the suitability of accommodation for the household. To date the number of households whom the Council has assisted to find accommodation outside Stevenage is relatively small. Cases where there is a need for a household to be placed outside of the Borough will be agreed by one of the seniors or managers within the service.
- 1.6. This policy operates as an adjunct to the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy and will be reviewed in conjunction with any future changes to the Strategy.
- 1.7. This policy also operates in conjunction with the Council's allocations scheme and private rented sector discharge policy.

2. Legal Overview

2.1. This policy complies with:

- ✓ Sections 206, 208, and 210 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- ✓ The relevant sections of the DLUHC Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018 (and all associated on-line amendments to that code).
- ✓ The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012.
- ✓ The DLUHC Supplementary Guidance on the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012 (November 2012). Applicants accommodated under this policy under section 193 of the Housing Act 1996 can request a statutory review of the suitability of any accommodation offered to them, in accordance with section 202 of the Act.
- ✓ Whether the accommodation is affordable
- ✓ Advice from the Courts to local authorities regarding the provision of temporary accommodation including the leading case of Nzolameso and Westminster Council.
- ✓ The Equalities Act 2010 and
- ✓ The Children Act 2004.

Temporary Accommodation Procurement and Placement Policy

3. Analysing the need for Temporary Accommodation

3.1. Establishing a detailed evidence base of the need for temporary accommodation for the next 12 months is the first aspect of defining a stock base that will deliver the units needed for the Council to meet its statutory duties and ensure a cost-effective resource that is person centred.

3.2. The Council will input into its temporary accommodation model, not only the detailed need profile of its homeless households, but also other key drivers such as environmental impacts, the length of stay in temporary accommodation, void turn around, reduction in Council general needs stock and move on opportunities. Given the uncertain nature of many of these factors, assumptions have to be made but, where possible, analysis will be based on detailed service statistics and data. Appendix A (final page of this document) sets out the temporary accommodation model.

4. Temporary Accommodation Supply Model

At present most temporary accommodation is Council owned, however there is a need to utilise nightly let provision for placements out of area where applicants are at risk remaining in the borough or where our own provision is less suitable than that which can be offered through an external party.

4.1. **Interim/ Temporary accommodation (also known as emergency or temporary accommodation)** – this accommodation can be self-contained or a unit with shared facilities and services, such as support, going in. The cost to the Council of providing such accommodation is usually higher than longer-term accommodation due to the provision of furnishings and increased back office and void costs associated with short-stay occupancy. In exceptional circumstances, bed and breakfast accommodation or interim accommodation with a nightly let provider.

4.2. **Specialist Accommodation** - accommodation for applicants with needs requiring supported housing. The Survivors Against Domestic Abuse (SADA) service

Temporary Accommodation Procurement and Placement Policy

support applicants to source accommodation when they are fleeing domestic abuse; this could be providing support to flee out of area and present to another local authority, or indeed support to flee temporarily to a place of safety whilst further options are explored in relation to returning safely to their home. There are also occasions where the applicant may have needs that would be better met in an Independent Living Scheme than in a temporary accommodation unit, as such where there is an available guest room/unit and manager approval sought, temporary placement into an Independent Living Scheme can be considered; this approach often supports further assessment of need and successful relief of homelessness.

4.3. **Private Rented Sector** – at present the Council does not use private rented accommodation as interim or temporary accommodation. The Council has carried out a risk assessment with regard to procuring new temporary accommodation through a private sector leasing scheme (PSL). However, due to the speed at which development and investment are identifying and delivering cost effective alternatives, this uncertain market option has not been pursued. Any loss sustained by the Council under a PSL scheme would be a cost to the Council's General Fund.

5. Maintaining Supply to Meet Demand

The Council will seek to maintain and increase the supply of temporary accommodation to meet demand as follows:

- Continue to seek ways to optimise the use of current temporary accommodation
- Continue to use additional units from the Council's general needs stock
- Explore options for using new Council developments
- Explore options to redevelop existing Council stock into temporary accommodation units e.g. repurpose larger units into multiple shared accommodation units
- Seek to increase the number of landlords engaged with Next Step Lets to support successful flow through temporary accommodation

Temporary Accommodation Procurement and Placement Policy

- Continue the dialogue with Hertfordshire County Council and engaged neighbouring local authorities around joint procurement partnerships

6. Meeting Quality Standards

6.1. The accommodation procured must meet appropriate levels of suitability and be fit for purpose.

7. Providing Value for Money

7.1. The Council seeks a balance between providing value for money in the provision of services and maintaining a level of service that meets statutory requirements whilst taking into consideration the limitations of the existing homelessness budget.

7.2. The Council aims to maximise income from its temporary accommodation through timely void turn around and effective collection of related charges. The cost of providing temporary accommodation and related services will always be in excess of possible recovery; this is due to the statutory requirement to provide affordable accommodation to persons facing multiple-disadvantage and the transient nature under which they are accommodated.

8. Placement of Households

8.1. Interim accommodation is usually allocated on the day that it becomes available, however where there is advanced warning of a presentation that has specific needs, the most suitable accommodation may be held open ready for placement to avoid a suitability challenge.

8.2. In an emergency, households will be placed into the most suitable and safe interim accommodation that is available at the time of the presentation. Should more suitable accommodation later become available, they will be prioritised for a move.

8.3. If a household is placed in interim accommodation outside of Stevenage, they will be treated as a priority to be moved back into Stevenage as and when a suitable

Temporary Accommodation Procurement and Placement Policy

property becomes available; those with children in education or with specific medical needs that can only be met in borough will be higher in priority.

- 8.4. To make best use of its provision and to meet the service demand, the Council will move households between interim accommodation units, as and when necessary.
- 8.5. Where an accommodated household notifies the Council that their circumstances have changed, rendering the interim accommodation less suitable, the service will complete a new assessment and the household will be moved to alternative suitable accommodation as soon as possible.
- 8.6. Given most interim accommodation placements are made in an emergency, it will not be possible for the applicant to view the property before 'signing up',
- 8.7. In cases where an applicant is being discharged from hospital or has specific medical needs, we may seek the opinion of any involved occupational therapist or other medical professional, to determine the suitability of the interim accommodation offer. Any visits carried out to assess suitability prior to placement, under these circumstances, may have the customer in attendance.
- 8.8. Where there is uncertainty over suitable placement, the final decision will rest with a senior or manager within the service; they will consider this policy alongside the statutory requirements on local authorities in respect of suitability of accommodation, including Suitability Orders, and the current Homelessness Code of Guidance.

OUT OF AREA

- 8.9. When placing applicants into interim accommodation the Council will aim to minimise disruption to the households taking into consideration their circumstances and needs. In addition to all of the other statutory suitability requirements, where the Council does have to consider out of area, it will also take the following into account:

Temporary Accommodation Procurement and Placement Policy

- ✓ The distance from its district.
- ✓ The significance of any disruption to employment, caring responsibilities or education.
- ✓ The proximity and accessibility of medical facilities and other support.
- ✓ The proximity and accessibility of local services, amenities and transport.
- ✓ The retaining of established links with schools, doctors, social workers and other key services and support.
- ✓ The need to reach a normal workplace and the need to minimise disruption to the education of young people, particularly at critical points, such as leading up to GCSEs or equivalent.
- ✓ Recognise that, in some cases, there can be benefits to out-of-district accommodation, such as in cases of domestic violence, ex-offenders and people in need of employment and those who chose to move out of area for any other reasons.
- ✓ Any other relevant factors

8.10. The Council may also keep aside local vacant units in anticipation of applicants presenting who meet the criteria for a local placement. This has been confirmed as a reasonable practice in the 2018 Court of Appeal case for Adam and Alibkhiat v Westminster and Brent Councils

9. REFUSALS

9.1. If an applicant rejects an offer, whether under S188 or S193 of the Housing Act 1996, the Council will ask the applicant to provide reasons for the refusal. The Council will consider the reasons for refusal given and undertake further enquiries as necessary. If the Council accepts the reasons for refusal and agree the offer is unsuitable, the offer will be withdrawn and a further offer will be made.

9.2. Where applicants refuse suitable interim accommodation and the Council does not accept their reasons for refusal, applicants will not be offered further accommodation and will be required to make their own arrangements. There is no right of appeal against the suitability of accommodation offered to applicants under S188 of the Housing Act 1996 (although applicants can apply for judicial

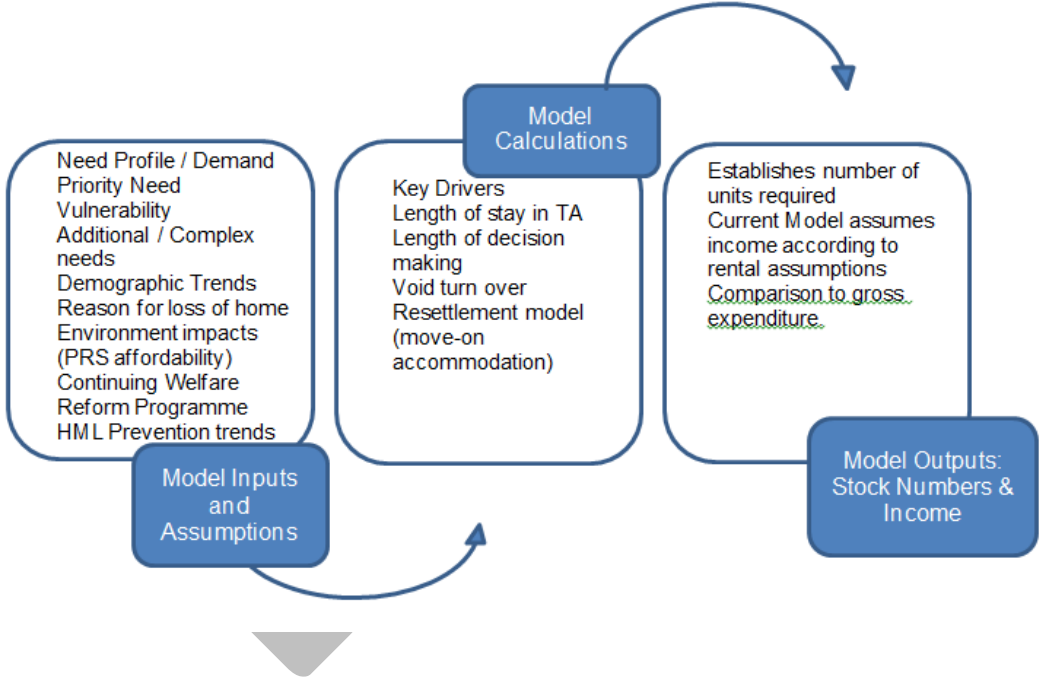
Temporary Accommodation Procurement and Placement Policy

review through the courts). For applicants where the Council has accepted a rehousing duty under S193 Housing Act 1996 (s193 duty) there is a right to request a review of the suitability of temporary accommodation decision, pursuant to S202 of the Housing Act 1996.

10. Governance and Annual Review

This policy is subject to Executive approval. Future targets for procurement will be reviewed annually. It is recommended that changes to the type of interim accommodation or methods of procurement will be agreed by the Strategic Director and Portfolio Holder for Housing.

Annex A: Temporary Accommodation Modelling





Part I – Release to Press

Meeting Executive
Portfolio Area Housing and Housing Development
Date 18 January 2023



JOINT HOUSING FOR OLDER PEOPLE STRATEGY UPDATE

Authors Lethius Charles / Karen Long
Lead Officer Rob Gregory
Contact Officer Lethius Charles

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The report provides an update on the initial progress of the Joint Housing for Older People's Strategy agreed by the Executive in December 2020 and outlines the next steps to be undertaken.
- 1.2 The next steps include a Strategic Housing Market Assessment and to work on a number of projects in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council that will benefit older residents in Stevenage.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the progress of the Housing for Older People Strategy following its adoption in 2020 be noted.
- 2.2 That the future plans, as identified in the Action Plan, including their financial implications, be approved.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The joint 10-year Housing for Older People Strategy (HOPS) was adopted in December 2020 following its development by Stevenage Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council (HCC). The project team held public and professional consultations to ensure that the strategy considered the future needs of the town's older population.
- 3.2 The HOPS was developed in the context of:
- the delivery of large-scale housing development programmes currently being undertaken by SBC.
 - HCC's new Extra Care Programme and Residential / Nursing Care requirement; and
 - Ever increasing pressures on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).
- 3.3 The planned development programmes create a new supply of high-quality accommodation options for older people and provide the opportunity to decommission and redevelop some of the ageing and low demand housing schemes within the borough.
- 3.4 The strategy also reflects the increased pressure on services for older people across all statutory services due to the demographic changes; and central government requirements to plan for services that meet older peoples' changing needs and aspirations.
- 3.5 The HOPS responds to objectives set in the Social Housing and Adult Social Care Reform White Paper and the Social Housing White Paper.
- 3.6 The vision of the HOPS is to deliver 'Homes for Healthy Ageing in Stevenage' and its strategic outcome is 'to enable healthy ageing for older people in Stevenage through the provision of a new housing and support offer'.

Four key themes were identified:

3.7 Development, standards and design

- Remodel the existing independent living/flexicare schemes to ensure they are fit for purpose through the asset management strategy
- Increase the provision and deliver on the new independent living scheme at Kenilworth and develop further new schemes with a mix of housing types.
- Develop design standards in housing for older people

Information, advice and technology

- Update SBC website pages with new information on this strategy, development and advice for older people wishing to move and/or their families and carers
- Work with private landlords to develop better understanding of needs of older people living in the private rented sector

- Ensure that integral or retrofitted technology is reflected in the Asset Management strategy
- Ensure new build properties are connected to good quality broadband services
- Develop marketing materials and possible show homes to help older people understand what benefits specialist housing can have.

Assistance and support to help people move

- Develop a business case and plan for expanding Community Support Services across the town.
- Recruit a dedicated resource to act as a single point of contact for older people including those with complex needs and needing specific assistance to manage a move
- Review the Council's Allocations Policy to make it easier for older people to move into suitable housing
- Undertake joint awareness campaigns across services linking older people's benefit take up and housing options advice
- Investigate ways of funding a handyman service to help older people with practical aspects of moving to a more suitable home.

Inter-organisational working

- Review Stevenage's Older Person's Network to create a HOPS Partnership comprising a range of statutory and voluntary services and older person representatives including those with disabilities.
- Undertake joint professionals' workshops to improve operational understanding between organisations and remove barriers to collaborative working
- Identify and exploit land opportunities in both public and private ownership that can help increase housing options across all tenures for older people
- Review information and data sources and recording mechanisms (cross authority) to capture strategic information on older people's housing needs and aspirations.

3.8 Upon adoption of the Strategy in 2020, the Executive requested this progress report.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

- 4.1 Due to the Covid-19 pandemic it was agreed to delay the launch of the strategy to enable resources to focus on the pandemic response. A HOPS Project Manager was subsequently recruited in January 2022; the role is jointly funded with Hertfordshire County Council.
- 4.2 The HOPS officially launched in September 2022 which saw 400 people attend over the course of the day. A number of residents registered their interest in the Older Person's Network, one of which went on to attend the Older Person's Network event in November 2022.

4.3 The Older Person's Network relaunched in November 2022. A memorandum of understanding has been drafted and is currently being reviewed by the Network. The group have provisionally agreed to meet quarterly with Task and Finish groups meeting as often as is necessary. The group are currently agreeing on the membership of the group and vision for the network.

4.4 As part of the HOPS Action Plan a range of support activities were undertaken supported by Specialist Support Officers recruited during 2021. Achievement highlights are outlined below.

4.5 Highlights of health and wellbeing delivery:

- The return of coffee mornings following the reopening of the lounges in October 2021
- The Health and Wellbeing programme officer completed the second scheme-wide health and wellbeing survey. The results indicated issues around physical health, loneliness, anxiety and digital engagement post the Covid-19 pandemic. It also demonstrated a year-on-year improvement in residents' knowledge of activities taking place in the schemes, indicating a positive impact of the health and wellbeing programme.
- Free 12 week 'Love to Move' chair-based exercise classes in collaboration with Stevenage Leisure Limited.
- Delivered a digital inclusion pilot in collaboration with North Herts and Stevenage Centre for Voluntary Service (NHSCVS). Residents received one-to-one support with Digital Champions to support with smartphones, tablets and laptops. Activities are currently on hold but will commence once again in the near future once recruitment challenges are addressed.
- An Expression of Interest had been submitted to The National Lottery's Reaching Communities Fund to support the Health and Wellbeing programme. The expression of interest was submitted in November. An initial response is due back in 12 weeks. This programme will also link into the new SBC leisure contract and the Active Communities Service, aimed at delivering physical activity to groups who would not access traditional leisure facilities.

4.6 Highlights of accommodation and complex needs support:

- The Local Lettings Policy has been reviewed to make it easier for older people to access independent living and flexicare. It gives them more choice and makes the process smoother when downsizing.
- The number of voids in the specialist accommodation schemes has reduced by 60%. In April 2021, 80 voids were recorded and 21 (Independent Living and Flexicare ready to let voids) in December 2022
- The Void loss was reduced from £36,375 in April 2021 to £23,977 in July 2022
- From April 2021 to July 2022, the Accommodation and Complex Needs Officer let 94 properties.

- 4.7 A significant focus of the HOPS has been about developing the right housing provision to meet future needs of older people. This has included a number of measures to make effective use of existing Council housing stock and to work with partners to create new housing to better meet future needs.
- 4.8 A Downsizing Pilot was launched in September to further incentivise people who are under occupying to move into more appropriate accommodation. The pilot enables residents to have one additional bedroom more than their basic need, a change that will be adopted in the upcoming Allocations Policy review. The results of this pilot will inform the Under Occupation Policy review. Officers have contacted 132 residents via phone and email resulting in 80 registering their interest. Of those who have registered their interest, 18 are currently bidding on properties, and 5 have downsized into Specialist Accommodation. A number of properties have been returned including a 2 bed ground floor flat, 2 bed house and 2 x 3 bed houses. The Downsizing Officer has noted that the extra bedroom is proving to be an effective incentive to downsizing; however, challenges remain around the lack of two bed accommodation available. There are two bedroom accommodation available once the new Independent Living Scheme at Kenilworth has been built.

Active management of older person's housing

- 4.9 Some voids in sheltered housing are to be expected where the housing stock is particularly old and cannot be fundamentally renewed without demolition. In pursuit of delivering the Council's flagship Independent Living scheme at Kenilworth a decision was taken to demolish a failing and low demand scheme at Asquith Court so as to make space for the new development that transforms the accommodation offer available to older people. A number of other low demand, and economically unviable schemes, are being assessed for their long term suitability and the opportunity they afford to improve on the current accommodation offer. As such, as this work completes, a further report will be presented to Executive in the coming year to update members on decision areas that will require consideration. Central to this will be a customer focused approach that seeks to improve the accommodation offer for older people, as well as supporting them with a host of measures that makes moving to a new home a less disruptive experience.
- 4.10 Monthly meetings are scheduled with the Planning Team to ensure that the priorities identified in the HOPS are adopted into the Local Plan review. SBC and North Herts planning team have jointly commissioned a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). A Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLLA) is scheduled 2023 which will identify land opportunities for older persons housing. Once findings have been finalised it will be necessary to review the strategy to ensure it continues to meet the desired outcomes.

- 4.11 A joint professionals' network is currently being formulated to further drive this work. The group will consist of professionals across Adult Care Service, Health, Housing and Development. The network will implement strategic plans and identify areas for collaboration and more effective working. Work to develop design standards has also commenced. The HOPS Project Manager has conducted a public consultation and continues to meet with staff across teams to gather the aspirations for future housing designs. The Housing Development Team will further progress this work to consider inclusion into future schemes along with any additional resourcing requirements.
- 4.12 The HOPS feeds into the work of the Stevenage Supported Housing Strategic Board which is jointly organised between HCC and SBC with a view to understanding and helping to address housing demand for people who draw on care and support or may need it in future. This extends beyond older people support and is a useful forum for supported housing related projects.
- 4.13 Officers are involved in a number of work streams with HCC. These are outlined below:
- HCC planning and ACS commissioned the Older Persons and Adult Disability Care Housing Need Model report. This research will help to determine the future demand for specialist accommodation across the county.
 - SBC officers will be involved in the early development work for a new care home in Stevenage
 - Supporting the feasibility of creating Enablement flats to support HCC's Discharge to Assess work.
 - A comprehensive response from across Council services had been submitted to HCC's Extra Care Consultation. The consultation identifies HCC's projected demand for Extra Care accommodation and the appetite for collaboration.

Summary and Forward Plan

- 4.14 There were 14 short to medium term actions identified in the action plan, 13 of which have commenced. Of those that have started, 4 are near completion and 2 have been completed. A further 4 medium to long term actions were identified in the action plan. Work has started on 3 of these actions with 1 nearing completion (see Appendix 1).
- 4.15 Whilst good progress has been made against the initial objectives set out in the HOPS, the changing nature of local government financing, community needs and service demands will mean that the strategy will need to continue to evolve. Following completion of a Strategic Housing Market Assessment in Quarter 4 2023/24, a further review of the strategy will be undertaken and proposed changes reported back to Executive accordingly.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

- 5.1.1 SBC has been successful in securing funding from Hertfordshire County Council for 17 hours of the Health and Wellbeing Officer role. The service is currently pursuing additional funding from the National Lottery Fund's Reach Communities grant to continue this work over the next 3 years. If successful, the bid will also support the Community Support Service, Hoarding Support Scheme and accommodation and complex needs support initiatives.
- 5.1.2 The costs of remodelling of planned schemes and making the stock fit for purpose is within the HRA Asset Management Strategy and has an allocated budget already identified in the HRA business plan.
- 5.1.3 To review the Private Stock Condition, as stated in the action plan, a new survey would need to be commissioned. This would be a one-off cost of approximately £12,000, this work will commence this work in 2023/24.
- 5.1.4 SBC's Housing and Planning are jointly funding the upcoming SHMA. £5,000 was ring-fenced to update the SHMA in the adopted HOPS. The first draft is currently being reviewed and we expect the final report to be ready in Quarter 4 2022/23.

5.2 Legal Implications

- 5.2.1 The HOPS was adopted by SBC and HCC in December 2020. The project team held public and professional consultations to ensure that the strategy considered the future housing and support needs of the Town. The HOPS also takes into consideration the:
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985.
 - Housing Act 2004
 - Care Act 2014

5.3 Risk Implications

- 5.3.1 There is limited land availability in the town which is a risk to developing significant numbers of new housing specifically for older people within wider housing market demands.
- 5.3.2 There is a risk that if the resources are unable to be provided for the action plan then delivery will not be possible.
- 5.3.3 Some of the actions within the strategy are dependent on HCC's continuing support and if this changed SBC would need to review the strategy.
- 5.3.4 There is a risk that external partners and service providers do not or stop engaging with SBC to deliver some of the actions identified in the action plan

5.4 Policy Implications

- 5.4.1 The strategy is impacted by a number of SBC's housing policies such as the Allocation Policy. The HOPS Project Manager is also involved in the Local Plan review to ensure that the needs of older people are included in future planning.

5.4.2 HCC policies/strategies that the HOPS links into are:

- Connected Lived model for social care
- Hertfordshire's Ten Year Supported Accommodation Strategy 2017-27
- Hertfordshire's Extra Care Housing Strategic Business Case
- Hertfordshire's 2017 Cabinet decision on the Future Development of Care Homes in
- Hertfordshire (Decision 17032)
- Market Position Statement

5.5 Climate Change Implications

5.5.1 As part of the Council's commitment to tackling climate change new housing provision is considered with regards to the environmental impact of that development. The design guide will address efficiency as a key area for consideration for new development, drawing on both industry best practice guidance and new regulatory requirements.

5.6 Staffing and Accommodation Implications

5.6.1 The HOPS Project Manager is currently managing the delivery of the strategy.

5.6.2 If the Council is unsuccessful in the Reaching Communities bid there will be a need to review the Health and Wellbeing post, as 20 hours is in the establishment whilst the remaining 17 hours is reliant on external funding. The current post is due to end in March 2023. If the Council does not secure extra funding it is likely this post will cease and there will be associated redundancy costs. The Council will also need to look at whether it can deliver some of the other projects detailed in the bid in a different way or it will have to reduce its commitment to the strategy accordingly.

5.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

5.7.1 Rigorous consideration will ensure that proper appreciation of any potential impact of that decision on the Council's statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. As a minimum this requires decision makers to read and carefully consider the content of any Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) produced by officers.

5.7.2 The Equality Act 2010 requires the Council when exercising its functions to have due regard to the need to:

- a. eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act;
- b. advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c. foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

5.7.3 The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

5.7.4 An updated EqIA will be submitted alongside the revised HOPS in 2023 following changes in relevant legislation.

5.8 **Service Delivery Implications**

5.8.1 The HOPS and its Key Performance Indicators will be reviewed following the updated Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Strategic Land Availability Assessment, which will help identify the future demand for specialist accommodation in the town.

6. **Background documents**

6.1 All documents that have been used in compiling this report, that may be available to the public, i.e., they do not contain exempt information, should be listed here:

BD1 Supported housing: national statement of expectations guidance

BD2 Housing for Older People Strategy 2020-2030

7. **Appendices**

Appendix A – HOPS Action Plan

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HOPS Programme Delivery (Appendix 1)

Project ID	Project Name	Project Description	RAG Status	Due Date	Departmental Lead	Project Sponsor	Progress Summary	SSAB Comments
HOPS01	Joint Professionals' Workshop	Programme and establish across sectors	In progress	2022-23	SBC/HCC	Lethius Charles	TOR drafted Meeting with ACS/ Housing to be set	
HOPS02	HOPS Partnership	Create HOPS Partnership(revamp of Older Persons Network)	In progress	2022-23	SBC	Lethius / Oonagh	1st meeting took place. MOU currently being revised	
HOPS03	Design Standards	Develop a standardised development criteria for older persons' housing	In progress	2022-23	SBC/HCC	Simon Nuttall/HCC Development Team	Staff and public consultation took place. Lack of funding to commission technical drawings. Waiting on Housing Development to confirm if this can be included in project work	
HOPS04	Tender & Commissioning Review	Embed new design and sustainability criteria in tender documents and commissioning requirements.	Not Started	2022-23	SBC/HCC	Simon Nuttall/HCC Development Team		
HOPS05	Specialist Roles	Appoint & train into specialist roles dedicated to support older people: -Accommodation and Complex Needs Coordinator -Health & Wellbeing Programme Officer	Completed	2020-23	SBC	Sharon Mills	Completed	
HOPS06	Dashboard	Standard reporting mechanism for reporting HOPS progress	In progress	2020-23	SSAB	Lethius Charles	Met with Sharron to review KPIs.	
HOPS07	Data Mapping Project	To provide robust information to inform reviews of strategic housing market assessments, local housing need assessments and Local Plan / Planning Policy updates	In progress	2020-26	HCC/SBC	Planning/HCC	SHMA is nearing completion. SLAA planned for early 2023	
HOPS08	Lessons Learned	To embed continuous improvement into design and development by developing a protocol for recording lessons learned from new developments	Not started	2020-26	SBC/HCC	Simon Nuttall	Cannot start until new development are completed	
HOPS09	Asset Management Strategy	Scope, cost and enable programme of refurbishment of smaller general needs dwellings that may be suitable for older people to downsize into	In progress	2020-26	SBC	Andrew Garside	Fed into the Assessment Management strategy review	
HOPS09+	Stock Condition Survey	Commission Private Sector Stock Condition Survey	Not started	2020-26	SBC	Environmental Health	Awaiting confirmation of available funds	
HOPS10	HHIA and SBC Adaptations	Align policies and explore jointly funded projects to ensure older people across all tenures can access adaptations and housing related practical support to move	In progress	2020-2026	SBC/HCC	Chris Neville	A&A recently updated their policies. Lethius to continue this work when new manager is appointed A&A workshop planned for Feb	
HOPS11	Communication & Marketing Plan	To ensure older people can access a range of up to date and relevant information	In progress	2020-26	SBC	Sharon Mills	Work to resume in Q1	
HOPS12	Strategic Database	Cross authority review of key information, data sources and recording systems	Not started	2020-26	HCC/SBC		Work has started on this will feed into the HOPS review	
HOPS13	Community Support Expansion	Develop business case to expand offer of Community Support service to older people across all tenures, and to include handyperson service	In progress	2020-26	SBC	Karen Long	Has been include in Reaching Community funding application	
HOPS14	Joint Land Register	Develop register of suitable development land for older persons housing	In progress	2020-26	SBC	Planning	Will be included in the SLAA	
HOPS15	Review of Allocations Scheme and Local Lettings Policies	Review and develop Allocations Policy and Local Lettings Policies in respect of Older People and specialist housing	In progress	2024-26	SBC	Tracy Jackson	Allocations, Under occupation and local lettings policies are being reviewed	
HOPS16	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment	Produce Stevenage Older Person's Housing JSNA	In progress	2024-26	HCC	Lethius Charles	Meeting set for 10/01	
HOPS17	Extra Care Development (mixed tenure)	Improve housing options for those older people with care needs but wish and have the ability to live independently	In progress	2024-2030	HCC/SBC	Ash Ahmed/HCC Development Team	Currently in review with legal	
HOPS18	Residential Care Home Development	Provision of excellent care and accommodation to stevenage residents in need of high levels of care and HCC funded.	Not started	2024-2030	HCC	Kristian Tizzard	Pre-development work starting in Q1 2023	

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Meeting Executive
Portfolio Area Environment and Climate Change
Date 18 January 2023



STEVENAGE DESIGN GUIDANCE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT: ADOPTION

KEY DECISION

Author Sally Talbot | 2176
Lead Officer Zayd Al-Jawad | 2257
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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide Members with an overview of the final Stevenage Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (Appendix A).
- 1.2 To seek Members' approval to adopt the Stevenage Design Guidance SPD.
- 1.3 The SPD seeks to maximise the delivery of high-quality design from development in Stevenage and improve the health and wellbeing of the town and its residents, as well as providing sustainable development and mitigating climate change.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the content of the final Stevenage Design Guidance SPD, and public consultation held between 19 September to 31 October 2022, be noted.
- 2.2 To agree the adoption of the Stevenage Design Guidance SPD, on 30 January 2023.

- 2.3 That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director: Planning and Regulation, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change, to make minor amendments as necessary in the final preparation of the SPD document prior to adoption.
- 2.4 That the comments of the Planning & Development Committee, held on the 10 January 2023, regarding the content of this report, be taken into account as part of the Executive's deliberations on the matter.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) are produced to add detail to the policies included in an adopted Local Plan [BD1]. They are used to build upon and provide further guidance for development on specific sites or on particular issues. Whilst they are not part of the Development Plan¹ for an area, and cannot add unnecessarily to the financial burdens on development, the contents of a SPD are a material consideration when determining a planning application.
- 3.2 The Council has a Design Guide SPD which was adopted in October 2009 [BD2]. The document was produced to supplement policies in the District Plan Second review (2004) and focusses on traditional design ideas such as the separation distance of homes and the design of suburban roads. The overarching aim of the SPD is to ensure that development in Stevenage results in optimal design for different areas of development including safety, habitat, privacy etc. It requires developments to include aspects of design that provide model conditions for the residents of Stevenage and for the environment.
- 3.3 The SPD provides instructions of what to provide and how to provide appropriate design of different types of development in Stevenage. For residential development, this includes privacy, separation distances and extensions for example. For non-residential development, the design guide includes less guidance and this is an area that has needed refining.

Policy Background

- 3.4 The procedure to adopt a new SPD is set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. In summary, the process runs as follows:
- Prepare draft SPD;
 - Minimum 4-week public consultation (normally 6 weeks);
 - Process public consultation responses;
 - Revise SPD to take account of responses;
 - Publish summary of all consultation responses (consultation statement);
 - Adopt new SPD.

¹ The Development Plan for an area comprises the adopted Local Plan, the Waste Local Plan, the Minerals Local Plan and any adopted Neighbourhood Plans (of which there are none currently in Stevenage).

- 3.5 The purpose of the Stevenage Design Guidance SPD is to give more detail to the current Strategic Policy 8: Good design, in the Stevenage Borough Local Plan, and also Detailed Policy GD1: High quality design.
- 3.6 National Government have a range of documents that consider levels of differing design standards including:
- Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard (2015)
 - Living with beauty: promoting health, well-being and sustainable growth (2020)
 - Creating space for beauty: interim report of the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission (2019)
 - Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission (2021)
 - National Design Guide (2021)
 - National Model Design Code (2021)
- These all promote good quality and thoughtful design to enhance environments for residents and biodiversity.
- 3.7 In December 2022, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities released two letters relating to future planning reform.
- 3.8 In his letter “Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill: Planning and Local Control in England” [BD3], the Secretary of State outlined plans to consult on a “National Planning Policy Framework Prospectus”, which includes a commitment to ensuring that the planning system creates more beautiful and sustainable buildings.
- 3.9 Through the Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill, the Government is seeking to introduce a duty for all local councils to produce a design code covering the same area as the Local Plan, which will set simple clear minimum standards on development in that area – such as height, form and density. This measure will allow Government to empower communities, working with local councils, to have a say on what their area will look like by setting clear standards for new development.
- 3.10 The proposed changes by Government will instruct the Planning Inspectorate that they should no longer override sensible local decision making, which is sensitive to and reflects local constraints and concerns. Overall, this amounts to a rebalancing of the relationship between local councils, Government and the Planning Inspectorate, and will give local communities a greater say in what is built in their neighbourhood. For example, when assessing a local plan, a series of considerations will have to be taken into account, including:
- Character and Design: ‘gentle densities’ need to be pursued, as championed by the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission. The Bill’s provisions for mandatory design codes, which will have the same legal force as the Local Plan, will provide authorities a powerful tool to guide the forms of development that communities wish to see.
- 3.11 In his letter “Creating Beautiful, Popular, Healthy and Sustainable Places” [BD4], the Secretary of State refers to a new “Office for Place”, to champion

design and beauty in placemaking by helping local authorities and communities turn visions for beautiful towns, cities and neighbourhoods into local standards that all new development should meet. As part of this, there are four “asks” of local authorities to support communities:

- Speed up permissions for well-designed places, and turn down applications for badly designed places;
- Prepare design codes now;
- Appreciate the role of placemaking in levelling up by recognising the need for strong leadership within a council; and
- Make use of the tools available to promote beautiful and sustainable development in the local authority area.

3.12 The Council has already adopted a suite of other SPDs, including:

- Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD (adopted October 2020) [BD5]
- The Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD (adopted March 2021) [BD6]

3.13 These SPDs have been incorporated and referenced in the document to ensure that the SPD remains robust and relevant.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

Recommendation 2.1: That the content of the final Stevenage Design Guidance SPD, and public consultation held between 19 September to 31 October 2022, be noted.

4.1 The final Stevenage Design Guidance SPD is included in Appendix A. A track changes version is included in Appendix B, to show changes since the first consultation version. A broad overview of the key points from the draft version is presented below.

Explanation of the purpose of the Design Guidance

4.2 An introduction to the document, what it relates to and how it sits with the Stevenage Borough Local Plan and its role as a material consideration.

4.3 A consideration of the components for good design, for example the appearance of buildings, the form and creation of new streets and spaces and the functionality and practicality that is embedded in design and the visual quality of buildings.

4.4 An introduction of the ten characteristics as set out in the National Design Guide. This is to ensure consistency and continuity between national guidance and also our own local guidance.

The ten characteristics

- 4.5 **1. Context** – this section deals with the location of development and the attributes of its immediate, local and regional surroundings. An understanding of the context history and the cultural characteristics of a site, neighbourhood or region influences the location, siting and design of new developments. It means they are well grounded in their locality and more likely to be acceptable to existing communities. Creating a positive sense of place helps to foster a sense of belonging and contributes to well-being, inclusion and community cohesion.
- 4.6 **2. Identity** – the identity or character of a place comes from the way that buildings, street and spaces, landscape and infrastructure combine together and how people experience them. It is not just about the buildings or how a place looks, but how it engages with all of the senses. Local character makes places distinctive. Well-designed, sustainable places with a strong identity give their users, occupiers and owners a sense of pride, helping to create and sustain communities and neighbourhoods.
- 4.7 **3. Built form** – Built form is the three-dimensional pattern or arrangement of development blocks, streets, buildings and open spaces. It is the interrelationship between all these elements that creates an attractive place to live, work and visit, rather than their individual characteristics. Together they create the built environment and contribute to its character and sense of place.
- 4.8 **4. Movement** – Patterns of movement for people are integral to well-designed places. They include walking and cycling, access to facilities, employment and servicing, parking and the convenience of public transport. They contribute to making high quality places for people to enjoy. They also form a crucial component of urban character. Their success is measured by how they contribute to the quality and character of a place, not only how well they function.
- 4.9 **5. Nature** – Public open spaces are open to all. They provide opportunities for comfort, relaxation, stimulation and social interaction in a safe environment, to encourage interaction in an open space, its location and structure needs careful consideration along with its activities, versatility and how it can be used and accessed by all groups of people.
- 4.10 **6. Public spaces** – The quality of the spaces between buildings is as important as the buildings themselves. Public spaces are streets, squares and other spaces that are open to all. They are the setting for most movement. The design of a public space encompasses its siting and integration into the wider network of routes as well as its various elements. These include areas allocated to different users – pedestrians, cyclists and cars – for different purposes such as movement or parking, hard and soft surfaces, street furniture, lighting, signage and public art.
- 4.11 **7. Uses** – Sustainable places include a mix of uses that support everyday activities, including live, work and play. Well-designed neighbourhoods need to include an integrated mix of tenures and housing types that reflect local housing need and market demand. They are designed to be inclusive and to meet the changing needs of people of different ages and abilities. New

development reinforces existing places by enhancing local transport, facilities and community services, and maximising their potential use. Where there is rapid social and economic change, such as sustainable growth or diversification in rural communities or town centres, well-designed buildings and places are able to accommodate a variety of uses over time.

- 4.12 **8. Homes and buildings** – Well-designed homes and buildings are functional, accessible and sustainable. They provide internal environments and associated external spaces that support the health and well-being of their users and all who experience them. They meet the needs of a diverse range of users, taking into account factors such as ageing population and cultural differences. They are adequate in size, fit for purpose and are adaptable to the changing needs of their occupants over time. Successful buildings also provide attractive, stimulating and positive places for all, whether for activity, interaction, retreat or simply passing by.
- 4.13 **9. Resources** – Well-designed places and buildings conserve natural resources including land, water, energy and materials. Their design responds to the impacts of climate change. It identifies measures to achieve:
- mitigation, primarily by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and minimising embodied energy; and
 - adaptation to anticipated events, such as rising temperatures and the increasing risk of flooding.

A compact and walkable neighbourhood with a mix of uses and facilities reduces demand for energy and supports health and well-being. It uses land efficiently so helps adaptation by increasing the ability for CO₂ absorption, sustaining natural ecosystems, minimising flood risk and the potential impact of flooding, and reducing overheating and air pollution.

- 4.14 **10. Lifespan** – Well-designed places sustain their beauty over the long term. They add to the quality of life of their users and as a result, people are more likely to care for them over their lifespan. They have an emphasis on quality and simplicity.

Appendices

- 4.15 The appendices in the Stevenage Design Guidance SPD contain more detail and readers are directed to the relevant sections in accordance with the area of interest.
- 4.16 The appendices include:
- Stevenage Urban Character Assessments;
 - Key shopfront components, including security shutters, canopies and awnings, and illumination etc; and
 - Building design features, including scale, sunlight, daylight and overshadowing, and landscaping etc;
- 4.17 The Stevenage Local List of Heritage Assets [BD7] and Public Realm Design Guide [BD8] Design Guidance SPD are appended to this Report. Both of

these documents were originally considered to be a part of the Stevenage Design Guidance SPD.

- 4.18 However, following comments from Executive in July 2021 [BD9] and as reflected in the Report to Executive in February 2022 [BD10], it was decided to keep the Design Guidance SPD separate from the Local List of Heritage Assets, which is updated regularly as submissions for new heritage assets in the Borough are received. The Local List was published on the Stevenage Borough Council website in March 2022. The Public Realm Design Guide acts as a supporting document to the SPD.
- 4.19 The Local List of Heritage Assets, in particular, is linked closely to the Stevenage Design Guidance SPD. Applications for any potential new listings can be submitted to Stevenage Borough Council via the following link: <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/local-heritage-asset-register-for-the-borough-of-stevenage>

Consultation on the Stevenage Design Guidance SPD

- 4.20 Consultation on the draft Design Guidance SPD was initially held between 20 September to 15 November 2021 and was then extended for a further two weeks until 29 November 2021. This brought close to 200 responses from the public and stakeholders; this following a Design Workshop with Members in July 2021 where suggestions were brought through into the draft SPD.
- 4.21 Because the amendments that needed to be made to the document were deemed significant, it was agreed by Executive in February 2022 that the document would need to be consulted upon again, once the amendments had been duly made.
- 4.22 Following approval from Executive in February 2022 [BD10], the second round of consultation was undertaken on the Draft Stevenage Design Guidance SPD for a period of six weeks, from 19 September to 31 October 2022. Consultation was undertaken in line with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. Consultees who had previously signed up to the planning consultation list were contacted by e-mail, or by post where no e-mail address had been provided.
- 4.23 The second consultation ensured that the Council exercised good practice in relation to the amendments that were required. The second consultation was an appropriate consultation, in line with the Regulations, given the responses from the first consultation. In addition, it provided an opportunity to further publicise the good work that the Council have been undertaking in relation to the design of buildings and public realm in the Borough.
- 4.24 The consultation was advertised on the Council's website home page and Planning Policy pages. It appeared on the Stevenage Borough Council social media pages and a hard copy of the consultation document was available at the Council offices and Customer Service Centre. Representations were submitted via the Council's website.
- 4.25 A total of 43 representations were received from a number of key consultees and stakeholders. Given that there were close to 200 representations to the first round of consultation, and that changes made as a result reflected the

significance of those representations, the number of responses to the second round of consultation was considered reasonable and the majority of comments to the second round were of strong value.

4.26 Responses were received from:

- Members of the public.
- Property developers.
- Stevenage Borough Council (Planning, Housing).
- Hertfordshire County Council (Highways, Minerals & Waste, Landscape & Environmental Service).
- The Coal Authority.
- Historic England.
- Sport England.
- Transport for London.
- Hertfordshire Countryside Management Service & Rights of Way.

4.27 The main topics raised during the consultation were:

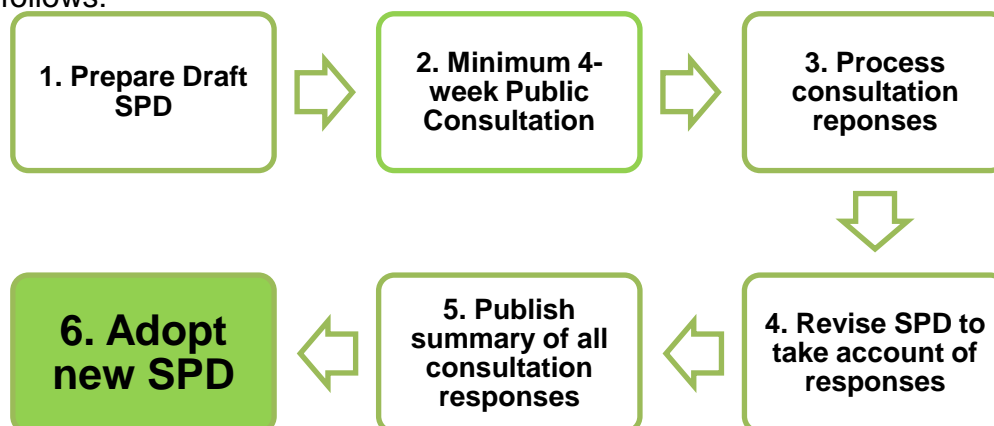
Response	Reasons for Amendment
Homes and bedroom sizes	<i>The National Described Space Standard from national government will be included within the SPD as a guide.</i>
Appropriate buildings and forms – reflecting NPPF guidance	<i>The Built Form section will be reviewed in line with recommendation and amendment made in line with the NPPF.</i>
Use of Sustainable Materials – Resources	<i>The use of recycled aggregates within the design stage is a valid request and this will be reflected where appropriate in the Design SPD and align the SPD with HCC’s Minerals and Waste Local Plan.</i>
Refer to new and updated documents from Sports England, HCC and Historic England	<i>To ensure the robust nature of the document Incorporate guidance and best practice from Historic England, HCC and Sport England</i>
Embed ‘Active Design’ into the document	<i>Help to promote a more physically active and mentally stimulating environment in all aspects of design.</i>
Review the proposed species for street tree planting	<i>Biosecurity regulations, for example Ash Dieback.</i>

Response	Reasons for Amendment
Review references to hedgerows	<i>The use of the word 'attractive' implies negativity to something that is aesthetically unattractive, would be more appropriate to use alternative language such as 'important' or 'valued'.</i>
Socially Inclusive – Homes for older people	<i>Incorporate SPD in line with HAPPI standards</i>
New guidance from BRE on daylight / sunlight best practice	<i>SPD will update the guidance in accordance with this new document</i>

- 4.28 Officers have taken all comments and views into account in a conscientious manner. This has helped to inform and shape the final version of the SPD being reported to Executive.
- 4.29 The main concepts and principles of the draft SPD have been maintained and brought forward into the final version of the SPD, taking into account a number of significant amendments suggested by respondents' comments.
- 4.30 A complete schedule of consultation responses, the Council's response to the comments and the areas of changes proposed in the SPD are provided in the Consultation Statement (Appendix C).

Recommendation 2.2: To agree the adoption of the Stevenage Design Guidance SPD, on 30 January 2023.

- 4.31 The final Stevenage Design Guidance SPD is appended to this report (Appendix A). The SPD has been through two public consultations and amended as per the responses received.
- 4.32 The procedure to adopt a new SPD is set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. In summary, it is as follows:



- 4.33 The Council has undertaken two public consultations and the Council has considered the consultation responses, produced a document stating the

main issues raised by respondents, and summarised how the issues have been addressed by the Council (Appendix C).

- 4.34 The Council has produced an Adoption Statement (Appendix D) which is required to notify the public of the adoption of the Stevenage Design Guidance SPD.
- 4.35 The SPD is now ready to be finalised and adopted on 30 January 2023.

Recommendation 2.3: That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director: Planning and Regulation, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change, to make minor amendments as necessary in the final preparation of the SPD document prior to adoption.

- 4.36 The Stevenage Design Guidance SPD is appended to this report. However, it may be necessary to make very minor changes prior to final adoption. This might include cosmetic adjustments, the correction of typographical errors and any minor factual changes.
- 4.37 It is recommended that any such amendments be approved via delegated powers.

Recommendation 2.4: That the comments of the Planning & Development Committee, held on the 10 January 2023, regarding the content of this report, be taken into account as part of the Executive's deliberations on the matter.

- 4.38 The Planning & Development Committee is due to meet on 10 January 2023. Officers will present a verbal update to Members on the status of the Stevenage Design Guidance SPD.
- 4.39 Planning & Development Committee Members have been made aware of the SPD and the process as it has developed since 2020–21.
- 4.40 Any comments and suggestions made at Planning & Development Committee on 10 January 2023 will inform any final decision made by Executive.

5 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 5.1 The costs associated with producing and consulting on the Stevenage Design Guidance SPD will be met from the agreed departmental budget.
- 5.2 Any potential schemes that are mentioned in the SPD will need to be subject to a business case and / or will require third party funding.

Legal Implications

- 5.3 Consultation on the Stevenage Design Guidance SPD was undertaken in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- 5.4 The outcomes of consultation were conscientiously considered in finalising the SPD, taking responses into account prior to approval by the Executive.

Risk Implications

- 5.5 There are no significant risks associated with producing the Stevenage Design Guidance SPD.

Policy Implications

- 5.6 The Stevenage Design Guidance SPD accords with, and has been produced to supplement policies in, the adopted Stevenage Local Plan (2019).

Planning Implications

- 5.7 The Stevenage Design Guidance SPD will supplement the adopted Stevenage Local Plan (2019).
- 5.8 If adopted after consultation, the document will not form part of the Development Plan for Stevenage. However, it will be a material consideration for planning applications.
- 5.9 The adoption of the Stevenage Design Guidance SPD on 30 January 2023 would position the Council very strongly, ahead of the proposed Planning Reforms by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities as referred to in paragraphs 3.8 to 3.11 of this Report.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.10 The Stevenage Design Guidance SPD has the potential to have a positive impact on climate change through the multiple benefits that prioritising the design of development and incorporating innovative technologies.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 5.11 The Stevenage Design Guidance SPD does not have any direct equality or diversity implications. When implementing any of the proposals the delivery

body will need to consider the potential impacts on different community groups, in particular those who are less mobile or disabled.

Community Safety Implications

- 5.12 Whilst the Stevenage Design Guidance SPD does not have any direct community safety implications itself, when implementing any proposals, the delivery body will need to consider potential impacts on community safety.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- BD1 Stevenage Borough Local Plan, 2011–2031
- BD2 Stevenage Design Guide 2009
- BD3 “Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill: Planning and Local Control in England” (Secretary of State of Communities and Local Government, 5 December 2022)
- BD4 “Creating Beautiful, Popular, Healthy and Sustainable Places” (Secretary of State of Communities and Local Government, 1 December 2022)
- BD5 Stevenage Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Document (October 2020)
- BD6 Stevenage The Impact of Development on Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (March 2021)
- BD7 Stevenage Local List of Heritage Assets (last updated March 2022)
- BD8 Stevenage Public Realm Design Guide (2019)
- BD9 Meeting of the Stevenage Borough Council Executive, Item 9: Stevenage Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document 2021: Public Consultation Feedback (February 2022)
- BD10 Meeting of the Stevenage Borough Council Executive, Item 6: Stevenage Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document 2021: Public Consultation (July 2021)

APPENDICES

- A Stevenage Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document: Final Version (December 2022)
- B Stevenage Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document: Tracked Changes Version (December 2022)
- C Stevenage Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document: Consultation Statement (for consultation held between 19 September to 31 October 2022)
- D Stevenage Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document: Draft Adoption Statement

Stevenage Design Guidance

Supplementary Planning Document



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Part 1 – Purpose of the Stevenage Design Guidance

Introduction

1.1 Stevenage Design Guidance supports the strategic and detailed policies in the Stevenage Borough Local Plan (SBLP). This guidance forms a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which is an additional 'material consideration' in planning decisions. This guidance replaces the Stevenage Design Guide 2009; updating advice where appropriate and providing new guidance on matters introduced or strengthened in the SBLP including long-term sustainability through the use of durable, low maintenance materials.



Image: Hertfordshire LEP

1.2 This document was adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document on 30 January 2023, following a meeting of the Executive Committee of Stevenage Borough Council on 18 January 2023.

1.3 A draft version of this document was subject to two public consultations between 9 August 2021 and 4 October 2021 and a second from, 19 September to 31 October 2022. The consultations were carried out in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004, as well as Stevenage Borough Council's Statement of Community Involvement. A summary of the representations received and the Council's response to these is set out in the Statement of Consultation which accompanies this document.

How to use this design guidance

1.4 This Stevenage Design Guidance sets out clear design principles to guide future development in Stevenage. It encourages a design led approach to all development, from large residential schemes to modest residential extensions and small infill developments.

1.5 This Guide provides design principles for all developments, accompanied by illustrations and good practice examples, to help deliver good design and clearly signpost where more detailed guidance can be accessed. It aims to be user-friendly and does not seek to replicate existing policy and regulations that will continue to apply to all development.

Looking forward

1.6 This guidance has been prepared in the context of social, economic, and environmental change. Technological change is rapid, with developments in digital, artificial intelligence and machine learning affecting our lives at all scales.

1.7 The demographics of Stevenage are also driving change as the population ages, the needs of some residents are changing from those originally provided for through the development of the New Town. Young people's expectations are changing too, leading to new lifestyles and new models of home ownership.

1.8 We expect continuing change as a consequence of climate change, changing home ownership models and technological changes. It is likely to emerge and embed in society rapidly. It will influence the planning, design and construction of new homes and places.

Components for good design

1.9 Urban design is the design of towns and cities, streets and spaces, and concerns all aspects of the public realm, including the detailed design of buildings and landscapes, the way in which places work and the relationships between existing and new developments.

1.10 Good design translates into more than the appearance of buildings. It is important in both small residential extensions and large-scale developments that introduce form and materials and the creation of new streets and spaces. Functionality and practicality are embedded in design and are as important as the visual quality of a building or large scale development.

1.11 Well-designed neighbourhoods help build communities, give them a sense of belonging and make residents feel safe. Often this can be through simple approaches such as natural surveillance, an easy technique created when new streets and public open spaces are overlooked by windows (in active rooms) and doors.



Image Studio RHE

1.12 Carefully positioned car parking and cycle storage, as well as integrated refuse and recycling bins, also help to create a sense of order and reduce litter and vandalism.

1.13 The quality of open space and the way in which new streets and spaces are designed directly affects how people feel about a place and the whole community benefits from a commitment to usable green space. Access to open space also has a direct impact on the health and wellbeing of those able to take advantage of it.

1.14 For commercial development, well designed buildings are good for business. The flexibility to respond to changing social and economic circumstances is important, as are design solutions which encourage creativity and innovation. Investment in good quality design provides a higher return on the investment made.

1.15 Good design in all development is inclusive and accessible for everyone, has a positive impact on the environment, integrates into its immediate and wider surroundings, provides flexibility for future change, is easily maintained and delivers a return on investment.

1.16 All places and spaces are different, and design is not about starting again from a blank canvas. The context and character of a place needs to be taken into account and renewal rather than demolition is encouraged where possible. There is no 'perfect blueprint' for good design and trying to apply the same rigid principles everywhere would result in a loss of local distinctiveness and, therefore, counteract the objectives of the initial application of urban design principles.

1.17 The government has placed a great deal of emphasis on the importance of creating well designed places. The [Design Council](#) provides an advisory service to the government and various best practice guidance publications have since been produced. In addition, there is the [National Modal Design Code](#) and the police preferred minimum security guidance, [Secured By Design](#).



www.designcouncil.org.uk

The relationship between the Stevenage Borough Local Plan and the Stevenage Design Guidance

1.18 National and local planning policies influence whether a site is suitable for development and the form and nature of development. A planning review of relevant planning policy documents, including the Stevenage Borough Local Plan Policies SP8: Good Design, and GD1: High Quality Design, should be undertaken.

1.19 In addition, there is a series of other documents, including, Conservation Area Management Plans and Appraisals and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's) which are adopted or endorsed by the Council. These are material planning considerations in planning decisions and should be considered in the design of new development.

1.20 In some instances, construction may be able to proceed without the need for a formal planning application/approval. This is known as 'Permitted Development' (PD) rights. They derive from general planning permission granted by Parliament rather than the Local Planning authority. Further details are available from the Ministry of Levelling Up Housing and Communities website.

1.21 Even if you do not need to make a planning application, you should follow good design principles, with materials, forms and architectural detailing.

1.22 In addition to planning policy, applicants should consider best practice in terms of sustainable design, creating better environments and the quality of the built form. Further advice is available from the Homes England and Regulator of Social Housing, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), Historic England and Landscape Institute publications.



www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/building-futures/building-futures.aspx

1.23 Hertfordshire County Council, in partnership with the Hertfordshire District and Borough council's, have produced [Building Futures](#); a web-based guide to ensuring sustainable development in Hertfordshire. Aimed at planners and developers, it advocates high quality urban design as a catalyst for promoting sustainability. Modules within this guide contain information on energy, air, water, waste, safety and materials, which all interrelate to form an extensive design guide for sustainable and successful development. [Building Futures](#) must be read, in conjunction with this SPD, to ensure the sustainability of all development proposals. Hertfordshire County

Council is also the highways authority and its emerging guidance will be called 'Place and Movement Planning and Design Guide' which should be considered in addition to its Local Transport Plan 4. Any guidance provided by Hertfordshire County Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority should also be adhered to when considering design of places.

Introducing the ten characteristics

1.24 The National Design Guide notes that well-designed places have individual characteristics which work together to create its physical character. These ten characteristics help to nurture and sustain a sense of community. They work positively to address environmental issues affecting climate. They all contribute towards the cross-cutting themes for good design set out in the NPPF.



Fig 1 – Ten characteristics from the National Design Guide

1.25 This document is divided up into each of these ten characteristics in order to ensure that this guidance reflects accurately the characteristics of the National Design Guide

Part 2: The ten characteristics

Context

NPPF Chapters 8, 12, 14,15, 16

C.1 Context is the location of the development and the attributes of its immediate, local and regional surroundings.

C.2 The National Design Guide states that an understanding of the context, history and the cultural characteristics of a site, neighbourhood and region influences the location, siting and design of new developments. It means they are well grounded in their locality and more likely to be acceptable to existing communities. Creating a positive sense of place helps to foster a sense of belonging and contributes to well-being, inclusion and community cohesion.

Value heritage, local history and culture

C.3 Stevenage is Britain's first New Town. Designated in 1946, it was the solution to



Image: BBC News

address overcrowding that was being experienced in the ravages of bomb-damaged London which lies approximately 30 miles south.

C.4 The New Town developed around the Old Town of Stevenage, and enveloped small pockets of rural settlement. The original Masterplan for the town was inspired by the Garden Cities movement and incorporated a number of distinctive urban design features which made the development of

New Towns a revolutionary stage in planning history.

C.5 Owing to its identity as Britain's first New Town, the inception of Stevenage has a prodigious place in development history in the United Kingdom. It is, therefore, crucial that the individuality of Stevenage is preserved, and enhanced. Once Stevenage's original features are lost, they can never be replaced. Stevenage's architecture and its historic significance have been documented by Historic England in [The New Town Centre](#) study. This aids the understanding of the previous design processes which are key to Stevenage's identity and future development.

C.6 The Borough is broadly urban in its nature and is made up of a number of residential neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods make Stevenage distinct in that they are individual and separate from the town's industrial areas of Gunnels Wood, adjacent to the A1(M), and Pin Green, to the north of the town.

C.7 Some of the neighbourhoods have ancient historic cores from which the neighbourhood has grown, such as Shephall, Symonds Green and Chells Manor. Historically, these small original settlements developed along the Great North Road because Stevenage was a significant staging post with inns catering for travellers heading to and from London.

C.8 Many of the New Town principles have led to the creation of a successful place; however, some have not worked so effectively, in the way they were planned.

C.9 The Stevenage Local List of Heritage Assets is a supporting document to this Design Guidance SPD. The document lists the buildings in the Borough that residents have nominated or have been identified as being of historic importance. The buildings listed are not considered significantly historic enough to be included on the Listed Buildings register kept by Historic England, although a copy of those buildings are included in an Appendix to the Local Heritage Register. The document is a live working document and the Council continues to accept nominations for buildings.

Understand and relate well to the site, its local and wider context

C.10 Since the town was developed, revised and nationally recognised principles of ‘best practice’ design have been produced. For the existing urban fabric of Stevenage there are opportunities to improve design through the integration of new schemes and the development of public realm improvements.

C.11 Generally accepted principles of good urban design should be adhered to in all new developments, but there are particular elements relevant to this New Town which require specific attention. In order to do this successfully, it is important that an understanding of the existing character of the town is formed, and that we learn from what has been successful and what has been less successful within the town.

C.12 A Stevenage Urban Character Assessment (Appendix A) was produced in 2008, which details the main characteristics of the residential areas within the town. This indicates the key features of the different neighbourhoods and highlights any relevant development considerations; providing details of both positive and negative aspects of the localities. This evidence is useful in providing a broad basis for site character appraisals and should be used as such when creating development proposals. It is important to note that the study covers neighbourhood areas as a whole and it is essential that each site is further assessed, on an individual basis.

C.13 An important part of considering development in Stevenage is to demonstrate a clear link between the appraisal of the context, any applicable planning designations, the character of the site, physical constraints and opportunities and the development proposals. This rationale will need to be explained through the Design and Access Statement that will accompany the planning application.

C.14 Stevenage’s environment is protected by a number of local and national designations including Local Wildlife Sites, Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments which seek to preserve the area’s natural and built environment for future generations. Applicants should check the SBLP Proposals Map and carry out their own desktop analysis, referring to the Council’s website for further details.

C.15 A substantial amount of new housing is now required in Stevenage in order to meet the Objectively Assessed housing figures produced by Central Government. This provides the



Image: Stevenage Borough Council

Fig 2 – Neighbourhoods in Stevenage

opportunity for Stevenage to learn from any past mistakes, make a real impact in terms of urban design, by modernising the town and preserving and enhancing the existing surroundings and historical attributes of Stevenage, where appropriate.

C.16 Stevenage Borough Council has worked with Building Design Partnership (BDP), an international firm of architects and engineers, to produce a Public Realm Guide for redevelopment of the Town Centre. This will act as a supporting document to this Design Guidance SPD. The Public Realm Guide seeks to ensure continuity between the original buildings and new development in the Town Centre. This will include specific visions for open space and ensure that the design of buildings in the Town Centre are reflective of the architectural tone achieved by the Stevenage Development Corporation at the inception of Stevenage.

C.17 A high quality environment is essential for providing a good quality of life for residents. A well designed and managed space not only provides a visually attractive environment, but can also help to ensure that a place is easy to move around and within, is safe and secure, and is useful for all members of the community.

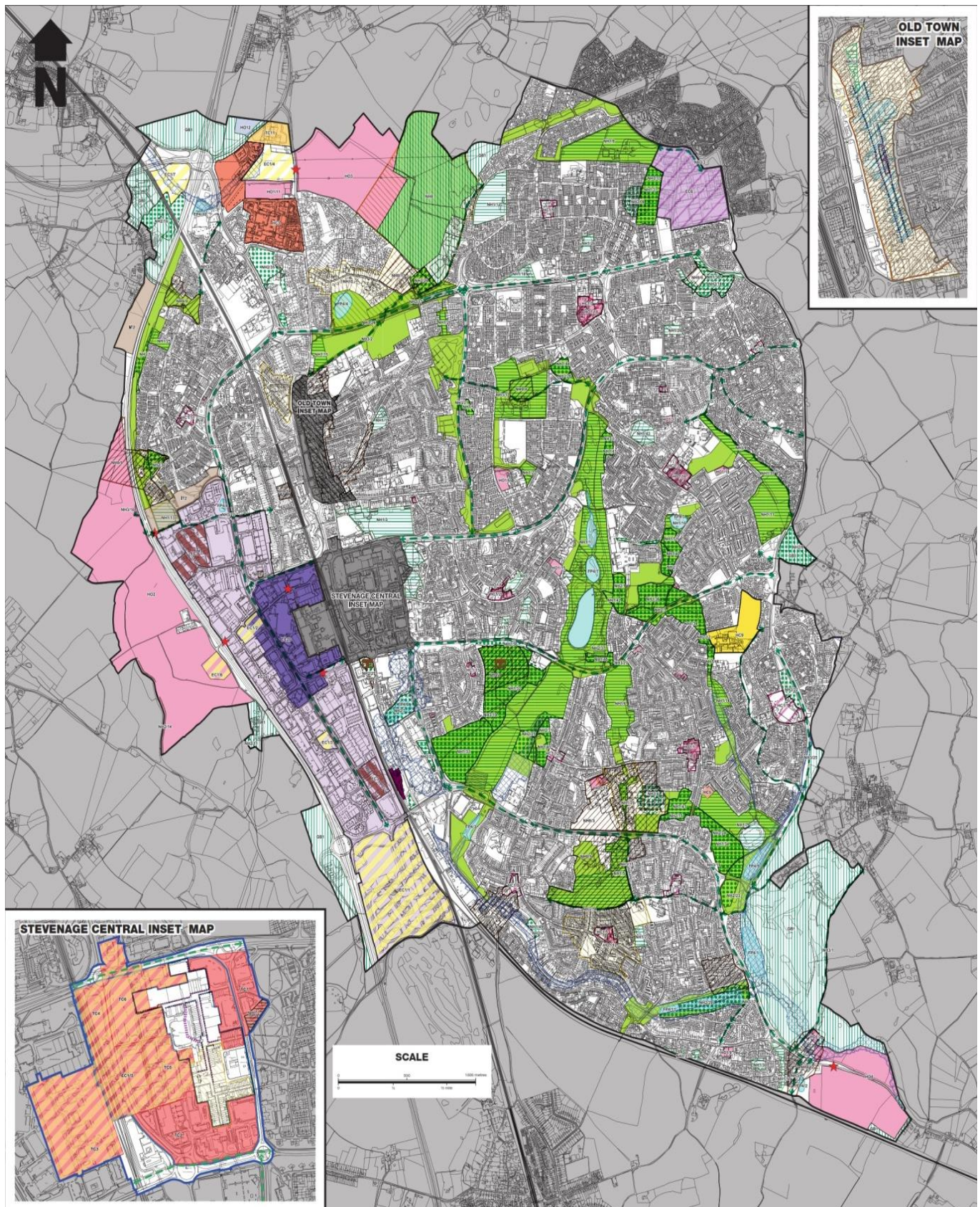


Image: Stevenage Borough Council

C.18 An understanding and analysis of the original New Town design concepts led to some key issues becoming apparent. These have been used as key themes, which run throughout the entirety of this guidance. Considering these concepts at all stages of the development process will provide a good basis for the creation of a successful place; based on the recognised principles of urban design, but also building on the existing fabric of the town without taking away from Stevenage's history as Britain's first Mark One New Town. The themes have been identified as follows:

- ✓ Sustainability – incorporate principles of sustainable development from a town-wide perspective to measures incorporated into an individual property.
- ✓ Increasing densities – encourage high densities in accessible locations.
- ✓ Respecting existing characteristics – respect local characteristics and preserve and enhance existing features, where appropriate.
- ✓ Legibility – provide landmark developments at nodal points.
- ✓ Design innovation – showcase Stevenage as an exemplar of high quality design; creating safer places through urban design techniques.

C.19 It is important to consider how highway and public realm schemes integrate with, and enhance areas of historic or architectural sensitivity. Historic England's [guidance for highways engineers and designers](#), highlight the historic environment is not all buildings and monuments. It is the spaces in between them and how they have a visual and physical impact on historic places, as well as how we value and use them. Highways and footpaths are often older than surrounding buildings; their line, construction materials and furniture can all be important to the sense of history of a place.

C.20 One of the key aspects of the original Masterplan for Stevenage was self-containment; on a town-wide scale, a balanced ratio of jobs and houses were provided, housing was allocated to people who had jobs in the town, reducing the need for residents to commute to work outside Stevenage. On a more local level, residents were accommodated within six distinct neighbourhoods, each containing their own Neighbourhood Centre; accommodating shops, pubs, schools, community centres and other services essential for facilitating self-containment. The aim was to reduce the need to travel into the Town Centre, enhance community relations and facilitate the success of local businesses.

C.21 These self-containment objectives are directly in line with the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) as well as healthy living aspirations. Although Stevenage is not completely self-contained, the Neighbourhood Centres have proved to be a particularly popular and well-used element of the town. With flats provided on the upper levels of the developments, they also provide multi-functional areas, which are now regarded as an important feature of good design; in terms of providing an active environment for natural surveillance and encouraging community spirit.

C.22 Sustainable development runs as a theme throughout this guidance and key ideas are highlighted within appropriate sections. However, the main principles for sustainability in design are listed within this chapter. C.20 This is not a fully comprehensive guide for sustainability, as there is a vast amount of information already available within the public realm. In addition, technologies are constantly being updated; therefore, it is essential that evolving guides are used.

C.23 Planning is crucial in the management of sustainable development, and with sustainability now at the heart of the government agenda, Local Authorities produce policies and guidance which supports these principles.

C.24 Our SBLP ensures that all new developments incorporate methods for encouraging sustainable transport, maintain and enhance biodiversity, minimise resource usage and reduce the overall environmental impacts of the development. Our policies also promote the use of renewable energies.

C.25 Planners, designers and developers need to work together to ensure climate change is considered at all stages of the development process.

C.26 With the amount of new development required in the town, there is the opportunity to make substantial gains in fostering sustainability. All new developments should minimise their carbon footprints. And existing homes and buildings can embrace retrofitting technologies to make a significant contribution to sustainability and climate change objectives. Government grants remain available for home owners to install energy efficient technologies.

C.27 Sustainable development not only helps tackle climate change but also provides benefits for communities including improved health and well-being and an enhanced quality of life.

C.28 Developers benefit from offering developments which are built sustainably. Consumers are more environmentally conscious and want to reside in eco-friendly homes, which reduce their impact upon the environment, as well as minimising household bills.

C.29 Corporate Social Responsibility is being seen as an increasingly important part of a company's reputation.

Fig 4 – Principles of the Garden City Movement



Image: HouseSimple

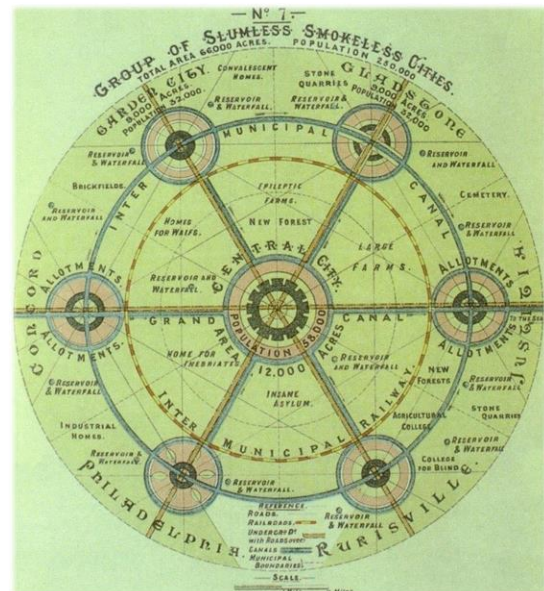


Image: Groundsure.com

C.30 Comprehensive sustainability guidance can be found within Hertfordshire's sustainable development guide '[Building Futures](#)'. Specific information on methods, techniques and best practice case studies, as well as expanding on the main principles put forward within this SPD are included in this guidance.

C.31 Another feature of the town's development was the relatively low density of housing. This was a result of the aspiration to provide an 'open town', following the principles of the Garden Cities movement; with high levels of open space, an extensive network of green corridors and wide roads throughout the town. Most of the residential areas have a high prevalence of two storey, terraced, properties, each with its own private garden. Guidance can be found in Historic England's '[Increasing Residential Density in Historic Environments](#)' study. This explores the factors that can contribute to successfully delivering developments which increase residential density in historic environments through case studies and literature.

C.32 Housing is an area of weaknesses across the town. One of the main issues is the lack of an appropriate mix of housing sizes, types and tenures. There is a high proportion of three bedroom properties, and a lack of one and two bedroom properties, although this has been helped by the recent office to residential conversions that having been taking place in the Town Centre, as well as larger homes. The lack of housing mix is exacerbated by

changes in demographics leading to an increase in the number of single person households and couples needing homes.

C.33 Due to growth requirements for the town, there is a need to provide a substantial number of additional homes in Stevenage. Higher density development is set out as a key requirement of National guidance, and, where appropriate, densities will need to be raised in order to meet these targets for new homes. This will need to be carefully balanced with the need to retain open space provision within the urban area as access to open space was a key original feature of the town.

I.1 The identity or character of a place comes from the way that buildings, street and spaces, landscape and infrastructure combine together and how people experience them. It is not just about the buildings or how a place looks, but how it engages with all of the senses. Local character makes places distinctive. Well-designed, sustainable places with a strong identity give their users, occupiers and owners a sense of pride, helping to create and sustain communities and neighbourhoods.

Respond to existing local character and identity

I.2 As a result of the prevalence of two storey, terraced properties, a reasonably continuous building height is broadly provided across the residential areas of the town. However, the Neighbourhood Centres do generally contain three storey buildings, helping to demonstrate their importance within the locality.

I.3 Although much of the original housing is similar in style, subtle differences exist between the housing in each of the residential areas, mainly attributable to the materials used. Since the initial development of the New Town, further neighbourhoods have been created, which follow the same basic principles, but also allow for modernisation.

I.4 The character of the town's housing varies more significantly between the original New Town housing, such as Bedwell and Shephall, and the modern estates built throughout the 1980's and 1990's, including Great Ashby, Chells Manor and Poplars. The more recent developments have respected the neighbourhood development strategy of the town but have strengthened the design and aesthetic value, by becoming a visible new extension with their own character.

I.5 There is a need to take this further in the future, as innovation in design, and contemporary architectural achievement is currently lacking in the town. Stevenage will benefit from landmark developments at key nodal points, which will assist in linking areas, as well as improving the legibility of the place, as set out in Policy EC5 of the SBLP. However, care should be taken to respect the existing characteristics of the town, and not to take value away from the New Town concepts.

I.6 Combining these ideas, contemporary buildings at appropriate locations will help achieve the higher densities required, as well as carrying forward and enhancing Stevenage's unique sense of place.

Well-designed, high quality and attractive

I.7 Places should be visually attractive and aim to bring pleasure to users and passers-by. They should cater for all users and be well-designed.

I.8 Well-designed places should appeal to all of the senses; its enduring distinctiveness, attractiveness and beauty are all affected by its looks, feels, sounds and even smells.

I.9 Buildings should:

- adopt typical building forms of the neighbourhood in which they are situated – developers should refer to Appendix A – Urban Character Assessments for more detail;
- draw upon the architectural precedents that are prevalent in the local area;
- use local building, landscape and topographical features, materials and plant types;
- introduce built form and appearance that adds new character and difference to places; and

- create a positive and coherent identity that local communities and residents alike can identify with.

Create character and identity

I.10 Character starts to be determined by the siting of development in the wider landscape, then by the layout. It continues to be created by form, scale, design, materials and details of buildings and landscape. In this way it creates a coherent identity that everyone can identify with, including the local communities and residents.

I.11 Where the scale or density of new development is very different to the existing place, it may be more appropriate to create a new identity rather than scale up the character of an existing place in its context. New character may also arise from a response to how today's lifestyles could evolve in the future, or to the proposed method of development and construction.

I.12 Where the character of an existing place has limited or few positive qualities, then a new and positive character will enhance its identity.

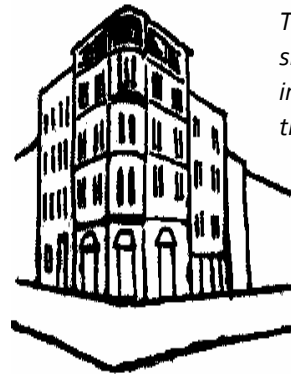
B.1 Built form is the three-dimensional pattern or arrangement of development blocks, streets, buildings, and open spaces. It is the interrelationship between all these elements that creates an attractive place to live, work and visit, rather than their individual characteristics. Together they create the built environment and contribute to its character and sense of place.

Compact form of development

B.2 The size and scale of a building, especially in relation to its context, is an important consideration when planning a development. Buildings and new developments should relate to their neighbouring buildings, ‘stepping up’ or gradually increasing from one height to another and they should not inappropriately dominate the street scene. Buildings should create landmark developments and incorporate taller buildings at nodal points, and in easily accessible locations.

B.3 Well designed, tall buildings can make a positive impact on a place, especially if they are to become identifiable landmarks at key nodal points.

B.4 Tall buildings should be carefully positioned to mark prominent landmarks, making it easier for people to find their way around, emphasising corners, particularly at important junctions or gateways, by curving the frontage, wrapping the fenestration around the corner or terminating the roof differently. Tall buildings can further emphasise corner building by raising the height of roof thereby creating visual interest and a distinctive identity, meaning that they can also be effective as landmark developments. These buildings should be designed to a high quality, as they are to become a prominent feature across the town, showcasing architectural innovation and best practice. Tall buildings help frame and define existing views, rather than blocking important features out and as such they should not appear out of place within the existing landscape or destroy existing views and reduce continuity. However, the development of tall buildings should not create ‘Micro-climates’, causing wind shear and cold corridors.



Taller developments should gradually increase in height from their neighbours

B.5 Views of and from the public realm can also enhance legibility throughout the town and should therefore be protected as far as possible. When considering future locations for tall buildings, policy guidance will consider areas that are sensitive to development, including their potential impact on views, conservation areas, listed buildings and their settings, other landmark buildings and areas, ecological assets and green spaces. Historic England’s publication ‘Streets for All’ provides updated practical advice for anyone involved in planning and implementing highways and other public realm works in sensitive historic locations. It sets out a means to improve public spaces without harming their valued character, including specific recommendations for works to surfaces, street furniture, new equipment, traffic management infrastructure and environmental improvements.

B.6 The use of tall buildings can also be beneficial in accommodating higher densities within Stevenage. Higher densities buildings can support public transport facilities and use land resources in a more sustainable and efficient way. They need to be designed in an effective way so that problems of overcrowding and reduced space standards do not arise. Tall buildings will be encouraged in easily accessible areas, and where space has previously been used ineffectively.

B.7 Buildings of 4 storeys or higher with roof access, balconies or ledges, often provide easy access and a means of suicide by jumping from a height. Policy guidance will consider how the design incorporates measures to reduce suicide potential and, where feasible and practical will require a risk assessment and management plan in line with UKHSA guidance on Preventing Suicides in Public Places 2015 UK Health Security Agency.

Appropriate building types and forms

B.8 Buildings should follow the existing building line of the area and respond positively to the existing frontage of a street. A sense of enclosure should be created by reducing the number of blank frontages and underutilised space. This will all contribute to improving the quality of the street scene.

B.9 Setback distances should be minimised to ensure buildings interact effectively with the existing public realm. Variation from the building line will only be allowed where it would not have any substantial impact on the surrounding environment and street scene.

B.10 The concept of buildings defining and creating public spaces is extremely important. Buildings should be located so that a clear distinction can be made between their public fronts and private backs and they should actively add interest to the public realm. This can be achieved through design details such as a large number of windows and doors, evident internal uses, and narrow building widths creating a variety of different frontages and building functions. Frontages should create interest and add vitality at ground level and provide the opportunity for a busy social environment and a good level of surveillance. Active frontages should be visible on all publicly facing walls on multi-fronted buildings, where more than one side faces the public realm, thereby avoiding blank frontages being created and should use high walls or hedgerows to separate private gardens from the public space where back gardens face out onto the public realm. But in doing so, this should not create unattractive, narrow alleyways.

B.11 The relationship between building heights and street widths is important in identifying the enclosure of a place. Building frontages should provide a sufficient sense of enclosure, allowing for natural surveillance and providing an acceptable density for the area. Building frontages should allow for sufficient natural light and ventilation into the buildings and the street below and create a balanced feel to the area by incorporating both sides of the street. Combining tall buildings with very narrow streets will not be acceptable as this creates passageways which are not overlooked and do not allow for enough natural light and air to impact upon a building.

M.1 Patterns of movement for people are integral to well-designed places. They include walking and cycling, access to facilities, employment and servicing, parking and the convenience of public transport. They contribute to making high quality places for people to enjoy. They also form a crucial component of urban character. Their success is measured by how they contribute to the quality and character of a place, not only how well they function.

An integrated network of routes for all modes of transport

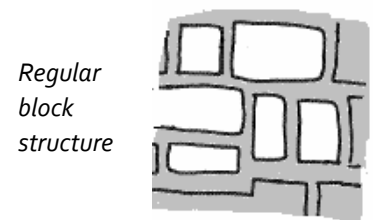
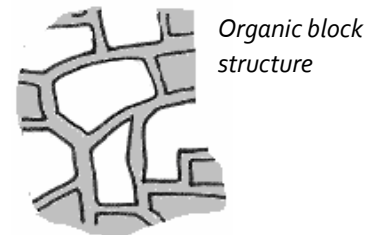
M.2 The extensive transport network was an integral part of the New Town’s original design and layout. Facilities are provided for all forms of movement, including walking and cycling. These allow residents easy access to the separated land uses within the town. Consideration was also given to safety, and routes for vehicular and non-vehicular traffic were separated in an attempt to reduce the occurrence of road traffic accidents.

M.3 On the primary transport routes, routes for pedestrians and cyclists run alongside vehicular routes, but at junctions’ vehicles are given priority and non-vehicular traffic is forced to travel under a series of underpasses in order to cross the roads. This makes it easier to travel by car, rather than promoting the benefits of sustainable transport. It also creates safety concerns, as some sections of routes receive no natural surveillance, and as people attempt to follow desire lines without appropriate



Image: Stevenage Borough Council

pedestrian access provisions. In terms of pedestrian and vehicular access to homes, a large proportion of housing was built following Radburn layout principles; houses were built to face each other, with the front being only accessible on foot, and the provision for cars made at the rear. Again, this has led to a lack of natural surveillance, as well as rear parking courts being underutilised, and insufficient access for emergency services.



M.4 The separation of land uses is apparent throughout the town, with the residential areas being separated from employment areas, leisure uses and the Town Centre. This could be considered contrary to sustainability principles, as it increases the need to travel. However, the land use zoning has worked in Stevenage because of the ease of access to and from these areas by all modes of transport.

M.5 Hertfordshire County Council hierarchy of road users is also detailed in Local Transport Plan 4 which should be considered in the design process.

A clear structure and hierarchy of connected streets

M.6 Streets should be designed as public and social spaces and not just respond to engineering requirements. They should carefully consider what activities would like to be seen on streets i.e. walking safely within the neighbourhood without feeling threatened by traffic from nearby streets, cross the road easily, window shop, and socialise with friends in the outside areas of bars and restaurants. Streets should feature elements of community assets, such as open space, to evoke a better sense of community between residents of the street or visitors to the street. They should provide direct and attractive connections between key facilities that are suitable for all types of movement, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists.

M.7 Streets should use a grid-type layout, which creates block sites for development. A variety of block sizes and shapes should be used to provide an effective balance and to promote diversity within a place. They should make use of existing infrastructure to minimise its impact upon the environment and take account of the existing routes around the site from the initial design stage. Existing

routes should be improved where necessary, and consider accessibility for emergency services, delivery vehicles and refuse collection vehicles.

M.8 Places should be easy to get to and from, as well as easy to travel within, by all modes of transport. In line with sustainability and health objectives, movement on foot or by bicycle should be made as convenient as travelling by car. This should help to encourage physical activity.

M.9 A Mobility Strategy has been developed for Stevenage. Developers are encouraged to consult the Mobility Strategy to develop and enable the implementation of sustainable methods of transport for developments in Stevenage.

M.10 The cycling routes of Stevenage are extensive, and the network was originally built into the fabric of the town as part of the vision of the New Town. New development should continue to extend the network as the town grows enabling the vision of segregated sustainable movement throughout the Borough to continue.

M.11 *Future Town, Future Transport (2019)* is SBC's transport plan responding to Hertfordshire County Council (HCC)'s Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) and emerging guidance called 'Place and Movement Planning and Design Guide'. This brings forward modal shift and sustainable transport measures across the county. The document contains



<http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/content/15953/26379/43876/Stevenage-Mobility-Strategy-December-2016.pdf>

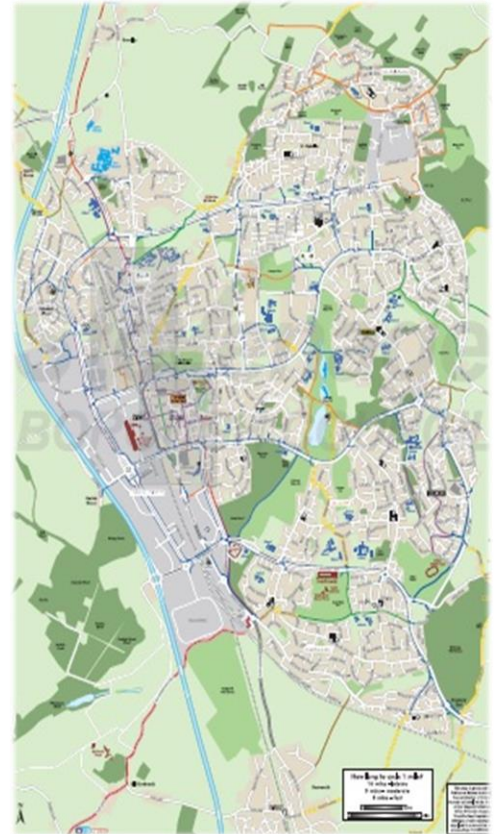


Fig 5 – Cycle routes in Stevenage

Image: Stevenage Borough Council

a number of policy actions across short term and medium-term plans, and policy guidance must respond to them.

M.12 The emerging *Stevenage Sustainable Travel Town Implementation Plan* forms part of Hertfordshire County Council's Local Transport Plan and aims to increase the number of people walking, cycling and using public transport. The key difference from previous initiatives is that the Sustainable Travel Town will fully integrate behavioural change techniques with infrastructure improvements so that new facilities are fully utilised. It is anticipated that the establishment of behaviour change programmes and the delivery of much of the required infrastructure will be delivered within a 4-to-5-year period. However, it is essential that mechanisms are put in place to ensure the longevity of the measures.

The overall vision for the Stevenage Sustainable Travel Town is to enable the delivery of the growth plans set out in the Local Plan (2019) whilst maintaining the attractiveness of the town for residents and business. This requires a major shift of journeys from the car to active and public transport. The objectives, for which policy and guidance must respond, include:

- Enable the delivery of housing proposals within the Local Plan by providing a modal shift in vehicle use.
- Enable the delivery of town centre regeneration proposals within the Local Plan by providing a modal shift in vehicle use.
- Help to achieve truly sustainable transport in the town and establish Stevenage as a leader in sustainable development.
- Help to reinstate the town's original New Town design objectives and help to achieve a sense of place in Stevenage as an active community.
- Help to reinstate the town's original New Town design objectives and help to achieve a sense of place in Stevenage as a healthy community

M.13 In 2017 the Government published its first Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy with an ambition to make walking and cycling the natural choices for shorter journeys. The *Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)* is a document used to implement the strategy at a local level. Stevenage's LCWIP sets out a network of preferred and future routes for walking and cycling in the borough and identifies a programme of infrastructure improvement priorities to guide future works and investment.

M.14 Walking and cycling provision should always be prioritised when designing access routes to, from and through developments. New developments on the periphery of Stevenage should be expected to provide pedestrian/cycle links to connect with existing public rights of way to allow residents of new development to easily walk/cycle from the development into the countryside for leisure purposes.

M.15 Walking routes should be short, overlooked by surrounding buildings and activities, well-lit and not situated between blank frontages and they should make people feel safe when using them.

M.16 The inclination to walk is also influenced by the quality and attractiveness of the route. Routes should not be alongside a busy road as this can be unappealing and they should be convenient, direct and safe route through a town centre, residential area or an area of open space can encourage people to make extensive use of these facilities, helping improve the health of residents and the vitality of the town.

M.17 New pedestrian/cycle routes should be waymarked and supported by distance markers to encourage leisure use of these routes e.g. to support residents to complete daily running distances from their homes and should be supported by seating in appropriate

locations to encourage all potential users of the routes to use it e.g. for the elderly, those with health conditions, parents with young children etc;

M.18 Where possible, cycle and pedestrian paths should be segregated to avoid conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists which may discourage use;

M.19 In both residential and other developments, cycle parking should be located in prominent and secure locations to make it a more attractive option than using the car e.g. at the entrance to public buildings rather than a corner of a remote car park. In places where there is significant demand for cycle storage, provision should be made for basic bike maintenance facilities such as public foot pumps.

M.20 Where major traffic routes cross over major pedestrian routes, they should be defined by wide crossings on the same level, lighted and landscaped.



Image: Pauline Maryan

M.21 Implementing features which aim to aid pedestrian safety can inadvertently impede it. Introducing barriers around a main road can prevent people from crossing the road where they want to cross, and therefore hinder their direct route. This reinforces vehicle priority further.

M.22 Stevenage also comprises numerous subways where segregated footpaths and cycleways run under the main vehicle roads. Whilst being a useful way of ensuring the flow of

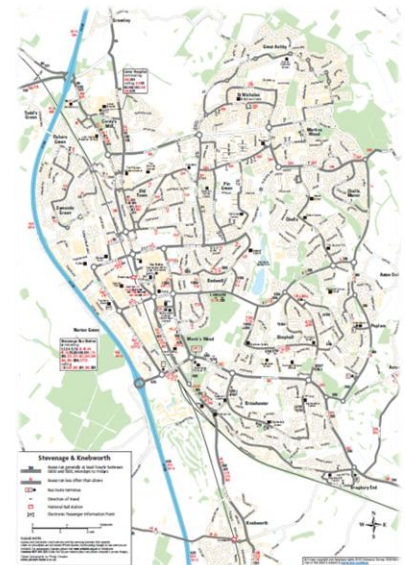


Fig 6 – Bus routes in Stevenage

Image: Stevenage Borough Council

traffic on both the cycle/pedestrian network and that on the road, these can cause safety concerns resulting in these routes being underutilised.

M.23 Encouraging the use of such conveniences by making them attractive and useful means of transit will discourage any antisocial behaviour in these areas.

M.24 Subways or footbridges should be well lit and as short and as wide as possible. They should be visible throughout (the exit should be visible from the entrance) and CCTV should be installed.

M.25 A number of underpasses in Stevenage feature public artwork, for example that which features in the Town Gardens and St Georges underpasses depict cast concrete reliefs of contemporary life by William Mitchell and were installed in 1973. Use of these areas for formal public art and cultural purposes will be encouraged.

M.26 Cycling routes should run alongside vehicular roads and be physically segregated cycle routes, rather than marked on the road. They should also connect to the already existing vast cycle network.

M.27 Providing a sufficient amount of appropriate parking for bicycle users is essential for promoting sustainable transport throughout the town and for encouraging a reduction in private vehicle usage. Both short and long term cycle parking facilities should be provided.

Storage for bicycles overnight should be provided as secure and covered and should be integrated into the initial design of the development and not added as an afterthought. Cycle parking should ideally be accommodated within an individual site rather than as larger communal stores - larger stores can encourage crime if poorly lit and inappropriately sited.

M.28 Public transport provision is reasonably well provided for in Stevenage, with bus routes throughout the town, and a centrally located train station. However, people often have a preference for car use and so public transport needs to become a viable and attractive alternative option.

M.29 Road layout should ensure public transport is given priority and incorporate bus priority measures to reduce public transport travel times.

M.30 Higher density developments help to support public transport and vice versa. Higher densities should therefore be encouraged, in appropriate locations in order to support sustainability objectives. This can, in turn, bring about social benefits, such as improved health and fitness through people reducing their car use and walking to and from public transport provision.

M.31 Stevenage has a moderately extensive Public Rights of Way network (Footpaths, Bridleways, Restricted Byways and Byways Open to All Traffic). The network as a whole presents opportunities for active travel within and into the town from surrounding communities. It is also a recreation facility for health and wellbeing interconnecting as it does with green space and out into the wider countryside. Areas of disconnect exist in the network as a whole. Cyclists and walkers may also use Bridleways. New provision to at least Bridleway status as well as upgraded routes (from Footpath to Bridleway) should be designed into and beyond developments to extend the network for users. A design [Guide for Non-motorised Routes](#) is available from the Highways Authority for Public Rights of Way (HCC). This sets out width and surface requirements where such proposals are being developed. When considering road crossings where Bridleways interface with the Highway Network, Pegasus Crossing facilities should be built into the design. These enable use of button controlled traffic lights by horse mounted users without necessitating dismounting; equestrians should be separated from other users at the crossing.

M.32 Streets should incorporate soft landscaping, in particular trees, to combat air pollution from vehicle emissions without creating a tunnel-like effect that will trap pollutants in the road corridor.

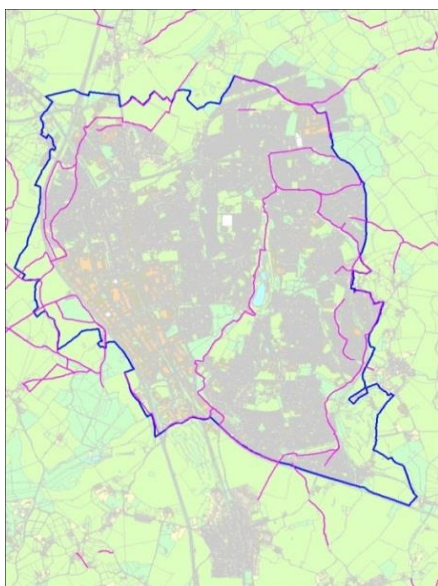


Image: Stevenage Borough Council

M.33 Trees are often heralded as part of the solution to climate change, and this has led to the mass-planting of new trees. However, such initiatives have raised concerns that the wrong planting in the wrong place can be counterproductive. A tree planting approach should reflect the recommendations of industry recognised guidance 'Trees in Hard Landscape: A Guide for Delivery by the 'Trees and Design Action Group' (TDAG). The guide states there is a temptation to produce simple lists of "suitable trees" for urban settings. Safe lists can result in overly limited choices that produce the disease-prone monoculture biases that most towns and cities face today. The guide suggests it is essential to choose the right tree for the right place. The possible combination of variables that influence tree choices are so numerous, they recommend conducting a site-specific robust assessment

with support from a knowledgeable tree expert as the best approach. Native tree species support a far wider range of associated biodiversity and some tree species are able to intercept particulate pollutants. Therefore, tree selection should be a considered design approach.

Well-considered parking, servicing and utilities infrastructure for all users

M.34 Car and cycle parking provision should be made in line with the requirements of our Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD. Garages and carports should be set back from the street frontage and located close to the property that they serve, to avoid dead frontages. They should not be segregated blocks as these are not easily flexible for future change, do not allow spaces to be shared, and also suffer from a lack of natural surveillance.

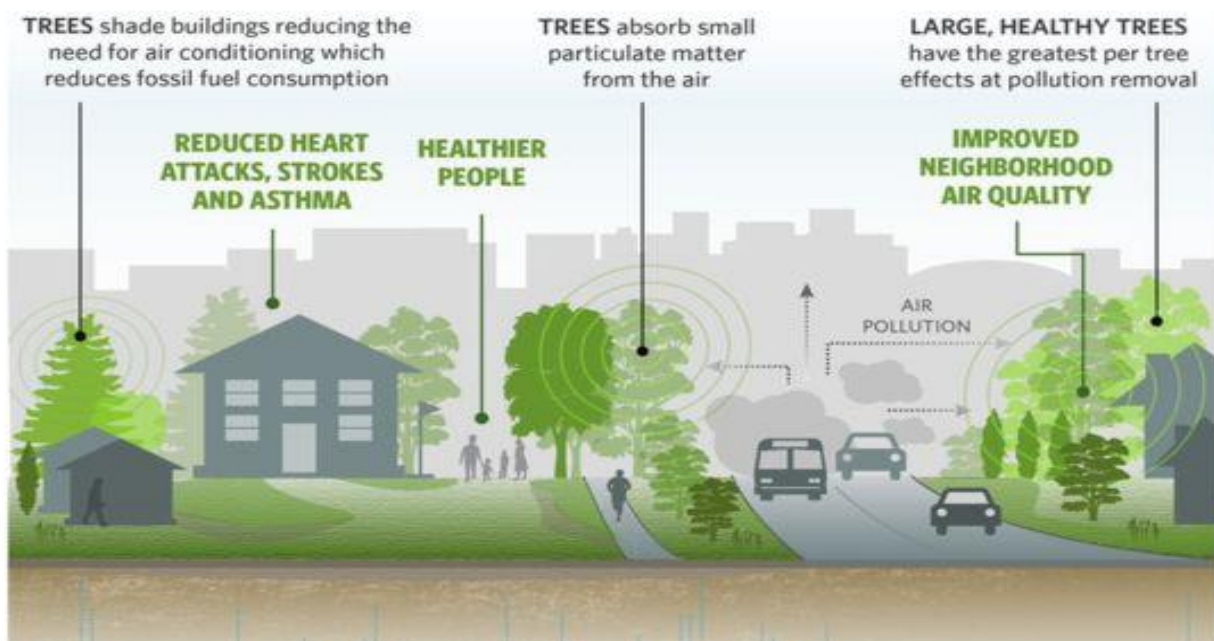
M.35 Car parking in large developments should be creative, such as undercroft or basement parking as this preserves street frontages and uses land more effectively. Landscaping should be used to minimise visual impact and, where security may be an issue, should be lit from dusk till dawn with energy efficient lighting and parking should be provided on several storeys and the visual impact reduced by 'wrapping around' single aspect apartments or other uses.

M.36 Traffic calming not only aids pedestrian safety, but by encouraging slower driving it can also help to reduce vehicle emission levels, and thus improve sustainability. Traffic speeds should be managed by the arrangement of buildings and spaces via simple, effective street design and not using barriers, unnecessary signage and traffic calming measures.



Image: BBC News

M.37 Streets should ensure that they cater for all levels of mobility. Steps and steep inclines should be replaced in favour of gentle inclines which enable mobility impaired people to use them fully as well as parents with pushchairs and young children. Narrow paths and road crossings should be avoided in favour of wide pathways which cater for wheelchairs, mobility scooters and pushchairs.



M.38 Ever improved technologies are being developed to help enable visually impaired individuals navigate streets such as Soundscape; the use of nodes allow the user to explore their environment and direct them to their destination. Such technologies have recently been piloted in Peterborough and we would support the implementation of the use of these technologies in Stevenage. Such technologies should be used alongside tried and tested methods of enabling visually impaired individuals to independently find their way around the town.

M.39 Residential developments should ensure that Mode 2 or Mode 3 electric vehicle (EV) charging points are installed for each residential unit. Where a garage is provided, the EV charging point should ideally be located at an accessible point near the entrance of the garage. Where resident parking is provided, EV charging points should be positioned in areas to serve the maximum number of residents at any one time.

M.40 In commercial and/or employment developments, Mode 3 and/or Mode 4 EV charging points should be provided to enable visitors and employees to utilise the facility. Again, the provision should be located in a suitable position to serve as many EV users as possible. Levels of requirement will be dictated by the type of development and more information can be found in the Stevenage Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD.

M.41 Commercial/employment EV charging points should be signed and marked for 'Electric Vehicle Charging Only' and Mode 4 charging points should be limited to 1 hour stay. The units should be protected from collision and positioned to avoid becoming an obstruction or trip hazard. Charging point controls, display and sockets or tethered plugs must be placed at a height of between 0.75 and 1.2 metres from the ground as per the British Standard on the design of buildings [BS8300-1:2018](#) and [BS8300-2:2018](#).

M.42 EV charging points should also be made accessible to all. The aim is to provide an inclusive experience for people with accessibility needs, [PAS 1899:2022](#) is a new standard giving designers, procurers and installers essential specifications on how to provide accessible public charge points for electric vehicles.

M.43 The level of provision must accord with the standards set out in our Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD.

Promoting lifestyles and wellbeing

M.44 Developments can be designed to promote healthy and active lifestyles. Sport England, in conjunction with Public Health England, has produced 'Active Design' (www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/active-design/), a guide to planning new developments that create the right environment to help people get more active. Active Design is a combination of 10 principles that promote activity, health and stronger communities through the way we design and build our towns and cities. The 10 principles have been developed to inspire and inform the layout of cities, towns, villages, neighbourhoods, buildings, streets and open spaces, to promote sport and active lifestyles.

M.45 Green infrastructure is a network of multi-functional green space and other green features, urban and rural, which can deliver quality of life and environmental benefits for communities. It is not simply an alternative description for conventional open space. It includes parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands – and also street trees, allotments, private gardens, green roofs and walls, sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and soils. It includes rivers, streams, canals and other water bodies, sometimes called 'blue infrastructure'. The key features of green infrastructure are that it is a network of integrated spaces and features, not just individual elements; and that it is 'multi-functional' – it provides multiple benefits simultaneously.

These can be to:

- support people's mental and physical health
- encourage active travel
- cool urban areas during heat waves
- attract investment
- reduce water run-off during flash flooding
- carbon storage
- provide sustainable drainage

The extent to which green infrastructure provides these benefits depends on how it is designed and maintained, and the maturity and health of the elements (such as trees) that form it.

N.1 Public open spaces are open to all. They provide opportunities for comfort, relaxation, stimulation and social interaction in a safe environment, to encourage interaction in an open space, its location and structure needs careful consideration along with its activities, versatility and how it can be used and accessed by all groups of people.

Provide high quality, green open spaces with a variety of landscapes and activities including play

N.2 Stevenage was designed to incorporate a network of open spaces and green corridors, which provide an important resource for biodiversity and recreation within the town. These are a key feature of New Town development and should be protected, maintained and extended as far as possible. Open space should be located so that it makes the most of existing natural features such as footpaths, trees and water as these can help to create attractive spaces, as well as encouraging biodiversity. Developments should consider existing open space features and include them within proposals and protect and enhance attributes and this can help a new development to integrate effectively into the existing area, as well as retaining important original features such as ancient lanes and associated hedgerows within the town.

N.3 Planting schemes should include wildlife friendly planting which allows for refuge for animals as well as a food source for insects and pollinators.

N.4 A range of different habitats should be provided in larger developments, for example trees, grassland and wetlands. Developers should refer to the Councils [Amenity Tree Management Policy](#) for more information.

N.5 Play spaces for children and young people should be provided across the borough and should include a range of larger and smaller open spaces which should include unequipped playscapes which provide an attractive landscape for young people of all ages, but also encourage informal/imaginative play through the provisions of features such as mounding, tree planting, at level maze etc. This should be done in a way that provides distinct areas for different age groups, but so that parents and carers are able to maintain visual contact with the young people.

N.6 Play spaces must be fully accessible for young people of all abilities and support inclusive play. Such areas should include suitable tree planting to allow for shading, combined with the provision of benches, litter bins, wider open space for picnics and low key kick about games for example. They should be highly visible and well overlooked with hard wearing, low maintenance equipment and suitable fenced to prevent access by dogs.

N.7 New open spaces should be designed so that they are multi-functional so that they encourage people to visit the spaces for a range of activities and therefore be suitable for meeting the activity needs of all groups within the community. For example, designing spaces so that they can be used for sport and informal recreation, designing Sustainable

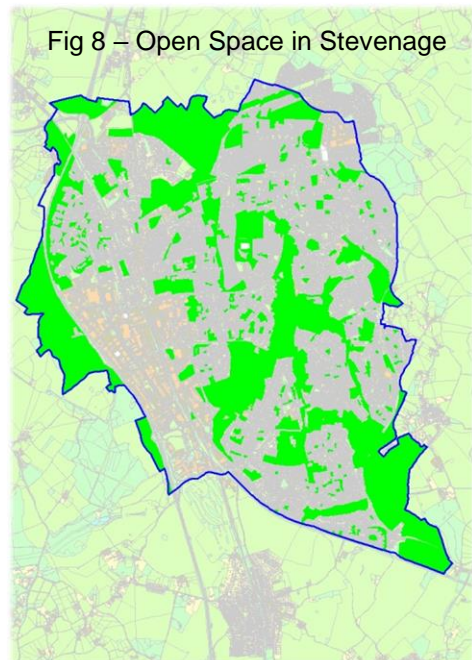


Image: Stevenage Borough Council

Drainage Systems SuDS so that they attract people to visit them as a destination and are supported by footpaths and seating.

N.8 Open spaces should be designed to integrate with existing and proposed active travel routes so that open spaces along the routes can be used for physical activity while people are travelling to their destination and to encourage walking/cycling to the open space for leisure purposes.

N.9 Where appropriate, open space should have waymarked routes e.g. circular walking/running routes with distance markers.

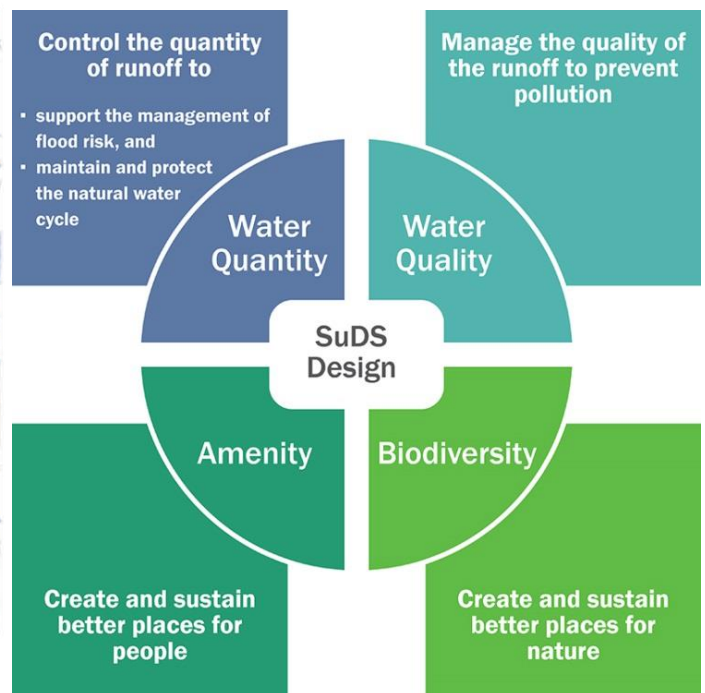
Improve and enhance water management

N.10 Stevenage suffers from surface water flooding, as evidenced in the Environment Agency’s Surface Water Flood Maps. Flooding is likely to become more of a problem in the future due to climate change. As such, buildings and developments should maximise the use of SuDS techniques across development sites and individual buildings to allow rainwater to percolate into the ground. These SuDS features should provide sustainable solutions for flood and pollution reduction as well as landscape and wildlife benefit. Large scale SuDS schemes should be designed to ensure that they provide a valuable natural habitat and improve water quality, as well as reducing flood risk. The ongoing management of these schemes must also be considered at an early stage.

Fig 9 – Areas of surface water flooding in Stevenage



Image: Environment Agency



N.11 The Council are keen to promote the use of green roofs and walls, as well as blue roofs to achieve sustainable water management in the future.

Support rich and varied biodiversity

N.12 Stevenage benefits from high levels of open space and an extensive network of green corridors. This is a feature of the town that should be protected and enhance. As such, there is a requirement for all development to contribute towards improving the provision, quality and/or accessibility of local and strategic open space. This could be achieved through appropriate contribution or direct provision. Where direct provision is made, open spaces should form part of a green infrastructure network and make a positive contribution towards the townscape. They should be of high quality and have a primary role or function to prevent it becoming misused, unused or neglected. Open spaces should reflect the local context in the design of the local open spaces, which could be achieved through the use of materials, trees, planting, lighting and street furniture and thereby be multi-functional. Open spaces are ideal areas that can include provision for SuDS, benefit biodiversity and provide habitat, and they can also deliver high quality usable open and recreational space for residents to enjoy.

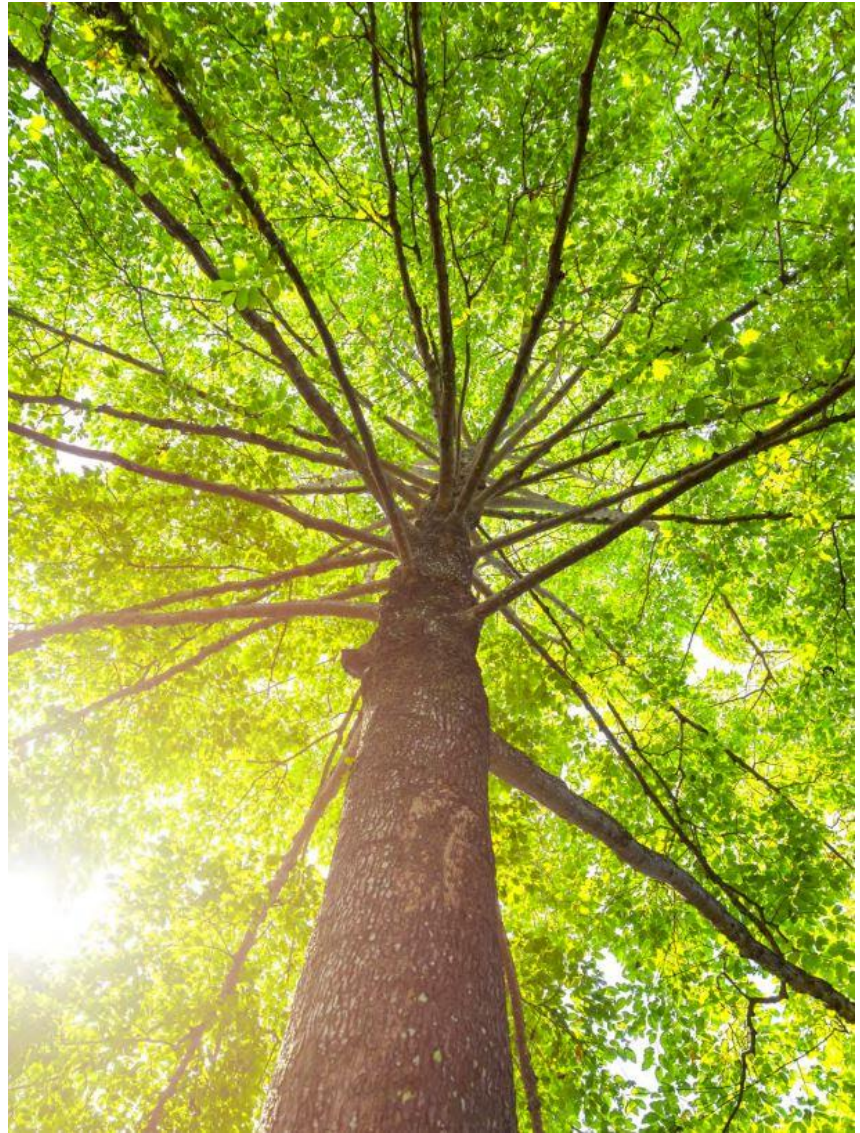


Image: Stevenage Borough Council

N.13 Developments should refer to Stevenage Borough Council's Impact of Development on Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document and also the Council's Biodiversity Action Plan if they are likely to impact upon existing wildlife sites and other habitats in the town. SBC requires all new developments to take account of existing biodiversity, and to make all reasonable efforts to avoid habitat loss, fragmentation or disturbance of the ecosystem. Where this is not possible, excellent mitigation measures will be sought.

P.1 The quality of the spaces between buildings is as important as the buildings themselves. Public spaces are streets, squares and other spaces that are open to all. They are the setting for most movement. The design of a public space encompasses its siting and integration into the wider network of routes as well as its various elements. These include areas allocated to different users – pedestrians, cyclists and cars – for different purposes such as movement or parking, hard and soft surfaces, street furniture, lighting, signage and public art.



Image: Pancras Square

Create well-located, high quality and attractive public spaces

P.2 Public spaces should be considered as part of the original design scheme and must not just be applied, as an afterthought, to leftover space. An expert should be consulted to ensure that the planting selected is appropriate to the scheme and the site context.

P.3 How attractive and well-maintained a place is can directly affect how people treat it; if a place is in good condition, people tend to treat it better and vice versa. Places should be designed for use during all seasons and by all members of the community. Landscaping of the public realm should be designed so that it is easy to maintain and manage, it should be wildlife friendly and include climate change tolerant planting in addition to providing year round interest, or can mature into a high quality space. It should ensure the long-term viability of street furniture to prevent some products creating eyesores and attracting crime. Street furniture should be made of a sustainable choice of materials, e.g. FSC timber or recycled/composite materials, it should have a small carbon footprint and have longevity of materials. Public realm should be uncluttered and should not reduce accessibility through the use of inappropriately sited street furniture pieces that can hinder access, especially for mobility impaired users and pushchairs.

P.4 Public realm should be coordinated and specifically designed to enhance the area and should include extensive soft landscaping, such as the planting of trees and shrubs, that is integrated into external areas of a development site in order to provide shelter and screen intrusive elements of the public realm but also provide green corridors for both people and wildlife that are aesthetically pleasing. Planting should be suitable to its location and, for trees, please refer to the Amenity Tree Management Policy. Suitable planting will also help moderate temperatures in an urban environment and contribute to the objectives set out in the Councils Climate Change Strategy.



Image: ANS Global – University of York, Environmental Building

P.5 Buildings surrounding public spaces should consider the installation of green walls and roofs as an alternative to traditional landscaping schemes, where space for green infrastructure and landscaping features is limited. These can help to improve the energy

efficiency of buildings by retaining heat, and have additional advantages such as helping to increase biodiversity levels and reducing surface water run-off.

Provide well-designed spaces that are safe

Lighting

P.6 Places should be well lit to provide a safe environment for pedestrians, and with particular attention being paid to key movement axes and desire lines across public spaces. However, light pollution, including glare, skyglow, light trespass and clutter, should be avoided to prevent energy wastage and reduce disruption to the natural day-night pattern and shifting the delicate balance of the environment.

P.7 Street lighting should be decorative as well as functional and enliven the whole of the area in a visually coherent and interesting manner. Street, building and advertisement lighting in the town centre should be creative and innovative but also ensure that streets and spaces are sufficiently well lit to promote personal safety. Lighting provision between adjacent developments should be coordinated to reduce clutter and does not overwhelm the space, particularly in predominantly pedestrian spaces;



Image: My Modern Met – spray-on solution for energy-free alternative to lighting

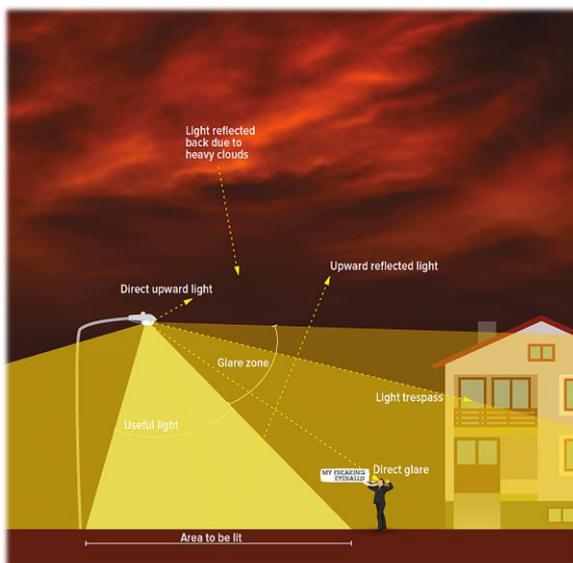


Image: www.Darksky.org

P.8 Parking area lighting should be appropriate for car drivers to see pedestrians and also be appropriate for pedestrians to see and be seen going to and from parked cars. The lighting should be mounted horizontally (0 degrees tilt) at a height of 4-5m. Luminaires with an Upward light Output Ratio (ULOR) of zero will achieve this and not include bollards as a primary source of lighting.

P.9 British Standards [BS EN 13201-2:2015](#) and [BS 5489-1:2013](#) make recommendations for lighting levels of areas with mixed vehicle/pedestrian usage. The application of these standards, and any associated design, should be design by competent lighting designers.

P.10 The design criterion is for horizontal illuminance. If it appears that light is going into windows of adjacent properties, vertical illuminance calculations may be required. Lighting class P5 would generally be appropriate for lighting design purposes. Average maintained illuminance (E_{av}) = 2 lux Minimum maintained illuminance (E_{min}) = 0.4 lux. This gives a minimum Uniformity of Illuminance (U_o) of 0.2.

surveillance throughout the area including in areas of fully private space, such as back gardens. Natural surveillance should not be confused with formal surveillance such as CCTV. Safety and surveillance

P.11 Public space should be safe for everyone to make use of, at all times of the day. Carefully designed and managed urban environments are effective in reducing levels of crime and vandalism, as well as reducing the fear of crime. Generally people feel more comfortable using public areas in which they can be seen and heard, and which look like they are not commonly affected by criminal activity. Creating spaces which are 'safe' is a key consideration for Stevenage.

P.12 Safety must be considered at every stage of the design process, and all principles should be incorporated as appropriate. Further information on the principles of designing out crime is put forward by '[Secured by Design](#)', the UK Police flagship initiative.

P.13 Creating defensible space involves ensuring clear physical or symbolic boundaries are present between public and private spaces.

<http://www.securedbydesign.com/>

P.14 Spaces should be clearly defined in terms of ownership and use and include small, semi-private areas, provided behind a low wall, railing or fence, where the existing building lines allow for properties to be set back from the street. Spaces should ensure that boundaries are not too high; a balance needs to be achieved between the security of public and private spaces. Developments and buildings should maximise natural

P.15 All developments must increase the sense of security in an area and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour levels. Buildings should be orientated so that windows and doors



Image: Secured by Design

face out onto streets, squares and footpaths and the internal layout of buildings should be organised so that the most used rooms are those which have windows overlooking public spaces. Entrances to buildings should be clearly visible and accessible from the street and visible from inside the building - recessed entrances should be avoided. All buildings should have a similar setback distance to ensure that overlooking is not limited by a building projecting too far out and blocking the view and landscaping should not block sightlines. Spaces should contain both daytime

and evening functional uses and ensure a mix of residents by integrating different types and tenures of housing to support a range of household sizes, ages and incomes. Residents with different lifestyles can create a more active environment, as people are around at varying times of the day.

P.16 It is essential that a balance is achieved between the need to promote permeability and the need to prevent uncontrolled and unwelcome access to private space and buildings. Creative design is required to ensure that places are both well-connected and secure. Buildings and developments should actively avoid public access to rear gardens and ensure routes for pedestrians and cyclists are well overlooked and are not in areas of limited levels of natural surveillance. Indoor, defensible cycle parking provision should be provided whilst car parking should avoid large, open and unsupervised areas of communal parking and communal garage blocks.



P.17 Properties with open access or easily climbable boundaries make easier targets for crime. The more difficult it is for a potential offender to access a property, the greater the deterrent to trespass. Natural crime reduction methods should be utilised where possible. Exceptions can be made where roads do not run through the development and dead frontages or dead ends cannot be avoided and if publicly visible security measures such as fences or gates are necessary, they should be designed as sculptures or art.



Image: Adam Styles Creative Metal

P.18 Clean and well-maintained environments are symbolically important as they give the message that people care about and area and exercise control over an area, not tolerating anti-social behaviour.

Make sure public spaces support social interaction



Image: Peter O'Connor

P.19 Stevenage is rich in public art across the town and we want to encourage the continuation of this culture through redevelopment. Public art can play a major part in giving a place a distinct character and identity. It can also attract people to a place; enhancing the economy and creating a sense of place. However, it needs to be integrated at the start of the design process and not put in as an afterthought.

P.20 Art can be incorporated in imaginative ways such as, within the floorscape and as a part of functional facilities like cycle racks, seating and signage. However, it should relate to the surrounding area, drawing from the historical significance or specific location of a place, and not just randomly selected.

P.21 Some directional signage can clutter the public realm. However, it can also provide an opportunity to enhance the landscape, by ensuring design which is consistent and co-ordinated throughout a place, and which complements other elements of the street scene. Signage should be mounted on existing structures such as buildings, walls and posts, where possible and direct pedestrians and cyclists, as well as vehicle users. Signage should enable the easiest and most direct routes to encourage people to walk or cycle, in line with sustainability, health and environmental objectives; designers should start from a position of having no signs, and street layout should aim to make the environment self-regulatory.

[Legible London](#) has helped both residents and visitors walk to their destination quickly and easily. The signs offer a consistent experience and information about distances between areas, but have also been integrated with other transport modes so, for example, when people are leaving the Tube they can quickly identify the route to their destination. It uses a form of wayfinding and is again a simple way to shape cleverly designed signage in to the public realm.

P.22 New public spaces, such as civic spaces, should be designed so they are multi-functional and encourage people to visit the spaces for a range of activities. They should be suitable for meeting the activity needs of all groups within the community. For example, designing civic spaces so that they can be used for events and informal activity as well as providing a community focal point and landscape. Public spaces should be designed to support informal children's play as this will encourage parents to visit and spend time in the public spaces. Where appropriate, especially in town and neighbourhood centre settings, new or enhanced public spaces should be supported by public conveniences, drinking

fountains and accessible seating to encourage visits by all groups within the community and to encourage people to spend time in these spaces.

U.1 Sustainable places include a mix of uses that support everyday activities, including live, work and play.

U.2 Well-designed neighbourhoods need to include an integrated mix of tenures and housing types that reflect local housing need and market demand. They are designed to be inclusive and to meet the changing needs of people of different ages and abilities. New development reinforces existing places by enhancing local transport, facilities and community services, and maximising their potential use.

U.3 Where there is rapid social and economic change, such as sustainable growth or diversification in rural communities or town centres, well-designed buildings and places are able to accommodate a variety of uses over time.

U.4 Community uses should be co-located wherever possible in order to support linked trips by active travel modes. For example, schools, shops, workplaces, open space. Where appropriate, uses should be integrated into the same building to encourage their use e.g. combining leisure uses with health services and community facilities. Co-located community uses should be focal points within active travel networks.

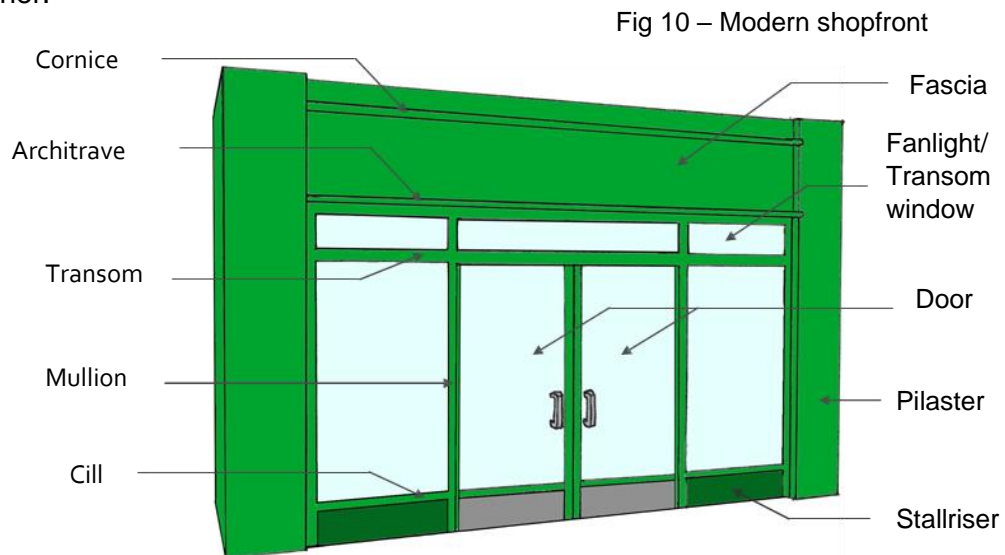
A mix of uses

Retail

U.5 Many of the shopfronts in the Town and Neighbourhood Centres are more modern looking. Modern interpretations of traditional shop fronts generally have less ornamental detailing than traditional shop fronts but they still create a ‘frame’ to the shop front. Modern shop front designs should generally follow the approach of traditional shop fronts albeit interpreted in a modern manner.

U.6 In order that these modern interpretations enhance the character and appearance of retail areas these should include well-proportioned components which also exhibit a level of depth and detailing to these.

U.7 The diagram illustrates the basic architectural features that make up modern shopfronts.



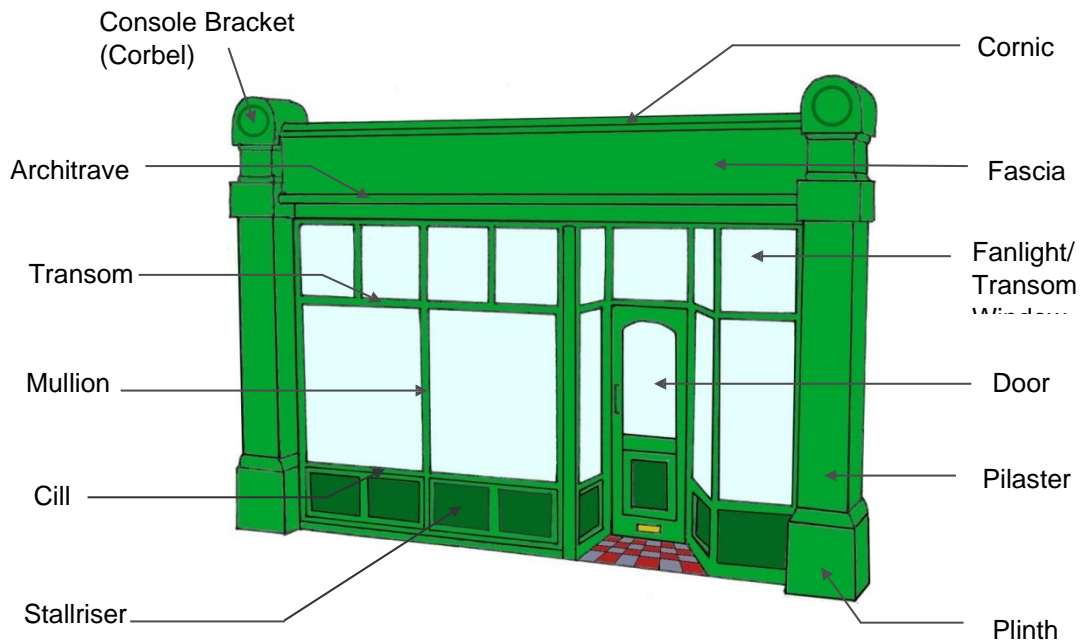
U.8 Shopfront alterations should respect the detailed design, materials, colour and architectural features of the shopfront and building itself, including the setting of the shop i.e. is it in the New Town area of Stevenage or is it situated in the historic setting of the Old Town.

U.9 Planning permission will generally be required for a new shopfront; alterations to an existing shopfront including awnings and canopies, external security shutters, blinds, grilles and security measures; and change of use will generally require planning permission.

U.10 The more traditional shopfronts, such as those found in the Old Town, feature

Fig 11 – Traditional shopfront

U.11



Each of these traditional elements of a shopfront has a practical purpose, as well as contributing to the character of the building.

U.12 Planning permission is not normally required for routine maintenance works, such as redecoration or straightforward repairs.

U.13 Any alterations (or replacement) of shopfronts that form part of a listed building will require [Listed Building Consent](#) and will need to be consistent with the age and style of the building. More stringent controls will apply for works including re-painting a shopfront in a different colour, installing a security alarm or extractor fan, altering the shop interior, installing blinds or shutters, and advertisements.

U.14 [Conservation Area Consent](#) is required for the proposed complete or substantial demolition of any building in a conservation area, including the removal of a shopfront or of any feature that gives character to a building.

U.15 In assessing applications to alter shopfronts within Conservation Areas special attention will be given to the desirability of preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Areas.

U.16 For shops in Conservation Areas, reference should also be made to the relevant [Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Plan](#). These describe the area and its special character and include guidelines that provide the framework for development proposals in the area and the appraisals contain audits of shopfronts of merit.

U.17 [Advertisement consent](#) is a separate procedure that applies to the display of advertisements on shopfronts and [Building regulations consent](#) will be required for all work which alters the shop's structure, changes its fire escape, or would make access difficult for those with disabilities.

U.18 More specific detail regarding key shopfront components can be found in [Appendix B](#).

A mix of home tenures, types and sizes

U.19 The aim of any residential development should be to provide a good living environment for occupants. Development should respect the surrounding buildings, in terms of their scale and massing, height, building lines, design and the materials used. However, it is accepted that housing layouts should take account of changing functional requirements. Occasionally, it may be appropriate to create pastiche developments. However, it is possible

for a development to respect its local surroundings but still incorporate contemporary styles and new technologies.

U.20 Different types and tenures of homes should be well-integrated and support a range of household sizes, ages and incomes. They should be suitable for all members of the community and promote social diversity by reducing exclusion. They should enable residents to be able to move to smaller or larger homes without the need to leave their neighbourhoods and allow families to live close together. Houses should be indistinguishable from each other.

Privacy and scale

U.21 In order to ensure that a reasonable degree of privacy for residents is provided, both within their habitable rooms and garden areas, the position of dwellings, and the arrangement of their rooms and windows, should not create significant overlooking of other dwellings' windows or private garden areas and not lead to any overbearing impacts or adversely affect the residential amenities of existing dwellings.

U.22 The following minimum separation distances should be achieved: For new developments where no existing properties are affected (excluding a phased development), it will require the 20m / 12m separation distance.

No of Storeys	Type of Separation	Min. 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 a 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

U.23 In all cases a 1.8m high solid wall or fence should be provided between the rear gardens of properties which back onto each other. Where the boundary adjoins a footpath, a minimum of 0.5m setback should be provided to avoid the creation of an alleyway effect, or appear overbearing on the streetscape.

Residential extensions

U.24 Although some extensions are permitted development, others may require both [planning permission](#) and [building regulation approval](#). All applications for extensions and alterations will be considered on their individual merits.

U.25 Extension proposals should respect the size, height, materials, features and layout of the building concerned, as well as the surrounding buildings. They should be built so that they look like a part of the main building rather than an obvious addition to it and not adversely affect the amenities of occupiers.

U.26 Further details of residential extensions can be found in [Appendix C](#).

Socially inclusive

U.27 Places need to be able to adapt to changing circumstances. Towns and cities, for example, must change when industries rise and decline and houses need to be adaptable for when children get older and their requirements change. Places should be designed so that they are capable of being used for a range of activities; a public square, for example, can be used effectively for festivals, markets and events.

U.28 Residential buildings should be future proofed; building higher attic spaces for future conversions and ensuring ground floors can benefit from higher ceilings to be easily adapted for commercial uses later.

U.29 Sub-dividing large development parcels and allocating them to different developers can generate a wider range of building types, tenures and uses, which can encourage a more diverse community.

U.30 Places also need to account of an ageing population and the different requirements needed at these stages of life. They should consider:

- Sensitively planning for older person's housing in mixed developments to encourage healthy communities that include housing suitable for an ageing population.
- New housing for older people of any tenure should be built to accessible and sustainable standards, conforming to [HAPPI design principles](#), be digitally enabled for assistive and other technology, and encourage developers to build to energy efficient and carbon neutral specifications, and thus promoting accessible, adaptable, and dementia friendly design.
- New housing for older people should investigate options such as PassivHaus and other eco-build designs for specialist older persons housing, to reduce thermal variances and the associated costs, and assist in preventing poor health outcomes in older people.

H.1 Well-designed homes and buildings are functional, accessible and sustainable. They provide internal environments and associated external spaces that support the health and well-being of their users and all who experience them.

H.2 They meet the needs of a diverse range of users, taking into account factors such as ageing population and cultural differences. They are adequate in size, fit for purpose and are adaptable to the changing needs of their occupants over time.

H.3 Successful buildings also provide attractive, stimulating and positive places for all, whether for activity, interaction, retreat or simply passing by.

Healthy, comfortable and safe internal and external environment

H.4 All developments are required to make efforts to minimise energy usage and to incorporate methods of using renewable energy, including reducing energy demand, using passive environmental systems, e.g. natural ventilation, daylighting and passive solar gains, using high levels of insulation and air tightness in the fabric of the building, specifying energy efficient services, controls and appliances, implementing water recycling and the provision of water butts, using renewable energy, using low/zero carbon technologies to provide as much of the energy load as is technically and economically feasible, minimising use of fossil fuels, and using efficient fossil fuel technologies, such as Combined Heat and Power and condensing boilers.

H.5 For major housing schemes, the nationally recognised [Building for Life](#) criteria should be used to assess their functionality, attractiveness and sustainability. This is a national standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods. It promotes high quality design, as well as celebrating best practise in the house building industry. Building for Life is a partnership between several national agencies, led by [CABE](#) and the [Home Builders Federation](#).

H.6 For internal space within new dwellings, there is the [nationally described space standard](#). This sets out the requirements for the Gross Internal (floor) area of new dwellings at a defined level of occupancy as well as floor areas and dimensions for key parts of the home, notably bedrooms, storage and floor to ceiling height. This is not a building regulation and remains solely within the planning system as a form of technical planning standard.

Noise

H.7 Noise can adversely affect peoples' quality of life and exposure to unwanted noise can affect our health and welfare. Protection against noise in the construction, design and layout of residential developments is essential to ensure that existing or future residents are not subjected to unacceptable levels of noise in their own homes. The likelihood of noise affecting future residents is a key factor in assessing the suitability of a site for residential use.

H.8 Residential development should be restricted to areas with low ambient noise levels and utilise noise control measures in order to make residential development feasible, wherever possible, to maximise the potential of previously developed land. They should employ solutions to technically complex acoustic problems through specialist advice. Delaying contact with such specialists until later in a project may result in avoidable additional costs being incurred at the design and construction stages.

H.9 Where it is unlikely that residents will be able to keep windows open or sit on/in a balcony/garden without being bothered by one or more external noise sources, such as

traffic, industrial noise or customers of entertainment venues, noise will be a material planning consideration and, under these circumstances, a noise survey will be required.

H.10 New residential dwellings, exposed to noise from existing sources, will be assessed in accordance with [National Planning Policy Guidance](#) and BS 8233:2014. National guidance assesses sites according to a noise exposure hierarchy.

H.11 It is likely that many sites within Stevenage, suitable for new housing, will be exposed to existing noise levels contained within, or on the boundary of 'noticeable and not intrusive' and 'noticeable and intrusive'.

H.12 Developments shall require proposals to achieve acceptable internal noise levels. Ideally, with windows open. However, on some potentially noisy sites in the Borough, an alternative means of purge ventilation will be required. They should demonstrate that all other mitigation measures have been exhausted to reduce external/internal noise levels where internal noise levels can only be achieved with closed windows. Developments should ensure that garden areas are usable and not unduly impacted upon by noise. Ideally noise levels in these outside amenity areas shall not be above the 55dBLAeq (16hour) range 50-55dB. To achieve this level of exposure to existing noise it may be necessary to provide amenity areas carefully sited away from noise-exposed facades and/or the provision of acoustic screening. The assessment of the noise exposure of outdoor amenity space shall be included in a noise survey report. The layout of mixed flatted and housing developments should be orientated in such a way to create an acoustic barrier through the use of the flatted element of the development closer to the noise source. They should mitigate external noise affecting noise sensitive developments by including screen fencing, vegetation buffers, insulation in the walls and roof, the use of double glazing in windows and the use of intervening buildings or structures, such as garages. Development should include engineering solutions to reduce the impact of noise at the point of generation as well as limiting the noise within the building. The layout of the site and building layout, including screening and buffering, can mitigate against noise, as can limiting the operational hours and restricting activities that can occur on site.

Well-related to external amenity and public spaces

H.13 All dwellings, including flats, should have private open space. The only exception to this is where flats are developed in very central locations, where public open space is easily accessible and higher densities are required.

H.14 Private open space should be located conveniently for use by residents and in a position that is not overlooked by neighbouring buildings; normally to the rear of the building, and in the case of flats the private space will usually form part of the garden or communal amenity space, and not an area of landscaping.

H.15 For new houses the minimum standard garden space for terraced and semi-detached houses should normally be 50 square metres. Each dwelling should normally have a minimum rear garden depth of 10m. The shape and slope of the garden should ensure that it is useable. Larger detached houses will generally be required to provide a larger rear garden area. The garden should normally be enclosed by a 1.8m high close boarded fence or wall and direct access should be afforded to rear gardens for activities such as refuse storage, cycle parking and maintenance.

H.16 In new flatted developments where there is no communal space balconies or roof gardens should be provided for the occupants of these units. These should be located so as to afford privacy to the occupant, normally to the rear of buildings. Some communal space within developments could provide opportunities for physical activity e.g. outdoor gym equipment, space for informal exercise. However, they should not compromise the privacy of existing dwellings. SBC will normally aim to achieve a minimum useable communal area of

50 square metres for schemes up to 5 units, plus an additional 10 square metres per additional unit over 5. Garage courts, parking areas and bin storage areas are not considered as part of the useable garden amenity requirements.

H.17 All rear gardens and communal open spaces should generally enjoy a reasonable amount of sunlight and have a relatively open outlook.

H.18 Employment/community buildings should be supported by cycle storage, lockers, showers and changing rooms. Informal sports facilities should be integrated into larger buildings e.g. table tennis in atriums/courtyards and space for parking wheelchairs and pushchairs should be incorporated into places of work and community buildings.

Sunlight, daylight and orientation

H.19 New developments should be designed to ensure that a satisfactory level of sunlight and daylight is provided for the occupants of both existing and proposed dwellings.

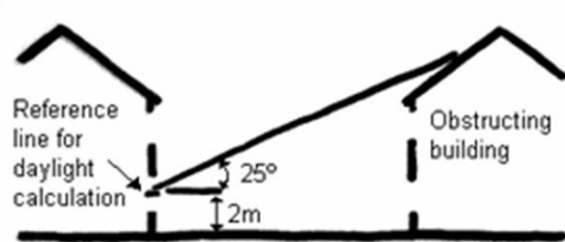
H.20 Where there is doubt that adequate sunlight and daylight will be achieved, indicators will be used to assess the amount of light reaching a new or existing window:

H.21 The Building Research Establishment (BRE) guidelines "[Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A Guide to Good Practice](#)" third edition, will be used. It provides guidance on avoiding unacceptable impacts and sets out non-mandatory targets for levels of daylight and sunlight within existing and proposed developments. The guidance contained in the revised advice has been updated to reflect the changes in the British Standard *Daylight in buildings, BS EN 17037*. Account will be taken of the size and position of windows to neighbouring buildings. However, indicators will not be applied to all schemes; only to those where there is doubt that adequate lighting may be achieved. For surrounding neighbouring properties, the guidelines remain largely the same, with Vertical Sky Component (VSC) and Daylight Distribution (DD) remaining the tests used for daylight amenity. Also, Annual Probable Sunlight House (APSH) remains the test used for sunlight amenity. The main change is the way in which daylight and sunlight is measured for proposed habitable rooms. For daylight, the Average Daylight Factor (ADF) test and Daylight Distribution (DD) test have been replaced. The new tests are Daylight Factor (DF) and Spatial Daylight Autonomy (SDA Illuminance).

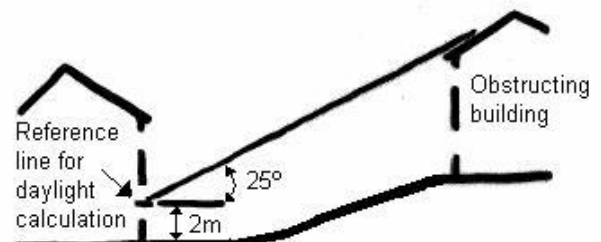
For existing buildings, a simple 25 degree test using the BRE guidelines, as identified in the diagram below :

From a point 2 metres above ground level at the horizontal centre of the protected window draw a line perpendicular to the window and at an angle of 25 degrees to the horizontal (see the drawing above). If the proposed development cuts this line then it is likely to interfere with the diffuse skylight enjoyed by the existing building. This being the case the proposal is

BRE Guidelines: 25 Degree Test



Section in plane perpendicular to the main face of the building.



On sloping sites overshadowing is more of a problem and greater spacing is required to obtain the same access to daylight for buildings lower down the slope.

likely to cause problems of loss of light and it will be necessary to undertake a detailed sunlight and daylight assessment.

H.22 Where possible dwellings should be laid out so that the main bedroom and the kitchen benefit from the morning sun and living rooms benefit from the afternoon and evening sun. Living rooms and kitchens need more daylight than bedrooms, so where there is a choice it is best to site the living room or kitchen away from obstructions. Low building depths should be encouraged to reduce the amount of artificial lighting required and reduce energy consumption. Dwellings should be orientated to maximise 'passive solar gain' in order to provide environmental benefits and minimise the amount of fuel used. Primary frontages should broadly face the south in order to optimise the solar potential of the site and dwellings should maximise solar gain through the use of technologies such as solar panels and solar hot water systems. Their use is encouraged where appropriate.

H.23 However, the form and character of the area may dictate a particular arrangement of buildings which is at odds with these objectives. In such a case, it will be for the designer to creatively combine both constraints.

Attention to detail: storage, waste, servicing and utilities

Waste

H.24 Waste planning is the responsibility of Hertfordshire County Council; therefore any proposals will need to be in line with their requirements. The waste strategy for England sets a recycling rate target of 65% by 2035, and a target to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill to 10% within the same timeframe.

H.25 It is important that provision is made for the storage and collection of waste from a site. Waste storage should be designed into all new developments, and any extension to an existing dwelling should not remove waste storage facilities. New developments should take account of [BS 5906: Waste Management in Buildings](#) Code of Practice.

H.26 The visual impact of these areas should be minimal. Appropriate screening should be used to disguise these facilities, where necessary.

H.27 Waste storage should also be designed so that bins can be moved easily and safely to the collection point. The collection point must be located near a road which provides easy access for refuse vehicles.

H.28 Facilities for recycling and composting should follow the same principles as above, with minimal adverse impact on the surrounding area. They should ideally be located in close proximity to waste storage facilities, for ease of use.

H.29 Buildings and developments should follow the waste hierarchy model:

- prevent waste as a first option;
- re-use, recycle and compost waste as a second option; and
- dispose of it as a last resort.



https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/765914/resources-waste-strategy-dec-2018.pdf

H.30 Developments should provide for onsite compost areas and for the storing of recyclable waste and also provide for recycling bins to be stored inside homes. They should provide sufficient waste container storage and design into the development how its subsequent collection will be achieved; and ensure level access so that waste receptacles can be accessed by the highway for collection.

Residential development of houses

H.31 Residential developments of houses are usually serviced by a kerbside waste and recyclables collection. The designs for waste and recycling facilities need to ensure that internal and external storage areas are designed into each dwelling and that internal space is provided for recycling storage, kitchens and utility rooms are generally the most appropriate locations. Storage for recyclables (in the case of SBC paper, glass, plastics and cans, and garden waste are all collected separately), organic kitchen waste and non-recyclable waste is provided and recycling waste storage comprises either a box or bag which are normally stored inside and taken to the kerbside on collection days. Organic waste (food) kitchen caddies are stored inside the property and emptied into larger external, free-standing organic waste receptacles. External space for the storage of garden waste should be provided and external storage for both waste and recyclables outside the buildings within the curtilage (for waste collector).

Residential development of flatted dwellings

H.32 Collection services for flatted developments vary depending on the individual circumstances of the premises. However, a kerbside collection is preferred. Developments need to ensure that internal storage is located in an accessible and communal area inside each dwelling and is easily accessible, but secure, from external storage areas, near to areas of high waste production, and hard wearing and washable - kitchens and utility rooms are generally the most appropriate. Internal storage areas where recyclables can be separated at the source should be provided, and dwellings should be provided with capacity for receptacles for each recyclable component (including food waste), according to the separation at the relevant “bring” facility e.g. glass, cans, plastic bottles, paper (single banks for mixed collections), etc, and for non-recyclable waste. They should provide for both mixed recyclables, organic kitchen waste and non-recyclable waste, and, for recyclables must have at least twice, if not three times, the capacity of storage for non-recyclable waste to account for the separation requirements and the frequency of removal from the dwelling.

External Bins for waste and recycling storage:

H.33 Bins for waste and recycling storage vary in size and an appropriate combination must be provided to accommodate the needs of the development.

H.34 The following is a summary of the bins currently used in waste and recyclables storage to provide a guide to the space requirements.

Bin Type	Use	Domestic / Trade	External Dimensions mm H x L x D (H + open lid)
180ltr Wheelie Bin (Black)	General Waste	Domestic	1070 x 580 x 730
240ltr Wheelie Bin (Brown)	Green & Food Waste	Domestic	1100 x600 x800

60ltr Bag (Black)	Recyclables - Plastic & Cans	Domestic	490 x 350 x 350
60ltr Bag (Blue)	Recyclables - Paper & Card	Domestic	490 x 350 x 350
23ltr Caddy (Red)	Glass	Domestic	405 x 320 x 400
23ltr Caddy	Food Waste	Domestic	405 x 320 x 400
240ltr Wheelie Bin (Black)	General Waste	Domestic	1100 x 600 x 800
360ltr Wheelie Bin	General Waste / Recyclables	Domestic / Trade	1120 x 630 x 890
660ltr Eurobin	Recyclables	Trade	1400 x 1300 x 720
1100ltr Eurobin	General Waste / Recyclables	Trade	1400 x 1300 x 1000

(NB: This list, including the bin dimensions, is subject to change. It is only to be used for preliminary design purposes)

External storage area features:	Housing developments	Flatted developments
Should be located within 10 metres of an external access but not near ground storey windows.	✓	✓
Storage and collection points must be as close as possible to, and preferably within 10 metres of, a place suitable for a collection vehicle to stop.	✓	✓
Must be at or near street level, and should be accessible via appropriately sized and graded ramps to allow bins to be wheeled to and from the collection point easily.	✓	✓
Must be safe for users by being well lit and visible from public vantage points and nearby dwellings / tenancies.	✓	✓
Should be unroofed, unless they are fully enclosed and secured (ideally inaccessible to animals).	✓	✓

External storage area features:	Housing developments	Flatted developments
Should be accessible for collection purposes and not impede pedestrian or vehicular access on public thoroughfares or to and from buildings.	✓	✓
Should be located as close to the front property boundary as possible, preferably behind the front boundary wall, without detracting from the street scene.		✓
Consideration should be given to the <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allocation of additional external storage space in the future, e.g. additional bins, • composting facilities - in residential development with a garden or landscaping, • provision of onsite storage for bulky waste (i.e. furniture) items and potential opportunities for re- use of these items. 		✓

Servicing and utilities

H.35 Building services equipment, whether it is used for heating and cooling, communications, power, plumbing, ventilation, access or security, if not considered appropriately, can cause significant visual blight and nuisance for neighbours.

H.36 The necessary building services equipment should be incorporated into development, while having minimal impacts on their environment. Impacts that are likely to require minimisation or mitigation include visual blight, light nuisance, noise nuisance and vibration, odour, and other environmental pollutants or nuisance.

H.37 In new development, all building services equipment must be integrated within the building or development structure and should not be a dominant feature of the building. It must be incorporated into the external building design where, because of its nature, it cannot be integrated within the building.

H.38 In refurbished development, plant and machinery should be accommodated within the building structure or incorporated into the design of external modifications.

H.39 Other design considerations for building services equipment include screening or other techniques to minimise the impacts of plant, machinery and ducting must, in themselves, not cause visual blight. Plant and machinery on roofs should not be visible from the street, public vantage points or from immediately adjacent buildings. The design and materials used for plant, machinery and ducting, as well as for ancillary structures such as screening, where located on the exterior of the building, must be consistent with those of the building and, where possible, plant and machinery should be designed in such a way that does not lead to issues of safety and security.

H.40 Where building services equipment is required on the outside of a building, it must not obscure access to daylight and sunlight, or provide any nuisance for occupants of the development or adjacent buildings. It should be separated or insulated from occupants and neighbours who are likely to sensitive to noise disturbance if plant and machinery has

moving parts. Techniques to achieve this separation include the use of flexible ducting, or resilient mountings for structure-borne plant and machinery. Plant and machinery must ensure that where mechanical or passive ventilation is required to remove odour emissions, the release point for odours must be located above the roofline of the building and, where possible, adjacent buildings.

H.41 In addition, plant and machinery, particularly where located on roofs, must not preclude the installation of required onsite renewable energy facilities in the proposal and due consideration must also be given to the possibility of future renewable energy installations.

H.42 Special consideration should be given to the installation of plant, machinery and ducting on listed buildings and in conservation areas as fewer external solutions are likely to be appropriate in these locations. Installations must be in keeping with the design and materials of the building and [listed building consent](#) is likely to be required for works to a listed building.

H.43 Access to plant and machinery must be provided to allow for convenient and safe servicing and replacement of installations. Machinery must be properly installed and maintained to ensure that impacts are properly mitigated and the situation does not deteriorate over time with continued operation. Plant and machinery should be located as close as possible to their end use, e.g. boilers should be located near to the hot water or heating users, to minimise use of ducting materials, loss of resource and visual blight. Whilst disused plant, machinery and ducting must be removed from the exterior of buildings before replacements can be installed. Only in exceptional circumstances will these be allowed to remain.

R.1 Well-designed places and buildings conserve natural resources including land, water, energy and materials. Their design responds to the impacts of climate change. It identifies measures to achieve:

- mitigation, primarily by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and minimising embodied energy; and
- adaptation to anticipated events, such as rising temperatures and the increasing risk of flooding.

R.2 A compact and walkable neighbourhood with a mix of uses and facilities reduces demand for energy and supports health and well-being. It uses land efficiently so helps adaptation by increasing the ability for CO₂ absorption, sustaining natural ecosystems, minimising flood risk and the potential impact of flooding, and reducing overheating and air pollution.

Follow the energy hierarchy

R.3 Energy efficiency should be considered at the earliest stages of design and buildings should reduce energy demands required to heat, cool, light and run buildings, thereby reducing carbon emissions and energy bills. They should improve energy efficiency using a variety of passive design measures and create innovative, high-quality urban environments.

R.4 There are many different energy efficiency options. Their application depends on the type of project, and, in particular, whether it is a new development or a refurbishment project. However, buildings and developments should utilise the waste heat produced when fuel is burnt to generate electricity through CHP systems, to heat homes and water. Individual homes should install micro-CHPs as an alternative to the traditional gas central heating boiler, while also providing electricity. Furthermore, they should utilise biomass fuels from a local sustainable source using:

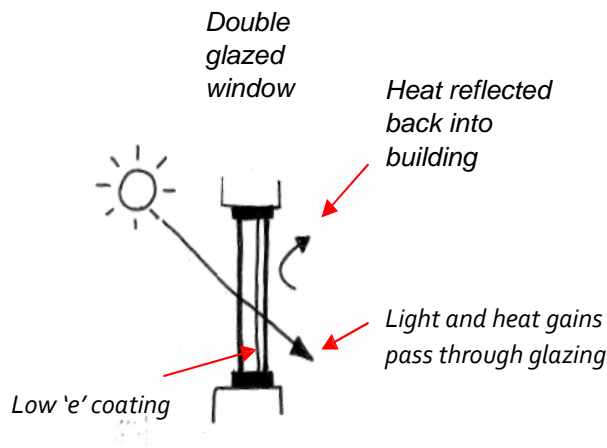
- stand-alone stoves providing space heating for a single room; and/or
- boilers connected to central heating and hot water systems.

Selection of materials and construction techniques

R.5 The standard of design in new developments has a major impact upon the quality of the environment. Good design can enhance the appearance of places and our use and enjoyment of them. Well-designed buildings should function well and should be able to adapt to changing circumstances. They should use appropriate materials and design details to achieve and maintain character and distinctiveness. Building features should vary throughout the different areas of the town whilst following the same basic design principles. They should draw on the scale, texture and colour of the building materials used throughout the surrounding area and use innovative design approach other than pastiches appropriate to the new town. Materials can be innovative and contemporary but should relate to the existing palette of colours and textures. Buildings should use locally sourced materials to effectively retain local distinctiveness. This will also help reduce the impacts of transportation on the environment, thus conforming to sustainability objectives. It can also reduce development costs. They should use environmentally friendly materials and generally arrange windows and doors symmetrically; however, random arrangements can be appropriate when they form part of an organised and distinctive effect, and when they fit in with the surrounding character of the buildings. Buildings should include chimneys as appropriate to help create varied and interesting rooflines, and provide a visual connection with the architectural style of the existing area. They should ensure boundary fences,

parking provision and landscaping are in-keeping with the surrounding area. Careful attention should be paid to decisions such as whether fences or hedgerows should be used, whether paving a currently green area would cause it to stand out unacceptably, and where parking provision should be made.

R.6 These factors need to be considered at the initial design process, as they can all make a significant difference as to whether a building fits in with the surrounding context of the area or not, and whether a place is successful.



R.7 Buildings should use high thermal mass materials, such as concrete, brick and stone, to absorb and retain solar heat during the day and maximise insulation to reduce heat loss; the rate of heat transfer through building elements is measured as a 'U-Value'. The lower the U-Value is, the less significant the heat losses are, and the more energy efficient the building materials are. U-

Values listed in Building Regulations should be considered as a minimum standard and should always be improved upon where viable and technically practicable.

R.8 Buildings should have high energy efficiency appliances installed at the development stage and use control systems, such as motion or light detecting sensors, to increase energy efficiency.

R.9 Construction, demolition, and excavation (C,D&E) wastes can be re-used and recycled on-site to provide an alternative to virgin aggregates such as sand and gravel. For developments that include demolition of existing structures, opportunities to reuse or recycle demolition waste should be considered when planning for the construction phase. This helps to not only reduce reliance on virgin aggregates but also promotes a circular economy for waste materials and reduces the need to transport materials to site. Reducing the need for virgin sand and gravel can also be encouraged by selecting secondary and or recycled materials for use within the project. For example, secondary and or recycled aggregates could be used as a substitute material in the production of concrete.

Maximise resilience

Wind

R.10 Buildings should incorporate natural ventilation ensure air quality is maintained and use atria and courtyards in an effective way to maximise natural ventilation. They should ensure voids between groups of buildings to encourage natural ventilation in the centre of deep plan developments whilst minimising heat loss through air leakage and ensure junctions between different building materials do not allow air to leak in or out of the building. Wind turbines (of varying scales) should be employed as a viable form of energy generation where appropriate.

Sunlight and daylight

R.11 Buildings should provide an adequate level of daylight and sunlight and reduce the amount of artificial light required. They should have low building depths to reduce the amount of artificial light; a depth of 9-13m provides maximum flexibility for natural lighting and ventilation. Buildings should employ techniques to bring light into the building if building depths are high. This would include design features such as atria, courtyards and sun tubes and they should ensure that any new extensions do not affect the amount of natural light being received by existing buildings. Buildings should be located far enough apart to not

cause overshadowing. Although, buildings which are too far apart can result in continuity and enclosure objectives not being achieved. They should maximise the benefits of 'passive solar gain' to provide environmental benefits and minimise the amount of fuel used. Buildings should be positioned carefully so that their primary frontages are orientated broadly to the south, in order to maximise the opportunity for passive solar gain and they should capture solar energy using Photovoltaic (PV) cells or solar water heating panels on south facing, unshaded roofs

Ground and air source heat pumps

R.12 Buildings should utilise the constant below ground temperature through ground source heat pumps and transfer heat from below the frost line into the building. In addition, they should extract the heat from the air using air source heat pumps.

Water consumption

R.13 Stevenage is in a region which receives one of the lowest levels of rainfall in the UK and, in recent years, the amount of water being consumed is steadily increasing. Reducing the amount of water needed for day-to-day activities is, therefore, essential for maintaining a sustainable lifestyle.

R.14 Buildings should reduce water consumption to 110 litres per person per day and collect and reuse rainwater for activities such as washing clothes, toilet flushing and garden irrigation. Care should be taken to ensure that elements of these schemes are designed into buildings effectively and are not visually intrusive

L.1 Well-designed places sustain their beauty over the long term. They add to the quality of life of their users and as a result, people are more likely to care for them over their lifespan. They have an emphasis on quality and simplicity.

Well managed and maintained

L.2 Developments should be well designed to ensure that they are robust, durable and easy to look after. They should be designed to ensure that the maintenance and management responsibilities are clearly defined and these roles are agreed by the necessary parties in advance.

L.3 Management of local waste, cleaning, parking, internal common spaces, shared spaces and public spaces should all be considered from the outset and these regimes should be considered from the early stages of the design process.

Adaptable to changing needs and evolving techniques

L.4 Consideration should be given to the changing needs in terms of health and mobility of the user. This is particularly relevant to private users of homes and gardens; such places should be designed to be flexible and able to adapt to the changing needs of the user.

L.5 This is also relevant to potential changes in lifestyle due to developing technologies i.e. electric vehicles, remote working etc.

L.6 Consideration should be given to the provision of high-speed digital connectivity in order to ensure the provision of options and information for education, health, leisure, social interaction, businesses and home working. Something that has become evident over the past year.

A sense of ownership

L.7 Well-designed places clearly define the boundaries for private, shared and public spaces; as such, occupants will place more value and take ownership of those spaces.

L.8 Shared spaces should be visible and easy to get to so that they are accessible to all users. They should also ensure that they are flexible so that they can be used for a variety of activities.

Appendix A – Stevenage Urban Character Assessments (2008, SBC)

Bedwell
General Characteristics
New Town neighbourhood
Low density Terraced blocks – 24 dph
High density flats towards western edge of neighbourhood
Low boundary walls and hedgerows to front, sometimes no distinct front boundaries
Mature and attractive landscaping
Access issues to properties, limited parking availability
Development Considerations
Off street parking which does not affect the street scene
Landscaping – this is an area with a deficiency of natural and semi-natural open space
Extensions of cycle and pedestrian links
Capitalise on central location
Borders Countryside Heritage site at Monks and Whormerley Wood

Broadwater
General Characteristics
Small pockets of medieval buildings at Hertford Road/London Road junction, Shephalbury and Bragbury End
New Town neighbourhood to north of area
Private modern estate developments to south of area (Hertford Road)
Low density, typically 2 to 3 storey developments, exception at neighbourhood centres and Roebuck Gate – 24dph
Mature and attractive landscaping
Access issues to new town neighbourhood properties, limited parking availability
Development Considerations
Off street parking which does not affect the street scene

Landscaping – there are also existing deficiencies in the quantity of amenity green spaces
Extensions of cycle and pedestrian links
Broadwater (Marymead) Conservation Area
Listed buildings on Hertford Road and at Bragbury and Shephalbury
Areas of archaeological significance, as advised by HCC, at Broadwater Farm, Wychdell and Bragbury End
Stevenage Brook runs through southern section of neighbourhood
Noise issues from railway which runs south of neighbourhood
Chells
General Characteristics
New Town neighbourhood
Low density, 2 to 3 storey developments, exceptions at neighbourhood centres – 27 dph
Mature and attractive landscaping
Access issues to front of new town neighbourhood properties due to layout of urban form
Development Considerations
Off street parking which does not affect the street scene
Landscaping – there are also existing deficiencies in the quantity of amenity green space
Extensions of cycle and pedestrian links
Borders several wildlife sites
Ancient Lane at Narrowbox Lane

Chells Manor
General Characteristics
Modern 20 th Century estate developments
Pocket of rural form along Chells Lane
High density, 2 to 3 storey developments, exception at neighbourhood centre – 35dph
Development Considerations
Landscaping

Extensions of cycle and pedestrian links
Borders several wildlife sites
Listed Buildings along Chells Lane
Ancient Lanes at Lanterns lane and Chells Lane

Coreys Mill and Rectory Lane
General Characteristics
Area of rural settlement layout along Rectory Lane and Weston Lane
Private estate development from 1960's onwards most common. Large homes on large plots
Generally, very low density and low scale development, typically 2 storeys – 16dph
Open countryside to the north of the area
Mature landscaping, on public and private property, throughout area
Typically, no on-street parking
Development Considerations
Landscaping
Parking solutions that do not affect the street scene
Extensions and improvements of cycle and pedestrian links
Several wildlife sites
Rectory Land and St Nicholas Conservation Area
Many Listed Buildings along Rectory Lane
Ancient Lanes at The Avenue and Fishers Green Lane
Area of archaeological significance at The Bury, as advised by HCC

Old Town
General Characteristics
Defined areas of historic character
Core commercial area at High Street. Residential above retail units

Employment uses centralised at Orchard Road/Enterprise centre
All low density, typically 2 to 3 storey developments, exception at Higgins Homes site and flatted developments along Primett Road
Mature and attractive landscaping. High quality public realm
Access issues for older people, limited parking availability
Development Considerations
Off street parking which does not affect the street scene
Landscaping. There are also existing deficiencies in the quantity of amenity green spaces
Extensions of cycle and pedestrian links
High Street and Orchard Road Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings throughout area
Maintain special interest of all built areas. Include small distinguishing details such as fascias, brickwork detail, traditional materials
Area of archaeological significance, as advised by HCC, at High Street
Noise issues from railway which runs west of the area
Ongoing issues with gyratory system

Pin Green
General Characteristics
New Town neighbourhood
Typically higher densities and low scale development, typically 2 storeys – except at neighbourhood centres – 32dph
Mature landscaping throughout the area
Typically no on-street parking
Development Considerations
Landscaping
Extension of cycle and pedestrian links
Several wildlife sites
Ancient Lane at Old Walkern Road

Areas of archaeological significance at Martins Wood and Hampson Park, as advised by HCC

Poplars

General Characteristics

Modern 20th Century estate developments

High density and low scale, typically 2 to 3 storey, development – 32dph

Immature landscaping

Shephall

General Characteristics

Area of rural settlement layout at Shephall Green

New town neighbourhood surrounding

Generally, low density and low scale development, typically 2 storeys – exceptions at neighbourhood centres – 26dph

Mature landscaping throughout area

Development Considerations

Landscaping. There are also existing deficiencies in the quantity of amenity green spaces

Parking solutions that do not affect the street scene

Extensions and improvements of cycle and pedestrian links

Several wildlife sites

Shephall Green Conservation Area

Listed Buildings around Shephall Green

Ancient Lane at Dene Lane

Are of archaeological significance at Shephall Green, as advised by HCC

St Nicholas
General Characteristics
Original neighbourhood located to the south of area
New modern estate of Great Ashby located to the north of the area
High density, low scale development, typically 2 storeys – 33 dph average although higher in southern section
Limited landscaping throughout area
Development Considerations
Requirement to improve landscaping of existing neighbourhood, there are accessibility issues to natural and semi-natural open space for existing residents
Requirements for new amenity green spaces
Parking solutions that do not affect the street scene
Extensions and improvements of cycle and pedestrian links
Two wildlife sites
Borders Rectory Lane and St Nicholas Conservation Area
Borders Weston Lane and Botany Bay Lane, both Ancient Lanes.

Symonds Green
General Characteristics
Area of rural settlement layout at Symonds Green
New town neighbourhood surrounding
Modern, late 20 th Century development to north and east of area
Generally, high density and low scale development, typically 2 storeys – exception at neighbourhood centre – 32dph
Mature landscaping throughout area
Typically no on-street parking
Development Considerations
Landscaping
Parking solutions that do not affect the street scene

Extensions and improvements of cycle and pedestrian links
Several wildlife sites
Symonds Green Conservation Area
Listed Buildings around Symonds Green
Ancient Lane at Meadway and Fishers Green Lane
Areas of archaeological significance at Fishers Green and Symonds Green, as advised by HCC

Appendix B - Key shopfront components

The following are key shopfront design components you need to consider when making alterations to an existing shopfront:

Window Displays

- Shop frontages should be largely glazed to maintain a window display. Solid frontages (including obscured glass) will be discouraged.
- Vertical glazing bars (mullions) should be used to subdivide large windows in traditional shopfronts to help visually relate the shopfront with the upper elevations of the building.

Entrances

- The design of the door should be in keeping with the other elements of the shopfront. The solid bottom panel should align with the stallriser. The top of the door should align with the transom (if present).
- Decorative tiling should be retained (if present) and reinstatement is encouraged.
- All new build shop units and shopfronts should be designed to be fully accessible to everyone.
- In the case of existing buildings, particularly where a new shop front is proposed, the following guidance should be followed:
 - Shops that have a change in level from pavement to shop floor surface can usually incorporate ramped access into or within the shop.
 - Entrance doors should be accessible to all, particularly wheelchair users and people with limited manual dexterity. 1000mm minimum clear door width in new buildings and 775mm door width in existing buildings where a new shop front or alterations to a shop front are proposed.

Shopfront Recess

- Existing shopfront recesses should be retained.
- Removable timber or metal lattice style shutters are often more appropriate to protect recessed shop entrances than horizontally-operated lattice security gates, but they should not extend across windows.
- New recesses in shopfronts will be strongly discouraged due to their potential for attracting anti-social behaviour.

Fascias

- The fascia should be of a suitable size and proportion in relation to the building and should not normally extend above the cornice or below the architrave as it would upset the overall balance and proportions of a shopfront or parade
- Fascia signs should not obscure or damage existing architectural features. Deep box fascias which project beyond the shopfront frame should be avoided
- Lettering on fascia signs should be proportionate to the scale of the shopfront. To aid identification, fascia signs should include the street number of the premises
- Where a shopfront and fascia extend across two or more shop unit bays, it is not acceptable to remove the intervening pilasters as it would:
 - weaken the frame's visual support to the upper floors; and
 - disrupt the character and rhythm of a shopping frontage created by the widths of individual shopfronts

Pilasters

- New pilasters are preferably placed in line with solid wall, not windows above, to emphasise their function. This is particularly important in the case of shopping frontages on sloping sites where existing stepped profiles of fascias and stallrisers should be preserved or reintroduced wherever possible.

Stallrisers

- Stallrisers consist of solid elements below shop windows. They form a base to the shopfront display, and prevent the glazing from being damaged or soiled.
- Where stallrisers are provided, they should be at least 300mm high or to the top of the pilaster base or door panel and faced in appropriate materials for the context. They should not provide ledges that can be sat upon. Glazing should be brought to the front of a stallriser.
- Stallrisers should be retained and generally incorporated to any new shopfront on a period building.

Colour and materials

- Materials should be chosen for their durability and appropriateness to their location. Traditional materials such as timber, stone and render are the most appropriate for new shopfronts, particularly for listed buildings and in conservation areas.
- More contemporary materials such as colour-coated steel, aluminium and bronze instead of timber may be appropriate in some circumstances.
- Existing glazed brickwork or tiling should be retained.
- Colour schemes for shopfronts and in particular the projecting framework should be carefully considered, particularly in conservation areas and for listed buildings.
- Proposals should be accompanied by full details of materials, finishes and colours (or sample and specification cards).

Folding shopfronts

- Folding shopfronts are not generally acceptable, particularly those on historic buildings such as listed buildings and those in Conservation Areas. When open, they erode the appearance of the shopfront, creating a visual void, and can increase disturbance to neighbouring properties, particularly in the case of food and drink premises. When closed they appear as a row of doors rather than a shopfront. This creates a heavier appearance than a shopfront mullion and reduces the area of glass in the shopfront.

Lightwells / grilles

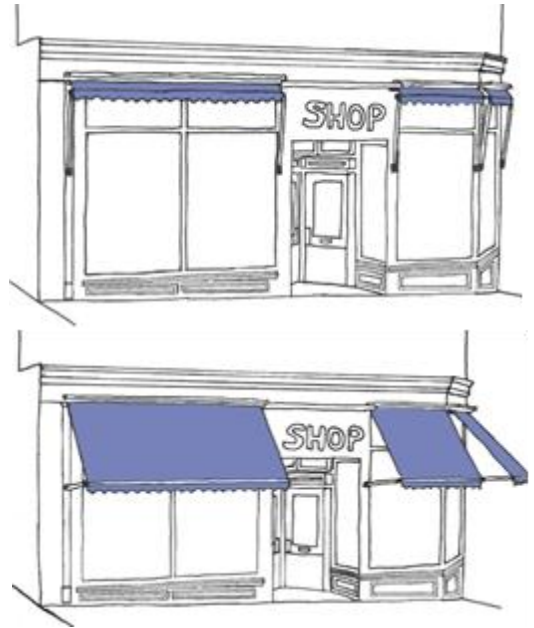
- Pavement lights or small lightwells covered with metal grilles are typically found in front of shopfronts. These provide light into the areas beneath whilst allowing shoppers close inspection of the window display.
- Creating open lightwells with railings in front of a shopfront is not generally acceptable as it prevents window shopping and disrupts the buildings relationship to the rhythm of the street. This is also the case if the shopfront has been converted into residential accommodation.

Signs, advertisements and hoardings

- Shop and business signs should relate well to the character, scale and architectural features of the building and respect their local context.
- Properties should only have one main fascia sign and one ancillary projecting or hanging sign per street frontage. Two projecting signs may be appropriate in cases of large shopfronts stretching across two or more shop units.
- Too many adverts/signs on a property contribute to visual clutter and can detract from the appearance of the street scene. Whilst signs that are unsympathetically designed can cause significant harm to the building and the local townscape.

Projecting and hanging signs

- Projecting and hanging signs should normally be level with the fascia rather than below or above it. They should be positioned to the side of the shopfront at fascia level.
- Signs at upper floor levels will be discouraged. Advertising for upper floor premises by lettering on windows or by suspended banners on large frontages will only be considered acceptable where advertising a specific event for a temporary period.
- Advert signs, including those on canopies/blinds, should:
 - be considered as an integral part of a shopfront or building, designed in from the outset with new structures; and
 - be in harmony with the existing building, and neighbouring ones, in terms of their proportions, design and materials.



Canopies, awnings and blinds

- Blinds can add colour and interest to the street scene, however, it is important to ensure that they do not dominate a shopfront or shop parade.
- Shopfront canopies and blinds are only likely to be acceptable where they are:
 - retractable;
 - traditional canvas;
 - blind box integrated with the overall design;
 - attached between the fascia and shopfront; and be flush with the fascia level.
- In general all blinds should be designed and installed to:
 - ensure public safety;
 - incorporate a minimum of 2.3 metres between the bottom of the blind and the pavement; and
 - incorporate a minimum of 1 metre between the blind and the kerb edge.

Retractable

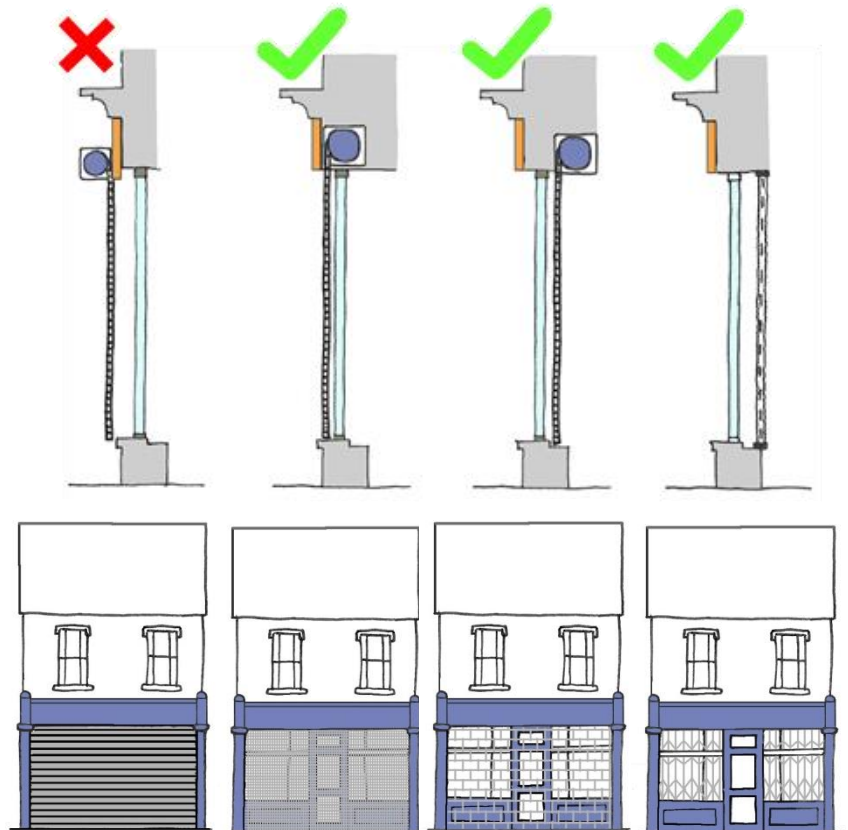
- Retracting awnings and blinds do not normally require planning permission, although they may require advertisement consent in certain cases. They should:
 - not obscure or damage the fascia and other important features of the shopfront and buildings;
 - be appropriate in position, design and materials to the character and scale of both the shopfront, building and locality and not have conflicting and over-dominant shapes.
- Fixed canopies require planning permission. Acrylic / plastic “Dutch blinds”, or similarly reflective materials will be strongly discouraged, due to their bulk and materials and the resulting visual clutter.
- Canvas blinds are often characteristic features of historic shopfronts and should therefore be retained or replaced using a similar design – acrylic or plastic blinds are not normally suitable.
- Canopies or blinds with signage (a letter or words for advertising purposes), are treated as advertisements and therefore [advertisement consent](#) will be required rather than planning permission.

Shopfront security

Security shutters can be visually unattractive and create a 'dead', hostile appearance (especially out of opening hours), which can affect the commercial viability of an area and harm the pedestrian experience. We want to minimise the impacts on the appearance of the shopfront, the building and the character of the area.

Shutters

- SBC strongly encourages internal rather than external shopfront security measures. Other forms of enhanced shopfront security should be considered instead of external shutters. For example, improved internal lighting, alarm systems, the use of toughened or laminated glass, etc.
- In cases where external measures (shutters, grilles or alarm boxes, etc.) are proposed they would only be permitted where they do not harm the character of shopfronts, such as internal brick bond grilles or collapsible gates.
- External security shutters will normally require [planning permission](#), whilst internal shutters normally do not. Where internal shutters are installed they should be set back to leave a window display.
- In the case of listed buildings, the installation of any shopfront security measures, external or internal, will require [listed building consent](#). On listed buildings, there will be a presumption against the use of external security shutters and grilles in favour of internal.
- Where an external shutter is proposed it may only be considered acceptable provided it is integrated into the shopfront in terms of design, materials and colour. External measures should avoid using solid roller shutters. This includes the 'pin-hole' versions that rely upon internal illumination for any transparent effect. These designs have negative environmental impacts including:
 - obscuring the shopfront and hiding window displays;
 - attracting graffiti;
 - preventing natural surveillance;
 - creating a hostile and unsafe appearance in streets and shopping centres; and
 - being visually unattractive.



Grilles

- Roller grilles are preferable to solid or pin-hole shutters as they provide security without obscuring window displays and allow views of the shop interior, which enhances surveillance and security.

- Removable or collapsible grilles can be used internally or externally and in both cases allow a certain degree of visibility. These only require [planning permission](#) if installed externally. However, [listed building consent](#) will also be required for internal grilles in listed buildings.
- Removable grilles are expected to remain in place only outside trading hours and should be stored inside at all other times. Any fixings should be discretely placed and must not harm architectural features or mouldings.
- Where there is a recessed entrance it is preferable to install 'Concertina style gate' between the openings.

Shutter boxes

Shutter boxes should be discrete and should not project forward of the fascia or obscure any architectural features. They should be concealed wherever possible, for example set behind or within the fascia panel, the guide rails concealed within the frame of the shopfront and the shutter should close onto the stallriser.

Finishes

All grilles and shutters should have an acceptable finish. They should:

- be coloured (painted, powder coated or stove enamelled) to match the rest of the shopfront, including signs.
- not be uncoated shutters, galvanised steel, a milled finish or anodised aluminium as these are not considered acceptable finishes.

In the exceptional cases where solid shutters are acceptable, original designs by artists will be encouraged provided they respect their location, particularly in Conservation Areas.

A-boards

- The licensing of portable advertising boards on the pavement (public highway) should be carefully controlled. Pedestrians can be put at risk through poorly sited advertisements.
- Anyone proposing to place portable advertising boards on a highway that is maintained at public expense will require a [highways licence](#) from the Highways Authority. Where it is proposed to place a portable advertising board on a privately maintained forecourt, over which the public have limited access, a licence will not be required.

Outdoor seating & spill out displays

- Many shops, particularly cafes, restaurants, greengrocers or hardware shops use an area in front of the shop for tables and chairs or to exhibit goods for sale.
- Such areas must ensure that fire tracks throughout pedestrian areas are kept clear to ensure access for emergency vehicles. Outdoor areas may require [planning permission](#) and advice should be sought from the Development Management Team. Care should be taken to avoid obstruction and to allow access for all users.
- Properties wishing to use the public realm for tables, chairs or to exhibit goods for sale must ensure that waste and recycling is managed to avoid it escaping and causing street litter. Businesses have a duty of care to dispose of their waste correctly.

Burglar Alarms

- Burglar alarm devices must be sited so that they are both adequately visible as a deterrent but do not detract from the visual character of the shopfront.

Cash machines

- Cash machines require [planning permission](#) and, in the case of listed buildings, [listed building consent](#). Illuminated advertising for cash machines should be discreet and is subject to [advertisement consent](#).
- Cash machines are only likely to be acceptable provided they are:
 - treated as an integral part of a building's design wherever possible;
 - not dominant in the shop display frontage in terms of size or materials;
 - positioned sensitively and not be located where queuing could cause problems;
 - with minimal amount of display material;
 - located on the busiest elevation of a building to reduce the risk of robbery;
 - fully accessible to people with disabilities in both location and detailed arrangement; and
 - in existing bank buildings of traditional design they are most successfully inserted into existing stone recesses or beneath window bays.

All advertisements

All advertisements affect the appearance of the building, structure or place where they are displayed, to the extent that they can sometimes be the most dominant feature in an urban setting.

Guidance on advertisements is contained within [Outdoor advertisements and signs: A guide for advertisers](#).

The guidance in this document should still be applied as a matter of good practice where advertisements have deemed consent and do not require formal advertisement consent.

Advertisements and signs should:

- respect the form, fabric, design and scale of the host building and setting.
- serve as an integral part of the immediate surroundings and be constructed of materials that are sympathetic to the host building and the surrounding area.

Interesting and unique styles of advertisements and signs will be considered acceptable where they are compatible with the host buildings and surrounding environment.

Generally, advertisements will:

- only be acceptable at fascia level or below.
- not be considered acceptable where they impact upon public safety, such as being hazardous to vehicular traffic (e.g. block sight lines, emit glare) or pedestrian traffic (e.g. disrupt the free flow of pedestrian movement).
- require detailed consideration if advertisements are proposed in conservation areas and on or near listed buildings given the sensitivity and historic nature of these areas or buildings. Any advertisements on or near a listed building or in a conservation area must not harm their character and appearance and must not obscure or damage specific architectural features of buildings.



https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/11499/326679.pdf

Advertising on street furniture

Free standing signs and signs on street furniture will not normally be accepted where they contribute to visual and physical clutter and create a hindrance to movement along the pavement or pedestrian footway.

Illumination

The illumination levels of advertisements should be in accordance with the standards set by the [Institute of Lighting Professionals Guide to Illuminated Advertisements](#).

The type, appearance and method (internal, external, lettering, neon, etc.) of illuminated signs should:

- be sympathetic to the design of the building on which it is located.
- be determined by the design of the building.
- not be flashing or intermittent, whether internal or external.
- be unobtrusively sized and sited.
- be fixed and sized as discreetly as possible, particularly spotlights and trough lights.

Corporate designs involving internally illuminated signs may need to be modified where they are considered unsuitable, especially in residential areas, or conservation areas, or on listed buildings.

To ensure that an advertisement does not become unduly dominant in the street scene, disturb adjoining residents at night, or cause safety hazards to drivers, consideration should be given to the:

- intensity of illumination;
- surface area to be illuminated; and
- positioning and colours.

Internally illuminated box signs are discouraged. Generally, the internal illumination of individual letters, rather than the whole fascia or projecting sign on a shopfront, will be more appropriate.

Hoardings

Where [advertisement consent](#) is required for the display of hoardings, the following guidance will be applicable.

Advertisement hoardings or posters will not usually be acceptable, or will be carefully controlled:

- in predominantly residential areas.
- in conservation areas.
- on or near listed buildings to ensure that they do not detract from the areas and building's character and appearance.

However, if an area has a mix of uses or is predominantly in commercial use some poster or hoarding advertising may be acceptable where they satisfactorily relate to the scale of the host building or feature and its surroundings.

They should be designed and positioned as an integral feature of the building. Hoardings will not be considered acceptable:

- in locations where they may prevent or significantly damage views or obscure light;
- where they are forward of the face of adjoining buildings;
- where they project above roof ridge/eaves level;
- where they obscure architectural features or landmarks (including windows or window recesses); and
- on side walls where they would be unduly dominant.

Temporary poster hoardings used to screen buildings or construction sites while work is being carried out have deemed consent under [The Town and Country Planning \(Control of Advertisements\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#) for commercial, industrial or business uses only. This deemed consent is not available for any residential development and is also not available in conservation areas.

The impact of illumination will be taken into consideration and where it is considered to be a nuisance or out of character with the area then it will not be considered acceptable.

Shroud / banner advertisements

Shroud advertisements come in a range of forms but are generally large- scale and can cover the entire elevation of a building. As a result of the scale and size of shroud advertisements their appearance can create a conflict with the surrounding environment and the streetscene and, where the advertisement partially obscures a building, the visual appearance of the building itself. However, they can help to shield unsightly construction work.

Therefore, given the scale and size of shroud advertisements these types of advertisement proposals will only be considered acceptable primarily:

- in commercial areas
- where they screen buildings under construction, alteration or refurbishment

If considered acceptable they will only be allowed for a temporary period and should be removed upon completion of the works or at the end of the approved period, whichever is sooner. Longer consents will require additional [advertisement consent](#).

The erection of a banner or shroud advertisement may require a specific licence from the [Highways Authority](#). If [advertisement consent](#) is granted for a banner or shroud, this does not indicate that a licence will also be granted.

Shroud on scaffolding will only be permitted where:

- the scaffolding covers the entire elevation of the building and the netting on the scaffolding contains a 1:1 image of the completed building which is undergoing construction work (scaffolding is only to be erected for the purposes of carrying out building works and will be removed upon completion of the works); and
- the advertisement covers no more than 20% of each elevation and is not fragmented. It must respect the architectural form and scale of the host building. Where shroud and banner advertisements are considered acceptable on listed buildings or in conservation areas the advertisement should not cover more than 10% of each elevation and should not be fragmented. The location of the advertisement on the shroud will depend on the character of the local built form and the nature of views within it.
- in some highly sensitive locations or where the building plays a particularly important role in the appearance of the area, a visual representation of the building that is shrouded may be considered necessary to mitigate any harm to the appearance of the area.
- they relate to landmark or unique buildings, such as festival venues, museums, and do not detract from the appearance and form of the host building or the surrounding environment.
- in some commercial areas flags or banners may be considered a suitable form of display. Within residential areas, conservation areas, and on or near listed buildings we will be primarily concerned with safeguarding the amenity, character and appearance of these areas and buildings and therefore it is unlikely that such advertisements will be supported.

Appendix C – Residential building requirements

Building design and materials

Building features such as windows, roof pitches, overhangs, gables and chimneys should all be consistent with those of the existing property. For example, if the roof of the main building is pitched, then the extension should have a pitched roof at the same angle. However, this does not mean that contemporary design will not be acceptable, but it should respect local character and not detract from the original building.

The materials used should draw on the colour, type and texture of those used for the original house.

Privacy and outlook

Extensions should:

- be designed and orientated in relation to that of neighbouring properties
- not adversely affect the outlook from neighbouring dwellings
- not result in any significant overlooking to neighbouring houses and gardens.

The minimum separation distances set out in respect of new dwellings will be equally applied to proposals for extensions:

No of Storeys	Type of Separation	Min. 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 a 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

Scale

Generally, the extension should appear deferential to the original house; smaller in width, height and depth than the existing property, but still using the same proportions.

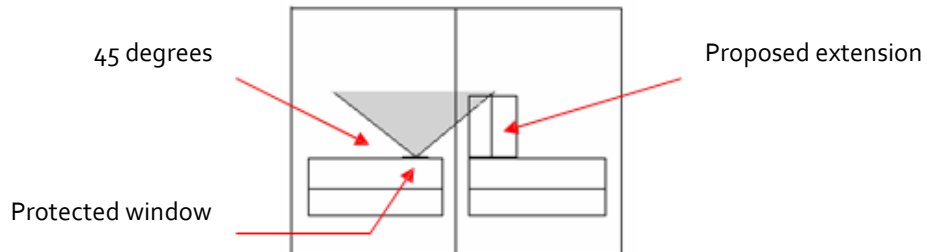
Sunlight, daylight and overshadowing

Extensions should be designed to ensure that a satisfactory level of sunlight and daylight is provided for the occupants of both existing dwellings and those adjoining or nearby.

Where there is doubt that adequate sunlight and daylight will be achieved, indicators will be used to assess the amount of light reaching a new or existing window. The Building Research Establishment (BRE) guidelines "[Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A Guide to Good Practice](#)", third edition, will be used. It provides guidance on acceptable levels of daylight and sunlight within existing and proposed developments. The indicators will not be applied to all schemes but only to those where there is doubt that adequate lighting may be achieved. This can be established by undertaking a 45 degree test or a simple 25 degree test using the BRE guidelines. BRE's third edition of guidelines was published in 2022 and the current recommendations for effects on neighbouring properties and open spaces is untouched. The major changes in the third edition will be to assessment of proposed developments with the current daylight (VSC, ADF, DD) and sunlight (APSH) tests being superseded by the new tests.

The 45 degree test

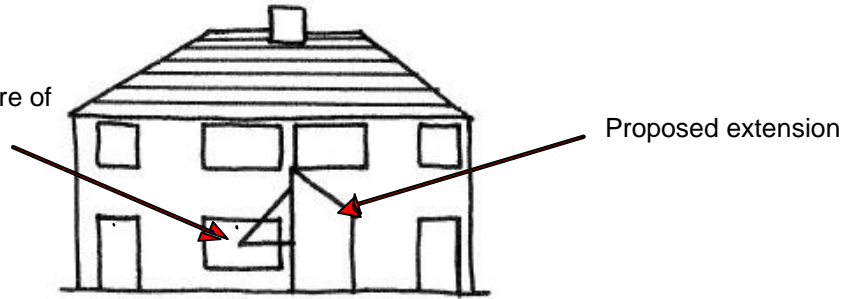
This rule applies to all types of dwellings. Firstly consider the plan layout of the proposed extension (see drawing A below). From the mid-point of a neighbour's protected window project two lines at 45 degrees from the centre of the window.



TEST 1 - the proposed extension should not project beyond the '45 degree line' into the neighbour's protected area

Secondly consider the elevation of the proposed extension (see drawing B below). From the centre of the neighbour's protected window draw a line at 45 degrees to the horizontal.

Line drawn at 45 degrees from centre of protected window

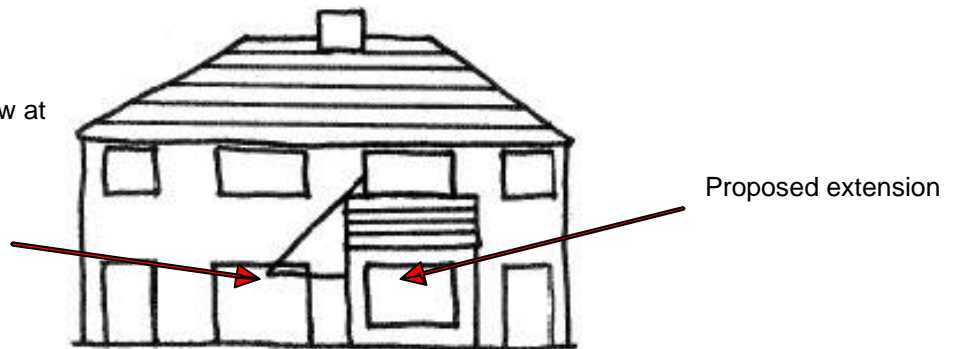


Proposed extension

TEST 2 - no part of the proposed extension should encroach beyond this 45 degree line

If the 'protected window' is a floor to ceiling window (e.g. patio doors) then the 45 degree line is drawn from a point on the horizontal centre of the window at 2 metres above ground level

Line drawn at 45° from centre of protected window at point of 2m above external ground

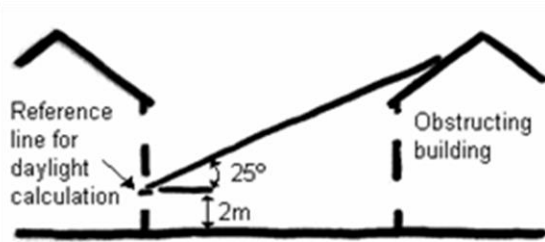


Proposed extension

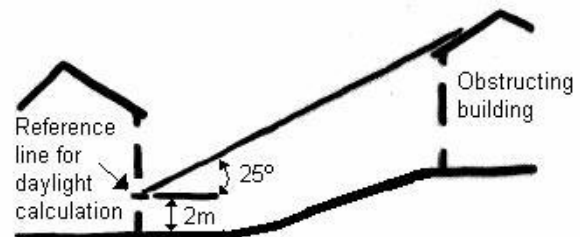
Extensions that fail both 'tests' will need to be assessed against the [BRE sunlight and daylight guidelines](#).

The 25 degree test

BRE Guidelines: 25 Degree Test



Section in plane perpendicular to the main face of the building.



On sloping sites overshadowing is more of a problem and greater spacing is required to obtain the same access to daylight for buildings lower down the slope.

From a point 2 metres above ground level at the horizontal centre of the protected window draw a line perpendicular to the window and at an angle of 25 degrees to the horizontal (see the drawing below). If the proposed extension cuts this line then it is likely to interfere with the diffuse skylight enjoyed by the existing building. This being the case the proposed extension is likely to cause problems of loss of light and it will be necessary to undertake a detailed sunlight and daylight assessment.

Garden size

If proposals for extensions result in the loss of garden space, SBC will ensure that a reasonable private garden area commensurate with the size of the property is retained to serve the dwelling.

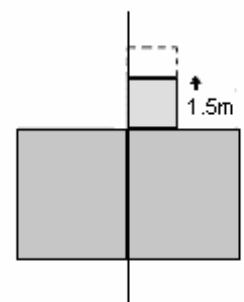
Landscaping

Proposals for extensions should not result in the loss of trees or hedgerows. If it is necessary to remove landscaping, appropriate replacements will be required. This will help to maintain biodiversity in line with sustainability objectives.

Front extensions

Generally, modest single storey front extensions will be acceptable subject to the following criteria:

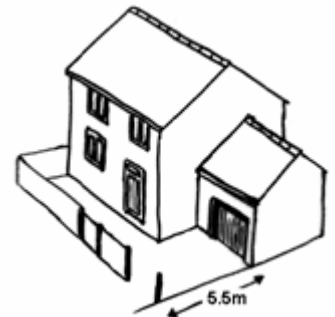
- extensions to a semi-detached or terraced house that abut the boundary of another house, should project no more than 1.5 metres. A greater projection may be acceptable for detached houses;
- the shape and projection of the extension should remain subordinate in views along the street and maintain the harmony or balance between existing houses. It should respect the architectural integrity of groups of homes.



- the extension should maintain the amount of parking space available on the site below our adopted maximum standards specified in the Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD. Where the extension incorporates a garage, it should ensure a minimum distance of 5.5 metres between the garage doors and the back edge of the footway, so that a parking space is retained.

It is also important that if any hardstanding is added/rebuilt it is created using permeable materials.

Two storey front extensions will generally not be acceptable, as they are likely to have a significant impact on the street scene, as well as seriously affecting the outlook and light of adjoining properties. In circumstances where these impacts will not occur, a two storey extension may be approved.



Porches

The addition of a porch to a property generally falls under permitted development. However, where planning permission is required it will be subject to the same criteria as front extensions, listed above.

The entrance to a house is its focal point; porches:

- can have a significant effect on a property's appearance;
- must be carefully designed so that it follows good examples from other properties along the street
- must be in keeping with the design of the dwelling;
- must not be located too close to windows.

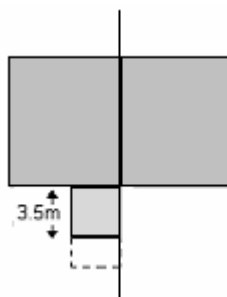
Rear extensions

Rear extensions generally have the least impact, as they do not usually affect the street scene. They can often, therefore, be the simplest way of extending a home. The most important factors to consider when assessing rear extensions are the length and height of the extension and its proximity to the neighbouring property.

Single storey rear extensions

Often, single storey rear extensions do not require planning permission; particularly if there have been no previous extensions on the original property.

This type of rear extension will be acceptable providing the following criteria are met:

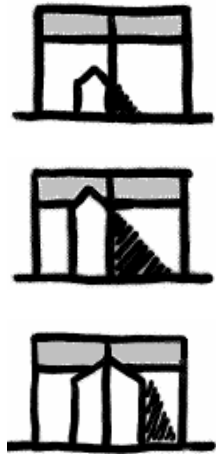


- extensions within 1 metre of the side boundary of the house should not exceed 3.5 metres in depth.
- side windows should not cause overlooking of the adjoining property and subsequent loss of privacy.
- flat roofs should not be designed for use as a balcony.

Two storey rear extensions

Two storey rear extensions usually have a greater impact on adjoining properties and the appearance of the area. These will only be permitted where the following criteria are met:

- extensions on attached houses should not project more than 2.5 metres when they are within 1 metre of the side boundary of the house. On detached houses the degree of separation from the adjoining house will be taken into account.
- side windows should have a lower sill level of at least 1.7 metres above the internal floor level of the room which they serve unless they are obscure glazed and fixed below 1.7 metres.



Both single and two storey rear extensions

Exceptions to the above criteria may be made when:

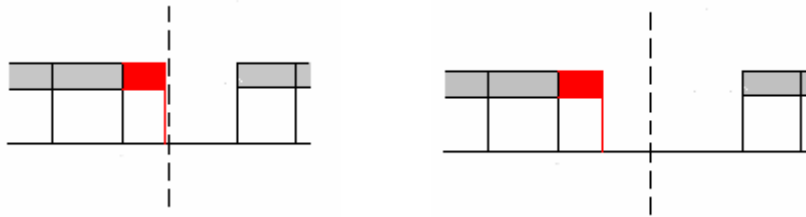
- joint or simultaneous applications are made by applicants in adjoining dwellings;
- where adjoining properties have been extended already;
- the existing houses are in a staggered line, the depth and width of the extension should be reduced to compensate;
- the extension would be to the north of a neighbouring dwelling; or
- changes in ground level increase the apparent size or impact of the extension on light and outlook, the depth and or width of the extension must normally be reduced to compensate.

Side extensions

Extensions to the side will be considered in the same way as criteria for front and rear extensions in terms of their projection forwards or backwards relative to adjoining dwellings. Special account will also be taken of the following criteria:

- the importance of the space between houses in establishing the character of the area and the need to prevent a cramped appearance
- a terraced appearance should not be created, and the rhythm of the street should not be compromised;
- the introduction of overlooking windows over a previously private area of an adjoining dwelling will not be acceptable
- where the side extension would come closer to a road or footpath it should not be overbearing or create an alleyway effect and should respect the context of the street scene;
- in certain circumstances, for two storey side extensions, it may be appropriate for the first floor element to be set-back from the front elevation to reflect the rhythm of the street scene and maintain the character and appearance of the area; and

in two storey extensions a space of at least 1 metre must normally be retained between the new side wall and the boundary of the site to prevent a terracing effect and to prevent an extension to one dwelling removing the ability of the adjoining property to similarly extend.



A 1m space has not been retained. A terracing effect would be created if the neighbouring property was to also extend

A space of over 1m has been retained. The neighbouring property can extend without creating a terracing effect.

Roof extensions

Roof extensions which project beyond the plane of any roof slope which forms a principal elevation and fronts a highway or which increase the height of the roof above the existing ridgeline will require [planning permission](#). Similarly, roof extensions to dwellings located within a conservation area will require [planning permission](#).

The addition of dormer windows can have a significant effect on the appearance of a property, as well as impacting upon the street scene as a whole.

Light and ventilation can often be provided by rooflights; these are less visually intrusive, reduce overlooking problems, and are also normally permitted development.

Where a roof alteration is proposed, the following criteria should be applied:

- the extension should remain below the existing ridgeline and must be kept as low as possible;
- the extension should be less than half of the roof slope;
- the extension should not extend off the main outside walls of the house;
- a minimum 500mm wide area of original roof should be retained at the bottom and both sides of the dormer;
- the roof extension should not extend below the height of the new window sills;
- the raising of the ridge height of a dwelling to accommodate a loft conversion will not normally be considered acceptable;
- in terraced houses the proposal must respect the integrity of the group or the street scene. We will discourage the introduction of such extensions, where there are no other examples within the street scene;
- the shape and size of the windows should reflect the proportions and finish of windows in the house, as well as lining up vertically with the fenestration on the property;



Rooflights often offer a favourable lighting solution. However, these rooflights are not in line with existing windows, and are uncoordinated in terms of size and style.

- the new windows should not overlook windows or private open space of adjoining houses or increase overlooking unreasonably. In exceptional circumstances, windows containing frosted glass and permanently fixed closed may be acceptable; and
- where possible dormer windows or roof extensions should be designed with a pitched roof. Large flat-roofed dormer windows proposed in houses with pitched roofs will generally not be acceptable.



Dormer windows work well here, they do not over dominate the roof, line up vertically with the existing windows, and are of a consistent style and size.



The flat roof dormer is visually intrusive and does not follow the principles of good design.

STEVENAGE DESIGN GUIDANCE

Supplementary Planning Document

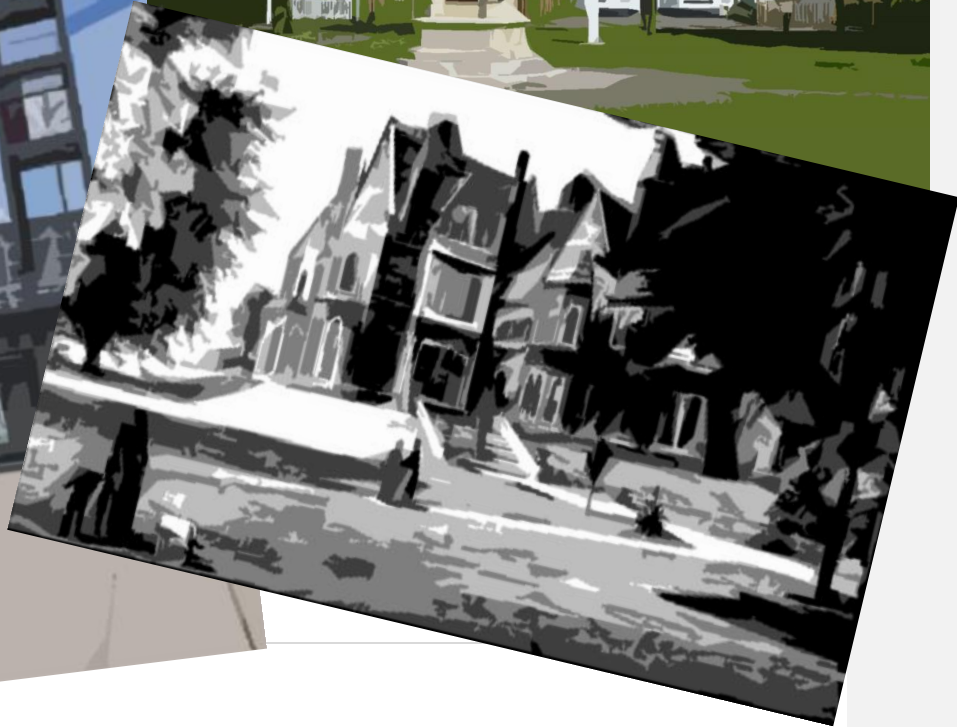


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Part 1 – Purpose of the Stevenage Design Guidance

Introduction

1.1 Stevenage Design Guidance supports the strategic and detailed policies in the Stevenage Borough Local Plan (SBLP). This guidance forms a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which is an additional 'material consideration' in planning decisions. This guidance replaces the Stevenage Design Guide 2009; updating advice where appropriate and providing new guidance on matters introduced or strengthened in the SBLP including long-term sustainability through the use of durable, low maintenance materials.

1.2 This document was adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document [on 30 January 2023](#), following a meeting of the Executive Committee of Stevenage Borough Council on ~~XX-XXXX~~ [18 January 2023](#).

1.3 A draft version of this document was subject to [two public consultations](#) between 9 August 2021 and 4 October 2021 [and a second from 19 September to 31 October 2022](#). The consultations ~~were~~ [were](#) carried out in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004, as well as Stevenage Borough Council's Statement of Community Involvement. A summary of the representations received and the Council's response to these is set out in the [Statement of Consultation](#) which accompanies this document.

How to use this design guidance

1.4 This Stevenage Design Guidance sets out clear design principles to guide future development in Stevenage. It encourages a design led approach to all development, from large residential schemes to modest residential extensions and small infill developments.

1.5 This Guide provides design principles ~~are~~ for all developments, accompanied by illustrations and good practice examples, to help deliver good design and clearly signpost where more detailed guidance can be accessed. It aims to be user-friendly and does not seek to replicate existing policy and regulations that will continue to apply to all development.

Looking forward

1.6 This guidance has been prepared in the context of social, economic and environmental change. Technological change is rapid, with developments in digital, artificial intelligence and machine learning affecting our lives at all scales.

1.7 The demographics of Stevenage are also driving change as the population ages, the needs of some residents are changing from those originally provided for through the development of the New Town. Young people's expectations are changing too; leading to new lifestyles and new models of home ownership.



Image: Hertfordshire LEP

1.8 We expect continuing change as a consequence of climate change, changing home ownership models and technological changes. It is likely to emerge and embed in society rapidly. It will influence the planning, design and construction of new homes and places.

Components for good design

1.9 Urban design is the design of towns and cities, streets and spaces, and concerns all aspects of the public realm, including the detailed design of buildings and landscapes, the way in which places work and the relationships between existing and new developments.

1.10 Good design translates into more than the appearance of buildings. It is important in both small residential extensions and large-scale developments that introduce form and materials and the creation of new streets and spaces. Functionality and practicality are embedded in design and are as important as the visual quality of a building or large scale development.

1.11 Well-designed neighbourhoods help build communities, give them a sense of belonging and make residents feel safe. Often this can be through simple approaches such as natural surveillance, an easy technique created when new streets and public open spaces are overlooked by windows (in active rooms) and doors.



Image Studio RHE

1.12 Carefully positioned car parking and cycle storage, as well as integrated refuse and recycling bins, also help to create a sense of order and reduce litter and vandalism.

1.13 The quality of open space and the way in which new streets and spaces are designed directly affects how people feel about a place and the whole community benefits from a commitment to usable green space. Access to open space also has a direct impact on the health and wellbeing of those able to take advantage of it.

1.14 For commercial development, well designed buildings are good for business. The flexibility to respond to changing social and economic circumstances is important, as are design solutions which encourage creativity and innovation. Investment in good quality design provides a higher return on the investment made.

1.15 Good design in all development is inclusive and accessible for everyone, has a positive impact on the environment, integrates into its immediate and wider surroundings, provides flexibility for future change, is easily maintained and delivers a return on investment.

1.16 All places and spaces are different, and design is not about starting again from a blank canvas. The context and character of a place needs to be taken into account and renewal rather than demolition is encouraged where possible. There is no 'perfect blueprint' for good design, and trying to apply the same rigid principles everywhere would result in a loss of local distinctiveness and, therefore, counteract the objectives of the initial application of urban design principles.

1.17 The government has placed a great deal of emphasis on the importance of creating well designed places. The [Design Council](#) provides an advisory service to the government and various best practice guidance publications have since been produced. In addition, there is the [National Modal Design Code](#) and the police preferred minimum security guidance, [Secured By Design](#).

The relationship between the Stevenage Borough Local Plan and the Stevenage Design Guidance

1.18 National and local planning policies influence whether a site is suitable for development and the form and nature of development. A planning review of relevant planning policy documents, including the Stevenage Borough Local Plan Policies SP8: Good Design, and GD1: High Quality Design, should be undertaken.

1.19 In addition, there is a series of other documents, including, [Conservation Area Management Plans and Appraisals](#) and [Supplementary Planning Documents](#) (SPD's) which are adopted or endorsed by the Council. These are material planning considerations in planning decisions and should be considered in the design of new development.

1.20 In some instances, construction may be able to proceed without the need for a formal planning application/approval. This is known as '[Permitted Development](#)' (PD) rights. They derive from general planning permission granted by Parliament rather than the Local Planning authority. Further details are available from the [Ministry of Levelling Up Housing and Communities](#) website.

1.21 Even if you do not need to make a planning application, you should follow good design principles, with materials, forms and architectural detailing.

1.22 In addition to planning policy, applicants should consider best practice in terms of sustainable design, creating better environments and the quality of the built form. Further advice is available from the Homes England and Regulator of Social Housing, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), Historic England and Landscape Institute publications.



www.designcouncil.org.uk

Fig 1 – Ten characteristics from the National Design Guide



www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/building-futures/building-futures.aspx

Design Guidance which should be considered in addition to its Local Transport Plan 4. Any guidance provided by Hertfordshire County Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority should also be adhered to when considering design of places.

Introducing the ten characteristics

1.24 The National Design Guide notes that well-designed places have individual characteristics which work together to create its physical character. These ten characteristics help to nurture and sustain a sense of community. They work positively to address environmental issues affecting climate. They all contribute towards the cross-cutting themes for good design set out in the NPPF.

1.25 This document is divided up into each of these ten characteristics in order to ensure that this guidance reflects accurately the characteristics of the National Design Guide.

1.23 Hertfordshire County Council, in partnership with the Hertfordshire District and Borough council's, have produced [Building Futures](#); a web-based guide to ensuring sustainable development in Hertfordshire. Aimed at planners and developers, it advocates high quality urban design as a catalyst for promoting sustainability. Modules within this guide contain information on energy, air, water, waste, safety and materials, which all interrelate to form an extensive design guide for sustainable and successful development. [Building Futures](#) must be read, in conjunction with this SPD, to ensure the sustainability of all development proposals.

Hertfordshire County Council is also the **Highways Authority** and its **emerging guidance will be called 'Place and Movement Planning and Design Guide'** **emerging Place and Movement Planning and**



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Part 2: The ten characteristics

Context

NPPF Chapters 8, 12, 14, 15, 16

C.1 Context is the location of the development and the attributes of its immediate, local and regional surroundings.

C.2 The National Design Guide states that an understanding of the context, history and the cultural characteristics of a site, neighbourhood and region influences the location, siting and design of new developments. It means they are well grounded in their locality and more likely to be acceptable to existing communities. Creating a positive sense of place helps to foster a sense of belonging and contributes to well-being, inclusion and community cohesion.

Value heritage, local history and culture

C.3 Stevenage is Britain's first New Town. Designated in 1946, it was the solution to address overcrowding that was being experienced in the ravages of bomb-damaged London which lies approximately 30 miles south.



Image: BBC News

C.4 The New Town developed around the Old Town of Stevenage, and enveloped small pockets of rural settlement. The original Masterplan for the town was inspired by the Garden Cities movement, and incorporated a number of distinctive urban design features which made the development of New Towns a revolutionary stage in planning history.

C.5 Owing to its identity as Britain's first New Town, the inception of Stevenage has a prodigious place in development history in the United Kingdom. It is, therefore, crucial that the individuality of Stevenage is preserved, and enhanced. Once Stevenage's original features are lost they can never be replaced. Stevenage's architecture and its historic significance have been documented by Historic England in The New Town Centre study. This aids the understanding of the previous design processes which are key to Stevenage's identity and future development.

C.6 The Borough is broadly urban in its nature and is made up of a number of residential neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods make Stevenage distinct in that they are individual and separate from the town's industrial areas of Gunnels Wood, adjacent to the A1(M), and Pin Green, to the north of the town.

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C.7 Some of the neighbourhoods have ancient historic cores from which the neighbourhood has grown, such as Shephall, Symonds Green and Chells Manor. Historically, these small original settlements developed along the Great North Road because Stevenage was a significant staging post with inns catering for travellers heading to and from London.

C.8 Many of the New Town principles have led to the creation of a successful place; however, some have not worked so effectively, in the way they were planned.

C.9 The Stevenage Local List of Heritage Assets is a supporting document to this Design Guidance SPD. The document lists the buildings in the Borough that residents have nominated or have been identified as being of historic importance. The buildings listed are not considered significantly historic enough to be included on the Listed Buildings register kept by [Historic England/English Heritage](#), although a copy of those buildings are included in an Appendix to the Local Heritage Register. The document is a live working document and the Council continues to accept nominations for buildings.

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Understand and relate well to the site, its local and wider context

C.10 Since the town was developed, revised and nationally recognised principles of 'best practice' design have been produced. For the existing urban fabric of Stevenage there are opportunities to improve design through the integration of new schemes and the development of public realm improvements.

Fig 2 – Neighbourhoods in Stevenage

C.11 Generally accepted principles of good urban design should be adhered to in all new developments, but there are particular elements relevant to this New Town which require specific attention. In order to do this successfully, it is important that an understanding of the existing character of the town is formed, and that we learn from what has been successful and what has been less successful within the town.

C.12 A Stevenage Urban Character Assessment (Appendix A) was produced in 2008, which details the main characteristics of the residential areas within the town. This indicates the key features of the different neighbourhoods and highlights any relevant development considerations; providing details of both positive and negative aspects of the localities. This evidence is useful in providing a broad basis for site character appraisals and should be used as such when creating development proposals. It is important to note that the study covers neighbourhood areas as a whole and it is essential that each site is further assessed, on an individual basis.

C.13 An important part of considering development in Stevenage is to demonstrate a clear link between the appraisal of the context, any applicable planning designations, the character of the site, physical constraints and opportunities and the development proposals. This rationale will need to be explained through the Design and Access Statement that will accompany the planning application.

C.14 Stevenage's environment is protected by a number of local and national designations including Local Wildlife Sites, Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments which seek to preserve the area's natural and built environment for future generations. Applicants should check the SBLP Proposals Map and carry out their own desktop analysis, referring to the Council's website for further details.

C.15 A substantial amount of new housing is now required in Stevenage in order to meet the Objectively Assessed housing figures produced by Central Government. This provides the opportunity for Stevenage to learn from any past mistakes, make a real impact in terms of urban design, by modernising the town and preserving and enhancing the existing surroundings and historical attributes of Stevenage, where appropriate.

C.16 Stevenage Borough Council has worked with Building Design Partnership (BDP), an international firm of architects and engineers, to produce a Public Realm Guide for redevelopment of the Town Centre. This will act as a supporting document to this Design Guidance SPD. The Public Realm Guide seeks to ensure continuity between the original buildings and new development in the Town Centre. This will include specific visions for open space and ensure that the design of buildings in the Town Centre are reflective of the architectural tone achieved by the Stevenage Development Corporation at the inception of Stevenage.



Image: Stevenage Borough Council

Fig 3 - Stevenage Borough Local Plan Policies Map

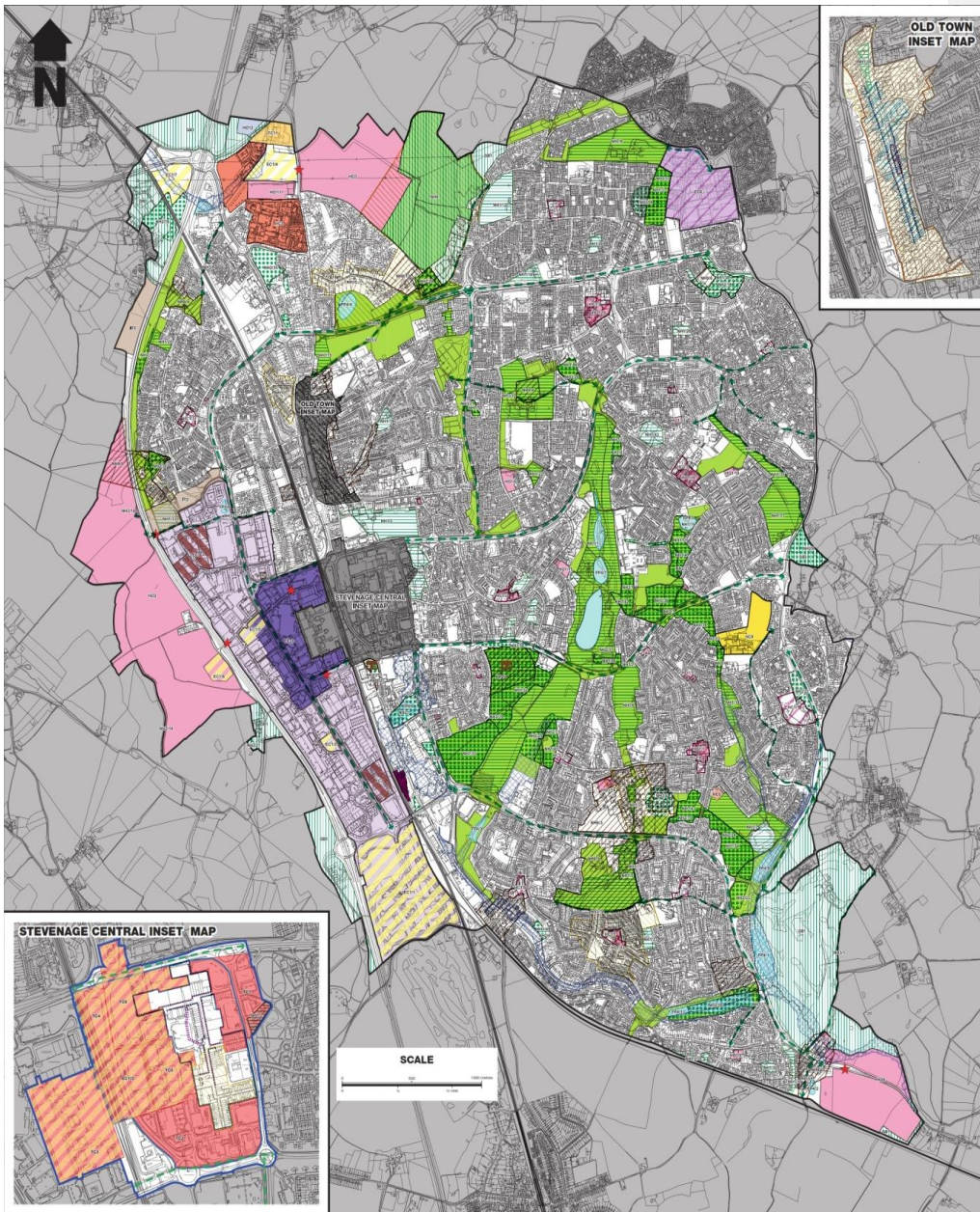


Image: Stevenage Borough Council

~~C.175~~ A high quality environment is essential for providing a good quality of life for residents. A well designed and managed space not only provides a visually attractive environment, but can also help to ensure that a place is easy to move around and within, is safe and secure, and is useful for all members of the community.

~~C.186~~ An understanding and analysis of the original New Town design concepts led to some key issues becoming apparent. These have been used as key themes, which run throughout the entirety of this guidance. Considering these concepts at all stages of the development process will provide a good basis for the creation of a successful place; based on the recognised principles of urban design, but also building on the existing fabric of the town without taking away from Stevenage's history as Britain's first Mark One New Town. The themes have been identified as follows:

- ✓ Sustainability – incorporate principles of sustainable development from a town-wide perspective to measures incorporated into an individual property.
- ✓ Increasing densities – encourage high densities in accessible locations.
- ✓ Respecting existing characteristics – respect local characteristics and preserve and enhance existing features, where appropriate.
- ✓ Legibility – provide landmark developments at nodal points.
- ✓ Design innovation – showcase Stevenage as an exemplar of high quality design; creating safer places through urban design techniques.

~~C.19~~ It is important to consider how highway and public realm schemes integrate with, and enhance areas of historic or architectural sensitivity. Historic England's guidance for highways engineers and designers, highlight the historic environment is not all buildings and monuments. It is the spaces in between them and how they have a visual and physical impact on historic places, as well as how we value and use them. Highways and footpaths are often older than surrounding buildings; their line, construction materials and furniture can all be important to the sense of history of a place.

~~C.20#7~~ One of the key aspects of the original Masterplan for Stevenage was self-containment; on a town-wide scale, a balanced ratio of jobs and houses were provided, housing was allocated to people who had jobs in the town, reducing the need for residents to commute to work outside Stevenage. On a more local level, residents were accommodated within six distinct neighbourhoods, each containing their own Neighbourhood Centre; accommodating shops, pubs, schools, community centres and other services essential for facilitating self-containment. The aim was to reduce the need to travel into the Town Centre, enhance community relations and facilitate the success of local businesses.

~~C.21#8~~ These self-containment objectives are directly in line with the ~~National Planning Policy Framework~~ National Planning Policy Framework as well as healthy living aspirations. Although Stevenage is not completely self-contained, the Neighbourhood Centres have proved to be a particularly popular and well-used element of the town. With flats provided on the upper levels of the developments, they also provide multi-functional areas, which are now regarded as an important feature of good design; in terms of providing an active environment for natural surveillance and encouraging community spirit.

~~C.22#9~~ Sustainable development runs as a theme throughout this guidance and key ideas are highlighted within appropriate sections. However, the main principles for sustainability in design are listed within this chapter.

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C.23~~9~~ This is not a fully comprehensive guide for sustainability, as there is a vast amount of information already available within the public realm. In addition, technologies are constantly being updated; therefore, it is essential that evolving guides are used.

C.24~~4~~ Planning is crucial in the management of sustainable development, and with sustainability now at the heart of the government agenda, Local Authorities produce policies and guidance which supports these principles.

C.25~~3~~ Our SBLP ensures that all new developments incorporate methods for encouraging sustainable transport, maintain and enhance biodiversity, minimise resource usage and reduce the overall environmental impacts of the development. Our policies also promote the use of renewable energies.

C.26~~3~~ Planners, designers and developers need to work together to ensure climate change is taken into account at all stages of the development process.

C.27~~4~~ With the amount of new development required in the town, there is the opportunity to make substantial gains in fostering sustainability. All new developments should minimise their carbon footprints. And existing homes and buildings can embrace retrofitting technologies to make a significant contribution to sustainability and climate change objectives. Government grants remain available for home owners to install energy efficient technologies.

C.28~~5~~ Sustainable development not only helps tackle climate change but also provides benefits for communities including improved health and well-being and an enhanced quality of life.

C.29~~6~~ Developers benefit from offering developments which are built sustainably. Consumers are more environmentally conscious and want to reside in eco-friendly homes, which reduce their impact upon the environment, as well as minimising household bills.

C.30~~7~~ Corporate Social Responsibility is being seen as an increasingly important part of a company's reputation. Fig 4 – Principles of the Garden City Movement



Image: HouseSimple

C.3128 Comprehensive sustainability guidance can be found within Hertfordshire's sustainable development guide 'Building Futures'. Specific information on methods, techniques and best practice case studies, as well as expanding on the main principles put forward within this SPD are included in this guidance.

C.3229 Another feature of the town's development was the relatively low density of housing. This was a result of the aspiration to provide an 'open town', following the principles of the Garden Cities movement; with high levels of open space, an extensive network of green corridors and wide roads throughout the town. Most of the residential areas have a high prevalence of two

storey, terraced, properties, each with its own private garden. [Guidance can be found in Historic England's 'Increasing Residential Density in Historic Environments' study. This explores the factors that can contribute to successfully delivering developments which increase residential density in historic environments through case studies and literature.](#)

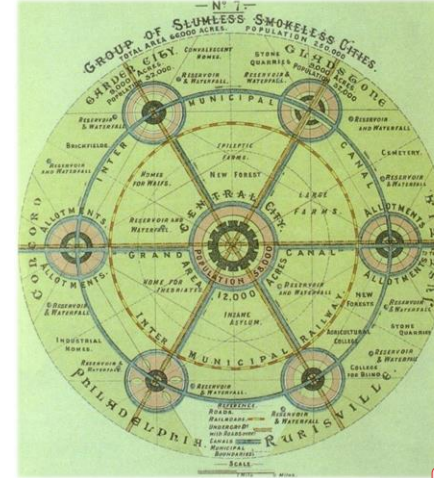


Image: Groundsure.com

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C.330 Housing is an area of weaknesses across the town. One of the main issues is the lack of an appropriate mix of housing sizes, types and tenures. There is a high proportion of three bedroom properties, and a lack of one and two bedroom properties, although this has been helped by the recent office to residential conversions that having been taking place in the Town Centre, as well as larger homes. The lack of housing mix is exacerbated by changes in demographics leading to an increase in the number of single person households and couples needing homes.

C.343 Due to [growth requirements for the town](#), there is a need to provide a substantial number of additional homes in Stevenage. Higher density development is set out as a key requirement of National guidance, and, where appropriate, densities will need to be raised in order to meet these targets for new homes. This will need to be carefully balanced with the need to retain open space provision within the urban area as access to open space was a key original feature of the town.

I.1 The identity or character of a place comes from the way that buildings, street and spaces, landscape and infrastructure combine together and how people experience them. It is not just about the buildings or how a place looks, but how it engages with all of the senses. Local character makes places distinctive. Well-designed, sustainable places with a strong identity give their users, occupiers and owners a sense of pride, helping to create and sustain communities and neighbourhoods.

Respond to existing local character and identity

I.2 As a result of the prevalence of two storey, terraced properties, a reasonably continuous building height is broadly provided across the residential areas of the town. However, the Neighbourhood Centres do generally contain three storey buildings, helping to demonstrate their importance within the locality.

I.3 Although much of the original housing is similar in style, subtle differences exist between the housing in each of the residential areas, mainly attributable to the materials used. Since the initial development of the New Town, further neighbourhoods have been created, which follow the same basic principles, but also allow for modernisation.

I.4 The character of the town's housing varies more significantly between the original New Town housing, such as Bedwell and Shephall, and the modern estates built throughout the 1980's and 1990's, including Great Ashby, Chells Manor and Poplars. The more recent developments have respected the neighbourhood development strategy of the town but have strengthened the design and aesthetic value, by becoming a visible new extension with their own character.

I.5 There is a need to take this further in the future, as innovation in design, and contemporary architectural achievement is currently lacking in the town. Stevenage will benefit from landmark developments at key nodal points, which will assist in linking areas, as well as improving the legibility of the place, as set out in Policy EC5 of the SBLP. However, care should be taken to respect the existing characteristics of the town, and not to take value away from the New Town concepts.

I.6 Combining these ideas, contemporary buildings at appropriate locations will help achieve the higher densities required, as well as carrying forward and enhancing Stevenage's unique sense of place.

Well-designed, high quality and attractive

I.7 Places should be visually attractive and aim to bring pleasure to users and passers-by. They should cater for all users and be well-designed.

I.8 Well-designed places should appeal to all of the senses; its enduring distinctiveness, attractiveness and beauty are all affected by its looks, feels, sounds and even smells.

I.E.9 Buildings should:

- adopt typical building forms of the neighbourhood in which they are situated – developers should refer to Appendix A – Urban Character Assessments for more detail;
- draw upon the architectural precedents that are prevalent in the local area;
- use local building, landscape and topographical features, materials and plant types;
- introduce built form and appearance that adds new character and difference to places; and
- create a positive and coherent identity that local communities and residents alike can identify with.

Create character and identity

I.E.10 Character starts to be determined by the siting of development in the wider landscape, then by the layout. It continues to be created by form, scale, design, materials and details of buildings and landscape. In this way it creates a coherent identity that everyone can identify with, including the local communities and residents.

I.E.11 Where the scale or density of new development is very different to the existing place, it may be more appropriate to create a new identity rather than scale up the character of an existing place in its context. New character may also arise from a response to how today's lifestyles could evolve in the future, or to the proposed method of development and construction.

I.E.12 Where the character of an existing place has limited or few positive qualities, then a new and positive character will enhance its identity.

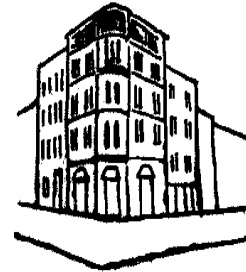
B.1 Built form is the three-dimensional pattern or arrangement of development blocks, streets, buildings and open spaces. It is the interrelationship between all these elements that creates an attractive place to live, work and visit, rather than their individual characteristics. Together they create the built environment and contribute to its character and sense of place.

Compact form of development

B.2 The size and scale of a building, especially in relation to its context, is an important consideration when planning a development. Buildings and new developments should relate to their neighbouring buildings, 'stepping up' or gradually increasing from one height to another and they should not inappropriately dominate the street scene. Buildings should create landmark developments and incorporate taller buildings at nodal points, and in easily accessible locations.

B.3 Well designed, tall buildings can make a positive impact on a place, especially if they are to become identifiable landmarks at key nodal points.

B.4 Tall buildings should be carefully positioned to mark prominent landmarks, making it easier for people to find their way around, emphasising corners, particularly at important junctions or gateways, by curving the frontage, wrapping the fenestration around the corner or terminating the roof differently. Tall buildings can further emphasise corner building by raising the height of roof thereby creating visual interest and a distinctive identity, meaning that they can also be effective as landmark developments. These buildings should be designed to a high quality, as they are to become a prominent feature across the town, showcasing architectural innovation and best practice. Tall buildings help frame and define existing views, rather than blocking important features out and as such they should not appear out of place within the existing landscape or destroy existing views and reduce continuity. However, the development of tall buildings should not create 'Micro climates', causing wind shear and cold corridors.



Taller developments should gradually increase in height from their neighbours

B.5 Views of and from the public realm can also enhance legibility throughout the town, and should therefore be protected as far as possible. When considering future locations for tall buildings, policy guidance will consider areas that are sensitive to development, including their potential impact on views, conservation areas, listed buildings and their settings, other landmark buildings and areas, ecological assets and green spaces. [Historic England's publication 'Streets for All' provides updated practical advice for anyone involved in planning and implementing highways and other public realm works in sensitive historic locations. It sets out a means to improve public spaces without harming their valued character, including specific recommendations for works to surfaces, street furniture, new equipment, traffic management infrastructure and environmental improvements.](#)

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B.6 The use of tall buildings can also be beneficial in accommodating higher densities within Stevenage. Higher densities buildings can support public transport facilities and use land resources in a more sustainable and efficient way. They need to be designed in an effective way so that problems of overcrowding and reduced space standards do not arise. Tall buildings will be encouraged in easily accessible areas, and where space has previously been used ineffectively.

B.7 Buildings of 4 storeys or higher with roof access, balconies or ledges, often provide easy access and a means of suicide by jumping from a height. Policy guidance will consider how the design incorporates measures to reduce suicide potential and, where feasible and practical will require a risk assessment and management plan in line with UKHSA guidance on Preventing Suicides in Public Places 2015 UK Health Security Agency.

Appropriate building types and forms

B.8 Buildings should follow the existing building line of the area and respond positively to the existing frontage of a street. A sense of enclosure should be created by reducing the number of blank frontages and underutilised space. This will all contribute to improving the quality of the street scene.

B.9 Setback distances should be minimised to ensure buildings interact effectively with the existing public realm. Variation from the building line will only be allowed where it would not have any substantial impact on the surrounding environment and street scene.

B.10 The concept of buildings defining and creating public spaces is extremely important. Buildings should be located so that a clear distinction can be made between their public fronts and private backs and they should actively add interest to the public realm. This can be achieved through design details such as a large number of windows and doors, evident internal uses, and narrow building widths creating a variety of different frontages and building functions. Frontages should create interest and add vitality at ground level and provide the opportunity for a busy social environment and a good level of surveillance. Active frontages should be visible on all publicly facing walls on multi-fronted buildings, where more than one side faces the public realm, thereby avoiding blank frontages being created and should use high walls or hedgerows to separate private gardens from the public space where back gardens face out onto the public realm. But in doing so, this should not create unattractive, narrow alleyways.

B.11 The relationship between building heights and street widths is important in identifying the enclosure of a place. Building frontages should provide a sufficient sense of enclosure, allowing for natural surveillance and providing an acceptable density for the area. Building frontages should allow for sufficient natural light and ventilation into the buildings and the street below and create a balanced feel to the area by incorporating both sides of the street. Combining tall buildings with very narrow streets will not be acceptable as this creates passageways which are not overlooked and do not allow for enough natural light and air to impact upon a building.

M.1 Patterns of movement for people are integral to well-designed places. They include walking and cycling, access to facilities, employment and servicing, parking and the convenience of public transport. They contribute to making high quality places for people to enjoy. They also form a crucial component of urban character. Their success is measured by how they contribute to the quality and character of a place, not only how well they function.

An integrated network of routes for all modes of transport

M.2 The extensive transport network was an integral part of the New Town's original design and layout. Facilities are provided for all forms of movement, including walking and cycling. These allow residents easy access to the separated land uses within the town. Consideration was also given to safety, and routes for vehicular and non-vehicular traffic were separated in an attempt to reduce the occurrence of road traffic accidents.

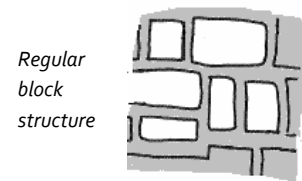
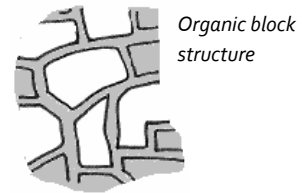
M.3 On the primary transport routes, routes for pedestrians and cyclists run alongside vehicular routes, but at junctions' vehicles are given priority and non-vehicular traffic is forced to travel under a series of underpasses in order to cross the roads.



Image: Stevenage Borough Council

This makes it easier to travel by car, rather than promoting the benefits of sustainable transport. It also creates safety concerns, as some sections of routes receive no natural surveillance, and as people attempt to follow desire lines without appropriate pedestrian access provisions. In terms of pedestrian and vehicular access to homes, a large proportion of housing was built following Radburn layout principles; houses were built to face each other, with the front being only accessible on foot, and the provision for cars made at the rear. Again, this has led to a lack of natural surveillance, as well as rear parking courts being underutilised, and insufficient access for emergency services.

M.4 The separation of land uses is apparent throughout the town, with the residential areas being separated from employment areas, leisure uses and the Town Centre. This could be considered contrary to sustainability principles, as it increases the need to travel. However, the land use zoning has worked in Stevenage because of the ease of access to and from these areas by all modes of transport.



M.5 Hertfordshire County Council hierarchy of road users is also detailed in Local Transport Plan 4 which should be considered in the design process.

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A clear structure and hierarchy of connected streets

M.65 Streets should be designed as public and social spaces and not just respond to engineering requirements. They should carefully consider what activities would like to be seen on streets i.e. walking safely within the neighbourhood without feeling threatened by traffic from nearby streets, cross the road easily, window shop, and socialise with friends in the outside areas of bars and restaurants. Streets should feature elements of community assets, such as open space, to evoke a better sense of community between residents of the street or visitors to the street. They should provide direct and attractive connections between key facilities that are suitable for all types of movement, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists.

M.76 Streets should use a grid-type layout, which creates block sites for development. A variety of block sizes and shapes should be used to provide an effective balance and to promote diversity within a place. They should make use of existing infrastructure to minimise its impact upon the environment and take account of the existing routes around the site from the initial design stage. Existing routes should be improved where necessary, and consider accessibility for emergency services, delivery vehicles and refuse collection vehicles.

M.87 Places should be easy to get to and from, as well as easy to travel within, by all modes of transport. In line with sustainability and health objectives, movement on foot or by bicycle should be made as convenient as travelling by car. This should help to encourage physical activity.

M.98 A [Mobility Strategy](#) has been developed for Stevenage. Developers are encouraged to consult the [Mobility Strategy](#) to develop and enable the implementation of sustainable methods of transport for developments in Stevenage.



Fig 5 – Cycle routes in Stevenage

Image: Stevenage Borough Council



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<http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/content/15953/26379/43876/Stevenage-Mobility-Strategy-December-2016.pdf>

M.109 The cycling routes of Stevenage are extensive and the network was originally built into the fabric of the town as part of the vision of the New Town. New development should continue to extend the network as the town grows enabling the vision of segregated sustainable movement throughout the Borough to continue.

M.110 *Future Town, Future Transport (2019)* is SBC's transport plan responding to Hertfordshire County Council (HCC)'s Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) and emerging guidance called 'Place and Movement Planning and Design Guide'. This brings forward modal shift and sustainable transport measures across the county. The document contains a number of policy actions across short term and medium-term plans, and policy guidance must respond to them.

M.124 The emerging *Stevenage Sustainable Travel Town Implementation Plan* forms part of Hertfordshire County Council's Local Transport Plan and aims to increase the number of people walking, cycling and using public transport. The key difference from previous initiatives is that the Sustainable Travel Town will fully integrate behavioural change techniques with infrastructure improvements so that new facilities are fully utilised. It is anticipated that the establishment of behaviour change programmes and the delivery of much of the required infrastructure will be delivered within a 4-to-5-year period. However, it is essential that mechanisms are put in place to ensure the longevity of the measures.

The overall vision for the Stevenage Sustainable Travel Town is to enable the delivery of the growth plans set out in the Local Plan (2019) whilst maintaining the attractiveness of the town for residents and business. This requires a major shift of journeys from the car to active and public transport. The objectives, for which policy and guidance must respond, include:

- Enable the delivery of housing proposals within the Local Plan by providing a modal shift in vehicle use.
- Enable the delivery of town centre regeneration proposals within the Local Plan by providing a modal shift in vehicle use.
- Help to achieve truly sustainable transport in the town and establish Stevenage as a leader in sustainable development.
- Help to reinstate the town's original New Town design objectives and help to achieve a sense of place in Stevenage as an active community.
- Help to reinstate the town's original New Town design objectives and help to achieve a sense of place in Stevenage as a healthy community

M.134 In 2017 the Government published its first Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy with an ambition to make walking and cycling the natural choices for shorter journeys. The *Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)* is a document used to implement the strategy at a local level. Stevenage's LCWIP sets out a network of preferred and future routes for walking and cycling in the borough and identifies a programme of infrastructure improvement priorities to guide future works and investment.

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M.143 Walking and cycling provision should always be prioritised when designing access routes to, from and through developments. New developments on the periphery of Stevenage should be expected to provide pedestrian/cycle links to connect with existing public rights of way to allow residents of new development to easily walk/cycle from the development into the countryside for leisure purposes.

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M.154 Walking routes should be short, overlooked by surrounding buildings and activities, well-lit and not situated between blank frontages and they should make people feel safe when using them.

M.165 The inclination to walk is also influenced by the quality and attractiveness of the route. Routes should not be alongside a busy road as this can be unappealing and they should be convenient, direct and safe route through a town centre, residential area or an area of open space can encourage people to make extensive use of these facilities, helping improve the health of residents and the vitality of the town.

M.17 New pedestrian/cycle routes should be waymarked and supported by distance markers to encourage leisure use of these routes e.g. to support residents to complete daily running distances from their homes and should be supported by seating in appropriate locations to encourage all potential users of the routes to use it e.g. for the elderly, those with health conditions, parents with young children etc.

Commented [ST11]: Comment ID – DESIGN 026

M.18 Where possible, cycle and pedestrian paths should be segregated to avoid conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists which may discourage use.

Commented [ST12]: Comment ID – DESIGN 026

M.19 In both residential and other developments, cycle parking should be located in prominent and secure locations to make it a more attractive option than using the car e.g. at the entrance to public buildings rather than a corner of a remote car park. In places where there is significant demand for cycle storage, provision should be made for basic bike maintenance facilities such as public foot pumps.

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M.2016 Where major traffic routes cross over major pedestrian routes, they should be defined by wide crossings on the same level, lighted and landscaped.



Image: Pauline Maryan

M.21~~7~~ Implementing features which aim to aid pedestrian safety can inadvertently impede it. Introducing barriers around a main road can prevent people from crossing the road where they want to cross, and therefore hinder their direct route. This reinforces vehicle priority further.

M.22~~8~~ Stevenage also comprises numerous subways where segregated footpaths and cycleways run under the main vehicle roads. Whilst being a useful way of ensuring the flow of traffic on both the cycle/pedestrian network and that on the road, these can cause safety concerns resulting in these routes being underutilised.

M.23~~9~~ Encouraging the use of such conveniences by making them attractive and useful means of transit will discourage any antisocial behaviour in these areas.

M.24~~0~~ Subways or footbridges should be well lit and as short and as wide as possible. They should be visible throughout (the exit should be visible from the entrance) and CCTV should be installed.

M.25~~1~~ A number of underpasses in Stevenage feature public artwork, for example that which features in the Town Gardens and St Georges underpasses depict cast concrete reliefs of contemporary life by William Mitchell and were installed in 1973. Use of these areas for formal public art

and cultural purposes will be encouraged.

M.26~~2~~ Cycling routes should run alongside vehicular roads and be physically segregated cycle routes, rather than marked on the road. They should also connect to the already existing vast cycle network.

M.27~~3~~ Providing a sufficient amount of appropriate parking for bicycle users is essential for promoting sustainable transport throughout the town and for encouraging a reduction in private vehicle usage. Both short and long term cycle parking facilities should be provided. Storage for bicycles overnight should be provided as secure and covered, and should be integrated into the initial design of the development and not added as an afterthought. Cycle parking should ideally be accommodated within an individual site rather than as larger communal stores - larger stores can encourage crime if poorly lit and inappropriately sited.

M.28~~4~~ Public transport provision is reasonably well provided for in Stevenage, with bus routes throughout the town, and a centrally located train station. However, people often have a preference for car use and so public transport needs to become a viable and attractive alternative option.



Fig 6 – Bus routes in Stevenage

Image: Stevenage Borough Council

M.295 Road layout should ensure public transport is given priority and incorporate bus priority measures to reduce public transport travel times.

M.3026 Higher density developments help to support public transport and vice versa. Higher densities should therefore be encouraged, in appropriate locations in order to support sustainability objectives. This can, in turn, bring about social benefits, such as improved health and fitness through people reducing their car use and walking to and from public transport provision.

M.3127 Stevenage has a moderately extensive ~~bridleway~~ Public Rights of Way network (Footpaths, Bridleways, Restricted Byways and Byways Open to All Traffic) network around the town and it extends into the surrounding countryside. Whilst enabling transit by horse and pony, cyclists and pedestrian can also utilise them. Areas of disconnect in the network should be identified through development and appropriate connections should be designed into developments to facilitate the ongoing use of the network. The network as a whole presents opportunities for active travel within and into the town from surrounding communities. It is also a recreation facility for health and wellbeing interconnecting as it does with green space and out into the wider countryside. Areas of disconnect exist in the network as a whole. Cyclists and walkers may also use Bridleways. New provision to at least Bridleway status as well as upgraded routes (from Footpath to Bridleway) should be designed into and beyond developments to extend the network for users. A design Guide for Non-motorised Routes is available from the Highways Authority for Public Rights of Way (HCC) that sets out width and surface requirements where such proposals are being developed. When considering road crossings where Bridleways interface with the Highway Network, Pegasus Crossing facilities should be built into the design. These enable use of button controlled traffic lights by horse mounted users without necessitating dismounting; equestrians should be separated from other users at the crossing.

M.3228 Streets should incorporate soft landscaping, in particular trees, to combat air pollution from vehicle emissions without creating a tunnel-like effect that will trap pollutants in the road corridor.

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Fig 7 – Bridleway routes in Stevenage

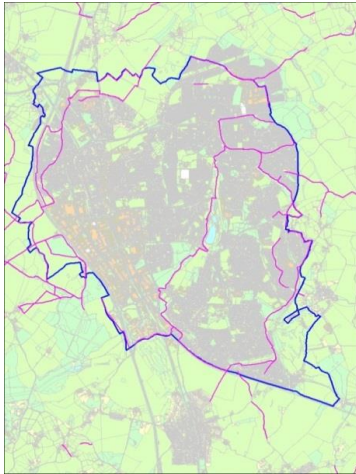


Image: Stevenage Borough Council

M.3329 Trees are often heralded as part of the solution to climate change and this has led to the mass-planting of new trees. However, such initiatives have raised concerns that the wrong planting in the wrong place can be counterproductive. A tree planting approach should reflect the recommendations of industry recognised guidance 'Trees in Hard Landscape A Guide for Delivery, Trees and Design Action Group' (TDAG). The guide states there is a temptation to produce simple lists of "suitable trees" for urban settings. Safe lists can result in overly limited choices that produce the disease-prone monoculture biases that most towns and cities face today. The guide suggests it is essential to choose the right tree for the right place. The possible combination of variables that influence tree choices are so numerous, they recommend conducting a site-specific robust assessment with support from a knowledgeable tree expert as the best approach. Native tree species support a far wider range of associated biodiversity and some tree species are able to intercept particulate pollutants. Therefore, tree selection should be a considered design approach. Free species that should be considered are:

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Hackberry (*Celtis australis*)

- Common ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*)
- Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*)
- Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*)
- Elm (*Ulmus minor*)
- Wild linden (*Tilia cordata*)
- Turkey oak (*Quercus cerris*)
- Broad-leaved linden (*Tilia platyphyllos*)

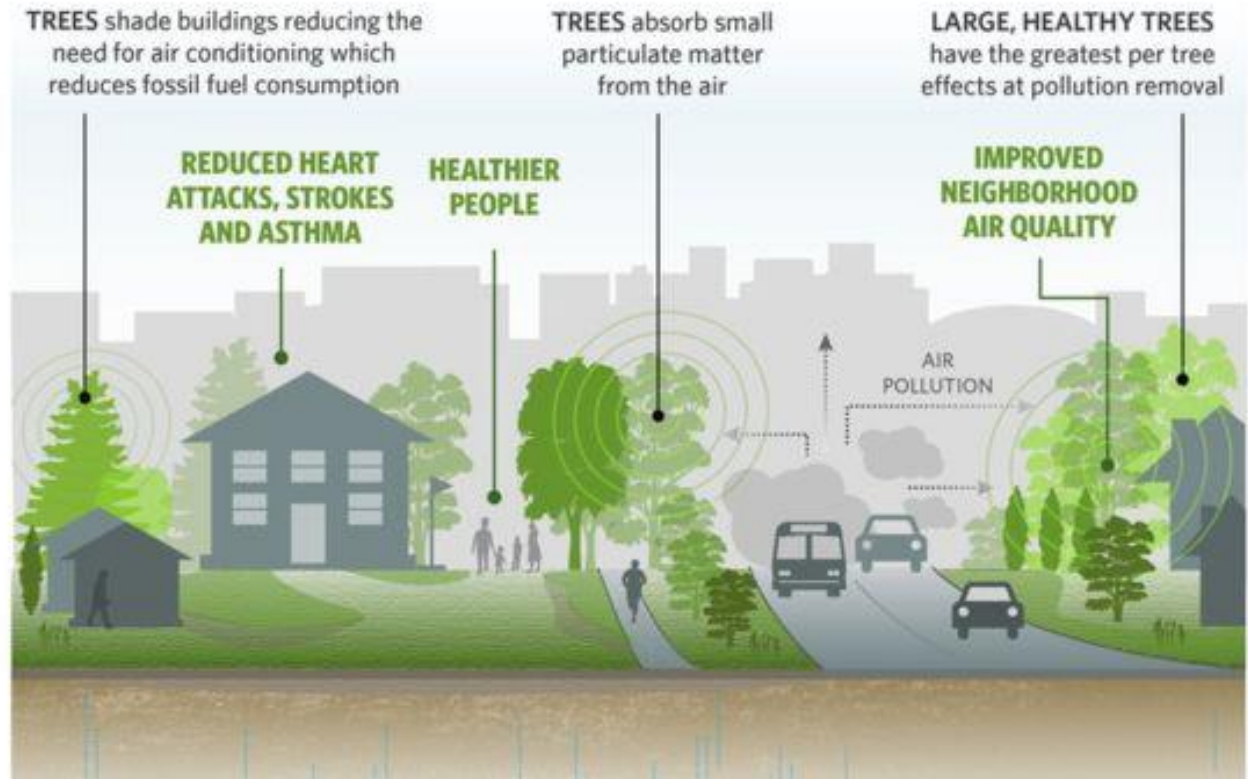


Image: BBC News

Well-considered parking, servicing and utilities infrastructure for all users

M.34~~e~~ Car and cycle parking provision should be made in line with the requirements of our [Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD](#) [Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD](#). Garages and carports should be set back from the street frontage and located close to the property that they serve, to avoid dead frontages. They should not be segregated blocks as these are not easily flexible for future change, do not allow spaces to be shared, and also suffer from a lack of natural surveillance.

M.35~~a~~ Car parking in large developments should be creative; such as undercroft or basement parking as this preserves street frontages and uses land more effectively. Landscaping should be used to minimise visual impact and, where security may be an issue, should be lit from dusk till dawn with energy efficient lighting and parking should be provided on several storeys and the visual impact reduced by 'wrapping around' single aspect apartments or other uses.

M.36~~a~~ Traffic calming not only aids pedestrian safety, but by encouraging slower driving it can also help to reduce vehicle emission levels, and thus improve sustainability. Traffic speeds should be managed by the arrangement of buildings and spaces via simple, effective street design and not using barriers, unnecessary signage and traffic calming measures.

M.37~~a~~ Streets should ensure that they cater for all levels of mobility. Steps and steep inclines should be replaced in favour of gentle inclines which enable mobility impaired people to use them fully as well as parents with pushchairs and young children. Narrow paths and road crossings should be avoided in favour of wide pathways which cater for wheel-chairs, mobility scooters and pushchairs.

M.38~~a~~ Ever improved technologies are being developed to help enable visually impaired individuals navigate streets such as Soundscape; the use of nodes allow the user to explore their environment and direct them to their destination. Such technologies have recently been piloted in Peterborough and we would support the implementation of the use of these technologies in Stevenage. Such technologies should be used alongside tried and tested methods of enabling visually impaired individuals to independently find their way around the town.

M.39~~a~~ Residential developments should ensure that Mode 2 or Mode 3 electric vehicle (EV) charging points are installed for each residential unit. Where a garage is provided, the EV charging point should ideally be located at an accessible point near the entrance of the garage. Where resident parking is provided, EV charging points should be positioned in areas to serve the maximum number of residents at any one time.

M.40~~a~~ In commercial and/or employment developments, Mode 3 and/or Mode 4 EV charging points should be provided to enable visitors and employees to utilise the facility. Again, the provision should be located in a suitable position to serve as many EV users as possible. Levels of requirement will be dictated by the type of development and more information can be found in the Stevenage Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD.



Image: BBC News

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M.4.137 Commercial/employment EV charging points should be signed and marked for 'Electric Vehicle Charging Only' and Mode 4 charging points should be limited to 1 hour stay. The units should be protected from collision and positioned to avoid becoming an obstruction or trip hazard. Charging point controls, display and sockets or tethered plugs must be placed at a height of between 0.75 and 1.2 metres from the ground as per the British Standard on the design of buildings [BS8300-1:2018](#) and [BS8300-2:2018](#).

M.4.2 [EV charging points should also be made accessible to all. The aim is to provide an inclusive experience for people with accessibility needs, PAS 1899:2022 is a new standard giving designers, procurers and installers essential specifications on how to provide accessible public charge points for electric vehicles.](#)

M.4.338 The level of provision must accord with the standards set out in our [Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD](#) [Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD](#).

Promoting lifestyles and wellbeing

M.4.4 [Developments can be designed to promote healthy and active lifestyles. Sport England, in conjunction with Public Health England, has produced 'Active Design' \(www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/active-design/\), a guide to planning new developments that create the right environment to help people get more active. Active Design is a combination of 10 principles that promote activity, health and stronger communities through the way we design and build our towns and cities. The 10 principles have been developed to inspire and inform the layout of cities, towns, villages, neighbourhoods, buildings, streets and open spaces, to promote sport and active lifestyles.](#)

M.4.5 [Green infrastructure is a network of multi-functional green space and other green features, urban and rural, which can deliver quality of life and environmental benefits for communities. It is not simply an alternative description for conventional open space. It includes parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands – and also street trees, allotments, private gardens, green roofs and walls, sustainable drainage systems \(SuDS\) and soils. It includes rivers, streams, canals and other water bodies, sometimes called 'blue infrastructure'. The key features of green infrastructure are that it is a network of integrated spaces and features, not just individual elements; and that it is 'multi-functional' – it provides multiple benefits simultaneously.](#)

[These can be to:](#)

- [support people's mental and physical health](#)
- [encourage active travel](#)
- [cool urban areas during heat waves](#)
- [attract investment](#)

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- reduce water run-off during flash flooding

- carbon storage

- provide sustainable drainage

The extent to which green infrastructure provides these benefits depends on how it is designed and maintained, and the maturity and health of the elements (such as trees) that form it.

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N.1 Public open spaces are open to all. They provide opportunities for comfort, relaxation, stimulation and social interaction in a safe environment, to encourage interaction in an open space, its location and structure needs careful consideration along with its activities, versatility and how it can be used and accessed by all groups of people.

Provide high quality, green open spaces with a variety of landscapes and activities including play

N.2 Stevenage was designed to incorporate a network of open spaces and green corridors, which provide an important resource for biodiversity and recreation within the town. These are a key feature of New Town development and should be protected, maintained and extended as far as possible. Open space should be located so that it makes the most of existing natural features such as footpaths, trees and water as these can help to create attractive spaces, as well as encouraging biodiversity. Developments should consider existing open space features and include them within proposals and protect and enhance attributes and this can help a new development to integrate effectively into the existing area, as well as retaining important original features such as ancient lanes and associated hedgerows within the town.

N.3 Planting schemes should include wildlife friendly planting which allows for refuge for animals as well as a food source for insects and pollinators.

N.4 A range of different habitats should be provided in larger developments, for example trees, grassland and wetlands. Developers should refer to the Councils [Amenity Tree Management Policy](#) for more information.

N.5 Play spaces for children and young people should be provided across the borough and should include a range of larger and smaller open spaces which should include unequipped playscapes which provide an attractive landscape for young people of all ages, but also encourage informal/imaginative play through the provisions of features such as mounding, tree planting, at level maze etc. This should be done in a way that provides distinct areas for different age groups, but so that parents and carers are able to maintain visual contact with the young people.

N.6 Play spaces must be fully accessible for young people of all abilities and support inclusive play. Such areas should include suitable tree planting to allow for shading, combined with the provision of benches, litter bins, wider open space for picnics and low key kick about games for example. They should be highly visible and well overlooked with hard wearing, low maintenance equipment and suitable fenced to prevent access by dogs.

Fig 8 – Open Space in Stevenage

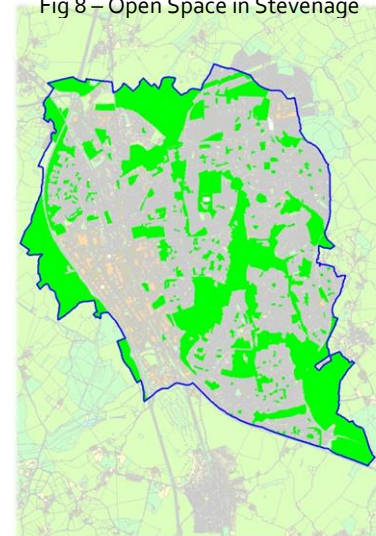


Image: Stevenage Borough Council

N.7 New open spaces should be designed so that they are multi-functional so that they encourage people to visit the spaces for a range of activities and therefore be suitable for meeting the activity needs of all groups within the community. For example, designing spaces so that they can be used for sport and informal recreation, designing Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) so that they attract people to visit them as a destination and are supported by footpaths/seating;

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N.8 Open spaces should be designed to integrate with existing and proposed active travel routes so that open spaces along the routes can be used for physical activity while people are travelling to their destination and to encourage walking/cycling to the open space for leisure purposes;

N.9 Where appropriate, open space should have waymarked routes e.g. circular walking/running routes with distance markers.

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Improve and enhance water management

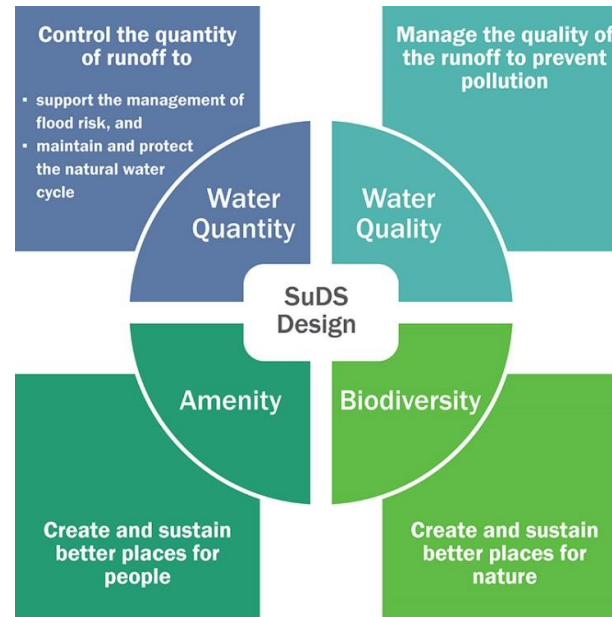
N.107 Stevenage suffers from surface water flooding, as evidenced in the Environment Agency’s Surface Water Flood Maps. Flooding is likely to become more of a problem in the future due to climate change. As such, buildings and developments should maximise the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) techniques across development sites and individual buildings to allow rainwater to percolate into the ground. These SuDS features should provide sustainable solutions for flood and pollution reduction as well as landscape and wildlife benefit. Large scale SuDS schemes should be designed to ensure that they provide a valuable natural habitat and improve water quality, as well as reducing flood risk. The ongoing management of these schemes must also be considered at an early stage.

N.118 The Council are keen to promote the use of green roofs and walls, as well as blue roofs to achieve sustainable water management in the future.

Fig 9 Areas of surface water flooding in Stevenage



Image: Environment Agency



Support rich and varied biodiversity



Image: Stevenage Borough Council

N.129 Stevenage benefits from high levels of open space and an extensive network of green corridors. This is a feature of the town that should be protected and enhanced. As such, there is a requirement for all development to contribute towards improving the provision, quality and/or accessibility of local and strategic open space. This could be achieved through appropriate contribution or direct provision. Where direct provision is made, open spaces should form part of a green infrastructure network and make a positive contribution towards the townscape. They should be of high quality and have a primary role or function to prevent it becoming misused, unused or neglected. Open spaces should reflect the local context in the design of the local open spaces, which could be achieved through the use of materials, trees, planting, lighting and street furniture and thereby be multi-functional. Open spaces are ideal areas that can include provision for SuDS, benefit biodiversity and provide habitat, and they can also deliver high quality usable open and recreational space for residents to enjoy.

N.130 Developments should refer to Stevenage Borough Council's [Impact of Development on Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document](#) and also the Council's [Biodiversity Action Plan](#) if they are likely to impact upon existing wildlife sites and other habitats in the town. SBC requires all new developments to take account of existing biodiversity, and to make all reasonable efforts to avoid habitat loss, fragmentation or disturbance of the ecosystem. Where this is not possible, excellent mitigation measures will be sought.

P.1 The quality of the spaces between buildings is as important as the buildings themselves. Public spaces are streets, squares and other spaces that are open to all. They are the setting for most movement. The design of a public space encompasses its siting and integration into the wider network of routes as well as its various elements. These include areas allocated to different users – pedestrians, cyclists and cars – for different purposes such as movement or parking, hard and soft surfaces, street furniture, lighting, signage and public art.

Create well-located, high quality and attractive public spaces

P.2 Public spaces should be considered as part of the original design scheme and must not just be applied, as an afterthought, to leftover space. An expert should be consulted to ensure that the planting selected is appropriate to the scheme and the site context.

P.3 How attractive and well-maintained a place is can directly affect how people treat it; if a place is in good condition, people tend to treat it better and vice versa. Places should be designed for use during all seasons and by all members of the community. Landscaping of the public realm should be designed so that it is easy to maintain and manage, it should be wildlife friendly and include climate change tolerant planting in addition to providing year round interest, or can mature into a high quality space. It should ensure the long-term viability of street furniture to prevent some products creating eyesores and attracting crime. Street furniture should be made of a sustainable choice of materials, e.g. FSC timber or recycled/composite materials, it should have a small carbon footprint and have longevity of materials. Public realm should be uncluttered and should not reduce accessibility through the use of inappropriately sited street furniture pieces that can hinder access, especially for mobility impaired users and pushchairs.



Image: Pancras Square

P.4 Public realm should be coordinated and specifically designed to enhance the area and should include extensive soft landscaping, such as the planting of trees and shrubs, that is integrated into external areas of a development site in order to provide shelter and screen intrusive elements of the public realm but also provide green corridors for both people and wildlife that are aesthetically pleasing. Planting should be suitable to its location and, for trees, please refer to the [Amenity Tree Management Policy](#). Suitable planting will also help moderate temperatures in an urban environment and contribute to the objectives set out in the Councils [Climate Change Strategy](#).



Image: ANS Global – University of York, Environmental Building

P.5 Buildings surrounding public spaces should consider the installation of green walls and roofs as an alternative to traditional landscaping schemes, where space for green infrastructure and landscaping features is limited. These can help to improve the energy efficiency of buildings by retaining heat, and have additional advantages such as helping to increase biodiversity levels and reducing surface water run-off.

Provide well-designed spaces that are safe
Lighting

P.6 Places should be well lit to provide a safe environment for pedestrians, and with particular attention being paid to key movement axes and desire lines across public spaces. However, light pollution, including glare, skyglow, light trespass and clutter, should be avoided to prevent energy wastage and reduce disruption to the natural day-night pattern and shifting the delicate balance of the environment.

P.7 Street lighting should be decorative as well as functional and enliven the whole of the area in a visually coherent and interesting manner. Street, building and advertisement lighting in the town centre should be creative and innovative but also ensure that streets and spaces are sufficiently well lit to promote personal safety. Lighting provision between adjacent developments should be coordinated to reduce clutter and does not overwhelm the space, particularly in predominantly pedestrian spaces;



Image: My Modern Met – spray-on solution for energy-free alternative to lighting

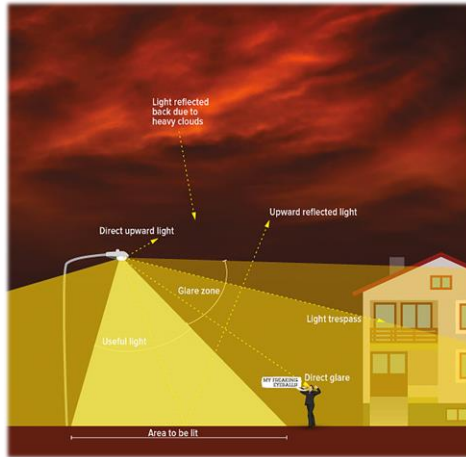


Image: www.Darksky.org

P.8 Parking area lighting should be appropriate for car drivers to see pedestrians and also be appropriate for pedestrians to see and be seen going to and from parked cars. The lighting should be mounted horizontally (0 degrees tilt) at a height of 4-5m. Luminaires with an Upward light Output Ratio (ULOR) of zero will achieve this and not include bollards as a primary source of lighting.

P.9 British Standards [BS EN 13201-2:2015](#) and [BS 5489-1:2013](#) make recommendations for lighting levels of areas with mixed vehicle/pedestrian usage. The application of these standards, and any associated design, should be design by competent lighting designers.

P.10 The design criterion is for horizontal illuminance. If it appears that light is going into windows of adjacent properties, vertical illuminance calculations may be required. Lighting class P5 would generally be appropriate for lighting design purposes. Average maintained illuminance (E_{av}) = 2 lux Minimum maintained illuminance (E_{min}) = 0.4 lux. This gives a minimum Uniformity of Illuminance (U_0) of 0.2.

Safety and surveillance

P.11 Public space should be safe for everyone to make use of, at all times of the day. Carefully designed and managed urban environments are effective in reducing levels of crime and vandalism, as well as reducing the fear of crime. Generally people feel more comfortable using public areas in which they can be seen

and heard, and which look like they are not commonly affected by criminal activity. Creating spaces which are 'safe' is a key consideration for Stevenage.

P.12 Safety must be considered at every stage of the design process, and all principles should be incorporated as appropriate. Further information on the principles of designing out crime is put forward by '[Secured by Design](#)', the UK Police flagship initiative.

P.13 Creating defensible space involves ensuring clear physical or symbolic boundaries are present between public and private spaces.

P.14 Spaces should be clearly defined in terms of ownership and use and include small, semi-private areas, provided behind a low wall, railing or fence, where the existing building lines allow for properties to be set back from the street. Spaces should ensure that boundaries are not too high; a balance needs to be achieved between the security of public and private spaces. Developments and buildings should maximise natural



<http://www.securedbydesign.com/>

surveillance throughout the area including in areas of fully private space, such as back gardens. Natural surveillance should not be confused with formal surveillance such as CCTV.

P.15 All developments must increase the sense of security in an area and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour levels. Buildings should be orientated so that windows and doors face out onto streets, squares and footpaths and the internal layout of buildings should be organised so that the most used rooms are those which have windows overlooking public spaces. Entrances to buildings should be clearly visible and accessible from the street and visible from inside the building - recessed entrances should be avoided. All buildings should have a similar setback distance to ensure that overlooking is not limited by a building projecting too far out and blocking the view and landscaping should not block sightlines. Spaces should contain both daytime and evening functional uses and ensure a mix of residents by integrating different types and tenures of housing to support a range of household sizes, ages and incomes. Residents with different lifestyles can create a more active environment, as people are around at varying times of the day.



Image: Secured by Design

P.16 It is essential that a balance is achieved between the need to promote permeability and the need to prevent uncontrolled and unwelcome access to private space and buildings. Creative design is required to ensure that places are both well-connected and secure. Buildings and developments should actively avoid public access to rear gardens and ensure routes for pedestrians and cyclists are well overlooked and are not in areas of limited levels of natural surveillance. Indoor, defensible cycle parking provision should be provided whilst car parking should avoid large, open and unsupervised areas of communal parking and communal garage blocks.

P.17 Properties with open access or easily climbable boundaries make easier targets for crime. The more difficult it is for a potential offender to access a property, the greater the deterrent to trespass. Natural crime reduction methods should be utilised where possible. Exceptions can be made where roads do not run through the development and dead frontages or dead ends cannot be avoided and if publicly visible security measures such as fences or gates are necessary, they should be designed as sculptures or art.

P.18 Clean and well-maintained environments are symbolically important as they give the message that people care about an area and exercise control over an area, not tolerating anti-social behaviour.



Image: Adam Styles Creative Metal

Make sure public spaces support social interaction



Image: Peter O'Connor

P.19 Stevenage is rich in public art across the town and we want to encourage the continuation of this culture through redevelopment. Public art can play a major part in giving a place a distinct character and identity. It can also attract people to a place, enhancing the economy and creating a sense of place. However, it needs to be integrated at the start of the design process and not put in as an afterthought.

P.20 Art can be incorporated in imaginative ways such as, within the floorscape and as a part of functional facilities like cycle racks, seating and signage. However, it should relate to the surrounding area, drawing from the historical significance or specific location of a place, and not just randomly selected.

P.21 Some Directional signage can clutter the public realm. However, it can also provide an opportunity to enhance the landscape, by ensuring design which is consistent and co-ordinated throughout a place, and which complements other elements of the street scene. Signage should be mounted on existing structures such as buildings, walls and posts, where possible and direct pedestrians and cyclists, as well as vehicle users. Signage should enable the easiest and most direct routes to encourage people to walk or cycle, in line with sustainability, health and environmental objectives; designers should start from a position

of having no signs, and street layout should aim to make the environment self-regulatory. Legible London has helped both residents and visitors walk to their destination quickly and easily. The signs offer a consistent experience and information about distances between areas, but have also been integrated with other transport modes so, for example, when people are leaving the Tube they can quickly identify the route to their destination. It uses a form of wayfinding and is again a simple way to shape cleverly designed signage in to the public realm.

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P.22 New public spaces, such as civic spaces, should be designed so they are multi-functional and encourage people to visit the spaces for a range of activities. They should be suitable for meeting the activity needs of all groups within the community. For example, designing civic spaces so that they can be used for events and informal activity as well as providing a community focal point and landscape. Public spaces should be designed to support informal children's play as this will encourage parents to visit and spend time in the public spaces. Where appropriate, especially in town and neighbourhood centre settings, new or enhanced public spaces should be supported by public conveniences, drinking fountains and accessible seating to encourage visits by all groups within the community and to encourage people to spend time in these spaces.

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- U.1 Sustainable places include a mix of uses that support everyday activities, including live, work and play.
- U.2 Well-designed neighbourhoods need to include an integrated mix of tenures and housing types that reflect local housing need and market demand. They are designed to be inclusive and to meet the changing needs of people of different ages and abilities. New development reinforces existing places by enhancing local transport, facilities and community services, and maximising their potential use.
- U.3 Where there is rapid social and economic change, such as sustainable growth or diversification in rural communities or town centres, well-designed buildings and places are able to accommodate a variety of uses over time.

U.4 Community uses should be co-located wherever possible in order to support linked trips by active travel modes. For example, schools, shops, workplaces, open space. Where appropriate, uses should be integrated into the same building to encourage their use e.g. combining leisure uses with health services and community facilities. Co-located community uses should be focal points within active travel networks.

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A mix of uses

Retail

~~U.5~~ Many of the shopfronts in the Town and Neighbourhood Centres are more modern looking. Modern interpretations of traditional shop fronts generally have less ornamental detailing than traditional shop fronts but they still create a 'frame' to the shop front. Modern shop front designs should generally follow the approach of traditional shop fronts albeit interpreted in a modern manner.

Fig 10 – Modern shopfront

U.65 In order that these modern interpretations enhance the character and appearance of retail areas these should include well-proportioned components which also exhibit a level of depth and detailing to these.

U.76 The diagram illustrates the basic architectural features that make up modern shopfronts.

U.87 Shopfront alterations should respect the detailed design, materials, colour and architectural features of the shopfront and building itself, including the setting of the shop i.e. is it in the New Town area of Stevenage or is it situated in the historic setting of the Old Town.

U.98 Planning permission will generally be required for a new shopfront; alterations to an existing shopfront including awnings and canopies, external security shutters, blinds, grilles and security measures; and change of use will generally require planning permission.

U.109 The more traditional shopfronts, such as those found in the Old Town, feature similar architectural features and these are illustrated below.

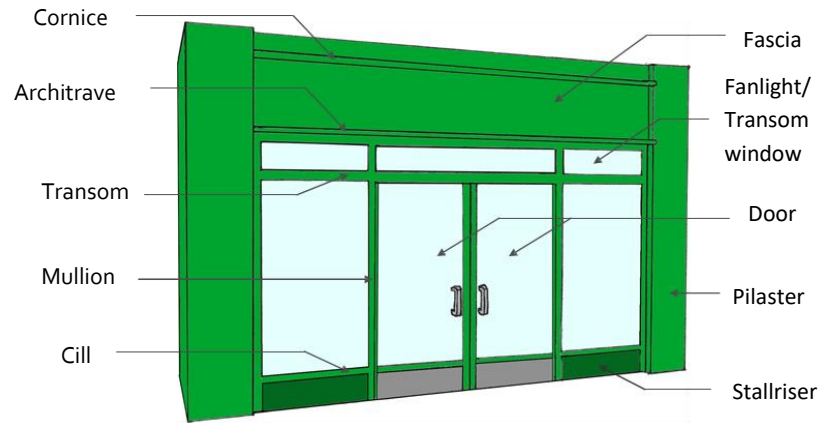
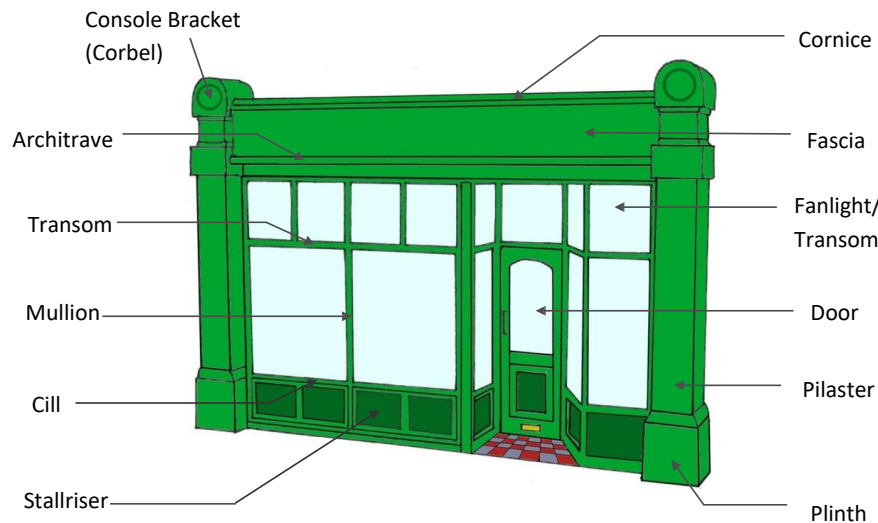


Fig 11 – Traditional shopfront



U.110 Each of these traditional elements of a shopfront has a practical purpose, as well as contributing to the character of the building.

U.124 Planning permission is not normally required for routine maintenance works, such as redecoration or straightforward repairs.

U.132 Any alterations (or replacement) of shopfronts that form part of a listed building will require [Listed Building Consent](#) and will need to be consistent with the age and style of the building. More stringent controls will apply for works including re-painting a shopfront in a different colour, installing a security alarm or extractor fan, altering the shop interior, installing blinds or shutters, and advertisements.

U.143 [Conservation Area Consent](#) is required for the proposed complete or substantial demolition of any building in a conservation area, including the removal of a shopfront or of any feature that gives character to a building.

U.154 In assessing applications to alter shopfronts within Conservation Areas special attention will be given to the desirability of preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Areas.

U.165 For shops in Conservation Areas, reference should also be made to the relevant [Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Plan](#). These describe the area and its special character and include guidelines that provide the framework for development proposals in the area and the appraisals contain audits of shopfronts of merit.

U.176 [Advertisement consent](#) is a separate procedure that applies to the display of advertisements on shopfronts and [Building regulations consent](#) will be required for all work which alters the shop's structure, changes its fire escape, or would make access difficult for those with disabilities.

U.187 More specific detail regarding key shopfront components can be found in [Appendix B](#).

A mix of home tenures, types and sizes

U.198 The aim of any residential development should be to provide a good living environment for occupants. Development should respect the surrounding buildings, in terms of their scale and massing, height, building lines, design and the materials used. However, it is accepted that housing layouts should take account of changing functional requirements. Occasionally, it may be appropriate to create pastiche developments. However, it is possible for a development to respect its local surroundings but still incorporate contemporary styles and new technologies.

U.2039 Different types and tenures of homes should be well-integrated and support a range of household sizes, ages and incomes. They should be suitable for all members of the community and promote social diversity by reducing exclusion. They should enable residents to be able to move to smaller or larger homes without the need to leave their neighbourhoods and allow families to live close together. Houses should be indistinguishable from each other.

Privacy and scale

U.219 In order to ensure that a reasonable degree of privacy for residents is provided, both within their habitable rooms and garden areas, the position of dwellings, and the arrangement of their rooms and windows, should not create significant overlooking of other dwellings' windows or private garden areas and not lead to any overbearing impacts or adversely affect the residential amenities of existing dwellings.

U.224 The following minimum separation distances should be achieved: For new developments where no existing properties are affected (excluding a phased development), we will require the 20m / 12m separation distance

No of Storeys	Type of Separation	Min. 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 a 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

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U.232 In all cases a 1.8m high solid wall or fence should be provided between the rear gardens of properties which back onto each other. Where the boundary adjoins a footpath, a minimum of 0.5m setback should be provided to avoid the creation of an alleyway effect, or appear overbearing on the streetscape.

Residential extensions

U.243 Although some extensions are permitted development, others may require both [planning permission](#) and [building regulation approval](#). All applications for extensions and alterations will be considered on their individual merits.

U.254 Extension proposals should respect the size, height, materials, features and layout of the building concerned, as well as the surrounding buildings. They should be built so that they look like a part of the main building rather than an obvious addition to it and not adversely affect the amenities of occupiers.

U.265 Further details of residential extensions can be found in [Appendix C](#).

Socially inclusive

U.276 Places need to be able to adapt to changing circumstances. Towns and cities, for example, must change when industries rise and decline and houses need to be adaptable for when children get older and their requirements change. Places should be designed so that they are capable of being used for a range of activities; a public square, for example, can be used effectively for festivals, markets and events.

U.287 Residential buildings should be future proofed; building higher attic spaces for future conversions and ensuring ground floors can benefit from higher ceilings to be easily adapted for commercial uses later.

U.298 Sub-dividing large development parcels and allocating them to different developers can generate a wider range of building types, tenures and uses, which can encourage a more diverse community.

U.30 Places also need to account of an ageing population and the different requirements needed at these stages of life. They should consider:

- Sensitively planning for older person's housing in mixed developments to encourage healthy communities that include housing suitable for an ageing population.
- New housing for older people of any tenure should be built to accessible and sustainable standards, conforming to HAPPI design principles, be digitally enabled for assistive and other technology, and encourage developers to build to energy efficient and carbon neutral specifications, and thus promoting accessible, adaptable, and dementia friendly design.

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- New housing for older people should investigate options such as PassivHaus and other eco-build designs for specialist older persons housing, to reduce thermal variances and the associated costs, and assist in preventing poor health outcomes in older people.

H.1 Well-designed homes and buildings are functional, accessible and sustainable. They provide internal environments and associated external spaces that support the health and well-being of their users and all who experience them.

H.2 They meet the needs of a diverse range of users, taking into account factors such as ageing population and cultural differences. They are adequate in size, fit for purpose and are adaptable to the changing needs of their occupants over time.

H.3 Successful buildings also provide attractive, stimulating and positive places for all, whether for activity, interaction, retreat or simply passing by.

Healthy, comfortable and safe internal and external environment

H.4 All developments are required to make efforts to minimise energy usage and to incorporate methods of using renewable energy, including reducing energy demand, using passive environmental systems, e.g. natural ventilation, daylighting and passive solar gains, using high levels of insulation and air tightness in the fabric of the building, specifying energy efficient services, controls and appliances, implementing water recycling and the provision of water butts, using renewable energy, using low/zero carbon technologies to provide as much of the energy load as is technically and economically feasible, minimising use of fossil fuels, and using efficient fossil fuel technologies, such as Combined Heat and Power and condensing boilers.

H.5 For major housing schemes, the nationally recognised [Building for Life](#) criteria should be used to assess their functionality, attractiveness and sustainability. This is a national standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods. It promotes high quality design, as well as celebrating best practise in the house building industry. Building for Life is a partnership between several national agencies, led by [CABE](#) and the [Home Builders Federation](#).

H.6 For internal space within new dwellings, there is the nationally described space standard. This sets out the requirements for the Gross Internal (floor) area of new dwellings at a defined level of occupancy as well as floor areas and dimensions for key parts of the home, notably bedrooms, storage and floor to ceiling height. This is not a building regulation and remains solely within the planning system as a form of technical planning standard.

Noise

H.7~~6~~ Noise can adversely affect peoples' quality of life and exposure to unwanted noise can affect our health and welfare. Protection against noise in the construction, design and layout of residential developments is essential to ensure that existing or future residents are not subjected to unacceptable levels of noise in their own homes. The likelihood of noise affecting future residents is a key factor in assessing the suitability of a site for residential use.

H.8~~7~~ Residential development should be restricted to areas with low ambient noise levels and utilise noise control measures in order to make residential development feasible, wherever possible, to maximise the potential of previously developed land. They should employ solutions to technically complex

acoustic problems through specialist advice. Delaying contact with such specialists until later in a project may result in avoidable additional costs being incurred at the design and construction stages.

~~H.98~~ Where it is unlikely that residents will be able to keep windows open or sit on/in a balcony/garden without being bothered by one or more external noise sources, such as traffic, industrial noise or customers of entertainment venues, noise will be a material planning consideration and, under these circumstances, a noise survey will be required.

~~H.109~~ New residential dwellings, exposed to noise from existing sources, will be assessed in accordance with [National Planning Policy Guidance](#) and BS 8233:2014. National guidance assesses sites according to a noise exposure hierarchy.

~~H.110~~ It is likely that many sites within Stevenage, suitable for new housing, will be exposed to existing noise levels contained within, or on the boundary of 'noticeable and not intrusive' and 'noticeable and intrusive'.

~~H.124~~ Developments shall require proposals to achieve acceptable internal noise levels. Ideally, with windows open. However, on some potentially noisy sites in the Borough, an alternative means of purge ventilation will be required. They should demonstrate that all other mitigation measures have been exhausted to reduce external/internal noise levels where internal noise levels can only be achieved with closed windows. Developments should ensure that garden areas are usable and not unduly impacted upon by noise. Ideally noise levels in these outside amenity areas shall not be above the 55dB(A)eq (16hour) range 50-55dB. To achieve this level of exposure to existing noise it may be necessary to provide amenity areas carefully sited away from noise-exposed facades and/or the provision of acoustic screening. The assessment of the noise exposure of outdoor amenity space shall be included in a noise survey report. The layout of mixed flatted and housing developments should be orientated in such a way to create an acoustic barrier through the use of the flatted element of the development closer to the noise source. They should mitigate external noise affecting noise sensitive developments by including screen fencing, vegetation buffers, insulation in the walls and roof, the use of double glazing in windows and the use of intervening buildings or structures, such as garages. Development should include engineering solutions to reduce the impact of noise at the point of generation as well as limiting the noise within the building. The layout of the site and building layout, including screening and buffering, can mitigate against noise, as can limiting the operational hours and restricting activities that can occur on site.

Well-related to external amenity and public spaces

~~H.133~~ All dwellings, including flats, should have private open space. The only exception to this is where flats are developed in very central locations, where public open space is easily accessible and higher densities are required.

H.143 Private open space should be located conveniently for use by residents and in a position that is not overlooked by neighbouring buildings; normally to the rear of the building, and in the case of flats the private space will usually form part of the garden or communal amenity space, and not an area of landscaping.

H.154 For new houses the minimum standard garden space for terraced and semi-detached houses should normally be 50 square metres. Each dwelling should normally have a minimum rear garden depth of 10m. The shape and slope of the garden should ensure that it is useable. Larger detached houses will generally be required to provide a larger rear garden area. The garden should normally be enclosed by a 1.8m high close boarded fence or wall and direct access should be afforded to rear gardens for activities such as refuse storage, cycle parking and maintenance.

H.165 In new flatted developments where there is no communal space balconies or roof gardens should be provided for the occupants of these units. These should —be located so as to afford privacy to the occupant, normally to the rear of buildings. Some communal space within developments could provide opportunities for physical activity e.g. outdoor gym equipment, space for informal exercise. However, they should not compromise the privacy of existing dwellings. SBC will normally aim to achieve a minimum useable communal area of 50 square metres for schemes up to 5 units, plus an additional 10 square metres per additional unit over 5. Garage courts, parking areas and bin storage areas are not considered as part of the useable garden amenity requirements.

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H.176 All rear gardens and communal open spaces should generally enjoy a reasonable amount of sunlight and have a relatively open outlook.

H.18 Employment/community buildings should be supported by cycle storage, lockers, showers and changing rooms. Informal sports facilities should be integrated into larger buildings e.g. table tennis in atriums/courtyards and space for parking wheelchairs and pushchairs should be incorporated into places of work and community buildings.

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Sunlight, daylight and orientation

H.197 New developments should be designed to ensure that a satisfactory level of sunlight and daylight is provided for the occupants of both existing and proposed dwellings.

H.208 Where there is doubt that adequate sunlight and daylight will be achieved, indicators will be used to assess the amount of light reaching a new or existing window:

H.219 The Building Research Establishment (BRE) guidelines "[Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A Guide to Good Practice](#)" ~~third~~ ^{second} edition, will be used. It provides guidance on avoiding unacceptable impacts and sets out non-mandatory targets for levels of daylight and sunlight within existing and proposed developments. The guidance contained in the revised advice has been updated to reflect the changes in the British Standard Daylight in buildings, BS EN 17037. In particular, an account will be taken of the size and position of windows to neighbouring buildings. However, indicators will not be applied to all schemes; only to those where there is doubt that adequate lighting may be achieved. For surrounding neighbouring properties, the guidelines remain largely the same, with Vertical Sky Component (VSC) and Daylight Distribution (DD) remaining the tests used for daylight amenity. Also, Annual Probable Sunlight House (APSH) remains the test used for sunlight amenity. The main change is the way in which daylight and sunlight is

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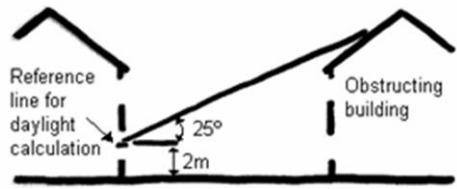
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measured for proposed habitable rooms. For daylight, the Average Daylight Factor (ADF) test and Daylight Distribution (DD) test have been replaced. The new tests are Daylight Factor (DF) and Spatial Daylight Autonomy (SDA Illuminance).

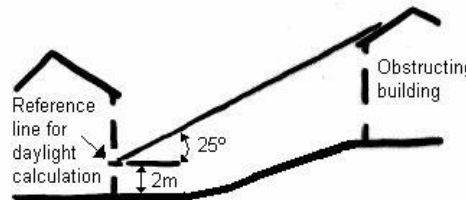
For existing buildings, This can be established by undertaking a simple 25 degree 'rule of thumb' test using the BRE guidelines, as identified in the diagram below on the next page:

From a point 2 metres above ground level at the horizontal centre of the protected window draw a line perpendicular to the window and at an angle of 25 degrees to the horizontal (see the drawing above). If the proposed development cuts this line then it is likely to interfere with the diffuse skylight enjoyed by the existing building. This being the case the proposal is likely to cause problems of loss of light and it will be necessary to undertake a detailed sunlight and daylight assessment.

BRE Guidelines: 25 Degree Test



Section in plane perpendicular to the main face of the building.



On sloping sites overshadowing is more of a problem and greater spacing is required to obtain the same access to daylight for buildings lower down the

H.22 Where possible dwellings should be laid out so that the main bedroom and the kitchen benefit from the morning sun and living rooms benefit from the afternoon and evening sun. Living rooms and kitchens need more daylight than bedrooms, so where there is a choice it is best to site the living room or kitchen away from obstructions. Low building depths should be encouraged to reduce the amount of artificial lighting required and reduce energy consumption. Dwellings should be orientated to maximise 'passive solar gain' in order to provide environmental benefits and minimise the amount of fuel used. Primary frontages should broadly face the south in order to optimise the solar potential of the site and dwellings should maximise solar gain through the use of technologies such as solar panels and solar hot water systems. Their use is encouraged where appropriate.

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H.233 However, the form and character of the area may dictate a particular arrangement of buildings which is at odds with these objectives. In such a case, it will be for the designer to creatively combine both constraints.

Attention to detail: storage, waste, servicing and utilities

Waste

H.242 Waste planning is the responsibility of Hertfordshire County Council; therefore any proposals will need to be in line with their requirements. The waste strategy for England sets a recycling rate target of 65% by 2035, and a target to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill to 10% within the same timeframe.

H.253 It is important that provision is made for the storage and collection of waste from a site. Waste storage should be designed into all new developments, and any extension to an existing dwelling should not remove waste storage facilities. New developments should take account of [BS 5906: Waste Management in Buildings](#) Code of Practice.

H.264 The visual impact of these areas should be minimal. Appropriate screening should be used to disguise these facilities, where necessary.

H.275 Waste storage should also be designed so that bins can be moved easily and safely to the collection point. The collection point must be located near a road which provides easy access for refuse vehicles.

H.286 Facilities for recycling and composting should follow the same principles as above, with minimal adverse impact on the surrounding area. They should ideally be located in close proximity to waste storage facilities, for ease of use.

H.297 Buildings and developments should follow the waste hierarchy model:

- prevent waste as a first option;
- re-use, recycle and compost waste as a second option; and
- dispose of it as a last resort.

H.3028 Developments should provide for onsite compost areas and for the storing of recyclable waste and also provide for recycling bins to be stored inside homes. They should provide sufficient waste container storage and design into the development how its subsequent collection will be achieved; and ensure level access so that waste receptacles can be accessed by the highway for collection.



https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/765914/resources-waste-strategy-dec-2018.pdf

Residential development of houses

H.3179 Residential developments of houses are usually serviced by a kerbside waste and recyclables collection. The designs for waste and recycling facilities need to ensure that internal and external storage areas are designed into each dwelling and that internal space is provided for recycling storage, kitchens and utility rooms are generally the most appropriate locations. Storage for recyclables (in the case of SBC paper, glass, plastics and cans, and garden waste are all collected separately), organic kitchen waste and non- recyclable waste is provided and recycling waste storage comprises either a box or bag which are normally stored inside and taken to the kerbside on collection days. Organic waste (food) kitchen caddies are stored inside the property and emptied into larger external, free-standing organic waste receptacles. External space for the storage of garden waste should be provided and external storage for both waste and recyclables outside the buildings within the curtilage (for waste collector).

Residential development of flatted dwellings

H.3230 Collection services for flatted developments vary depending on the individual circumstances of the premises. However, a kerbside collection is preferred. Developments need to ensure that internal storage is located in an accessible and communal area inside each dwelling and is easily accessible, but secure, from external storage areas, near to areas of high waste production, and hard wearing and washable - kitchens and utility rooms are generally the most appropriate. Internal storage areas where recyclables can be separated at the source should be provided, and dwellings should be provided with capacity for receptacles for each recyclable component (including food waste), according to the separation at the relevant "bring" facility e.g. glass, cans, plastic bottles, paper (single banks for mixed collections), etc, and for non-recyclable waste. They should provide for both mixed recyclables, organic kitchen waste and non- recyclable waste, and, for recyclables must have at least twice, if not three times, the capacity of storage for non-recyclable waste to account for the separation requirements and the frequency of removal from the dwelling.

External Bins for waste and recycling storage:

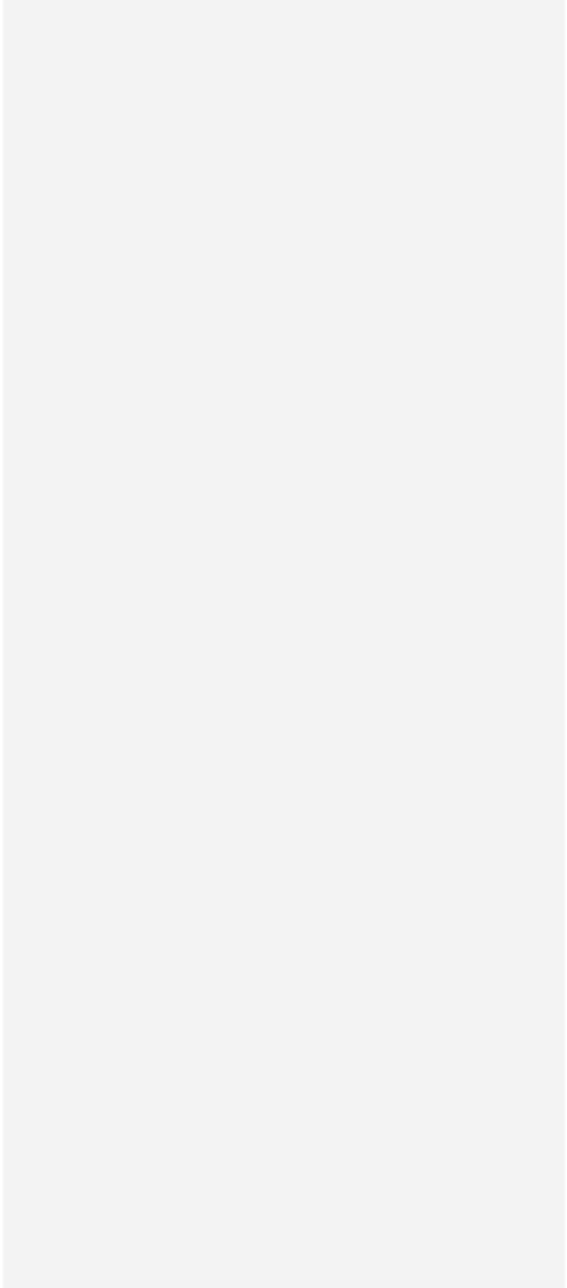
H.33# Bins for waste and recycling storage vary in size and an appropriate combination must be provided to accommodate the needs of the development.

H.34# The following is a summary of the bins currently used in waste and recyclables storage to provide a guide to the space requirements.

Bin Type	Use	Domestic / Trade	External Dimensions mm H x L x D (H + open lid)
180ltr Wheelie Bin (Black)	General Waste	Domestic	1070 x 580 x 730
240ltr Wheelie Bin (Brown)	Green & Food Waste	Domestic	1100 x 600 x 800
60ltr Bag (Black)	Recyclables - Plastic & Cans	Domestic	490 x 350 x 350
60ltr Bag (Blue)	Recyclables - Paper & Card	Domestic	490 x 350 x 350
23ltr Caddy (Red)	Glass	Domestic	405 x 320 x 400
23ltr Caddy	Food Waste	Domestic	405 x 320 x 400
240ltr Wheelie Bin (Black)	General Waste	Domestic	1100 x 600 x 800
360ltr Wheelie Bin	General Waste / Recyclables	Domestic / Trade	1120 x 630 x 890
660ltr Eurobin	Recyclables	Trade	1400 x 1300 x 720
1100ltr Eurobin	General Waste / Recyclables	Trade	1400 x 1300 x 1000

(NB: This list, including the bin dimensions, is subject to change. It is only to be used for preliminary design purposes)

External storage area features:	Housing developments	Flatted developments
Should be located within 10 metres of an external access but not near ground storey windows.	✓	✓
Storage and collection points must be as close as possible to, and preferably within 10 metres of, a place suitable for a collection vehicle to stop.	✓	✓
Must be at or near street level, and should be accessible via appropriately sized and graded ramps to allow bins to be wheeled to and from the collection point easily.	✓	✓
Must be safe for users by being well lit and visible from public vantage points and nearby dwellings / tenancies.	✓	✓
Should be unroofed, unless they are fully enclosed and secured (ideally inaccessible to animals).	✓	✓
Should be accessible for collection purposes and not impede pedestrian or vehicular access on public thoroughfares or to and from buildings.	✓	✓
Should be located as close to the front property boundary as possible, preferably behind the front boundary wall, without detracting from the street scene.		✓
Consideration should be given to the <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allocation of additional external storage space in the future, e.g. additional bins, • composting facilities - in residential development with a garden or landscaping, • provision of onsite storage for bulky waste (i.e. furniture) items and potential opportunities for re- use of these items. 		✓



Servicing and utilities

H.353 Building services equipment, whether it is used for heating and cooling, communications, power, plumbing, ventilation, access or security, if not considered appropriately, can cause significant visual blight and nuisance for neighbours.

H.364 The necessary building services equipment should be incorporated into development, while having minimal impacts on their environment. Impacts that are likely to require minimisation or mitigation include visual blight, light nuisance, noise nuisance and vibration, odour, and other environmental pollutants or nuisance.

H.375 In new development, all building services equipment must be integrated within the building or development structure and should not be a dominant feature of the building. It must be incorporated into the external building design where, because of its nature, it cannot be integrated within the building;

H.386 In refurbished development, plant and machinery should be accommodated within the building structure, or incorporated into the design of external modifications.

H.397 Other design considerations for building services equipment include screening or other techniques to minimise the impacts of plant, machinery and ducting must, in themselves, not cause visual blight. Plant and machinery on roofs should not be visible from the street, public vantage points or from immediately adjacent buildings. The design and materials used for plant, machinery and ducting, as well as for ancillary structures such as screening, where located on the exterior of the building, must be consistent with those of the building and, where possible, plant and machinery should be designed in such a way that does not lead to issues of safety and security.

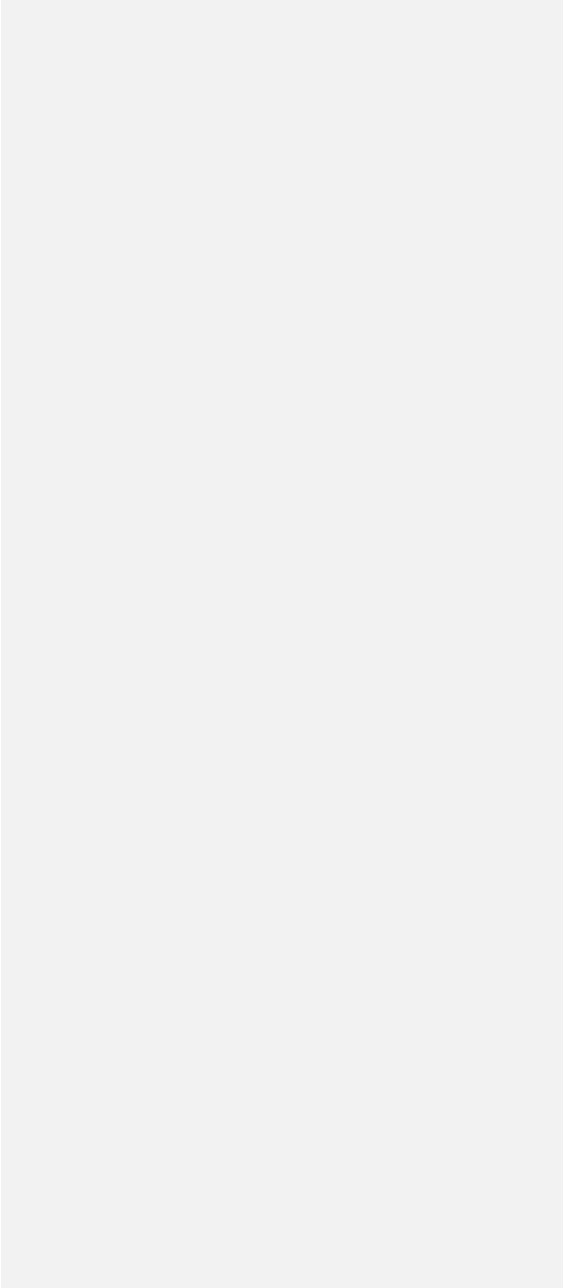
H.4038 Where building services equipment is required on the outside of a building, it must not obscure access to daylight and sunlight, or provide any nuisance for occupants of the development or adjacent buildings. It should be separated or insulated from occupants and neighbours who are likely to be sensitive to noise disturbance if plant and machinery has moving parts. Techniques to achieve this separation include the use of flexible ducting, or resilient mountings for structure-borne plant and machinery. Plant and machinery must ensure that where mechanical or passive ventilation is required to remove odour emissions, the release point for odours must be located above the roofline of the building and, where possible, adjacent buildings.

H.4139 In addition, plant and machinery, particularly where located on roofs, must not preclude the installation of required onsite renewable energy facilities in the proposal and due consideration must also be given to the possibility of future renewable energy installations.

H.429 Special consideration should be given to the installation of plant, machinery and ducting on listed buildings and in conservation areas as fewer external solutions are likely to be appropriate in these locations. Installations must be in keeping with the design and materials of the building and [listed building consent](#) is likely to be required for works to a listed building.

H.433 Access to plant and machinery must be provided to allow for convenient and safe servicing and replacement of installations. Machinery must be properly installed and maintained to ensure that impacts are properly mitigated and the situation does not deteriorate over time with continued

operation. Plant and machinery should be located as close as possible to their end use, e.g. boilers should be located near to the hot water or heating users, to minimise use of ducting materials, loss of resource and visual blight. Whilst disused plant, machinery and ducting must be removed from the exterior of buildings before replacements can be installed. Only in exceptional circumstances will these be allowed to remain.



R.1 Well-designed places and buildings conserve natural resources including land, water, energy and materials. Their design responds to the impacts of climate change. It identifies measures to achieve:

- mitigation, primarily by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and minimising embodied energy; and
- adaptation to anticipated events, such as rising temperatures and the increasing risk of flooding.

R.2 A compact and walkable neighbourhood with a mix of uses and facilities reduces demand for energy and supports health and well-being. It uses land efficiently so helps adaptation by increasing the ability for CO₂ absorption, sustaining natural ecosystems, minimising flood risk and the potential impact of flooding, and reducing overheating and air pollution.

Follow the energy hierarchy

R.3 Energy efficiency should be considered at the earliest stages of design and buildings should reduce energy demands required to heat, cool, light and run buildings, thereby reducing carbon emissions and energy bills. They should improve energy efficiency using a variety of passive design measures and create innovative, high-quality urban environments.

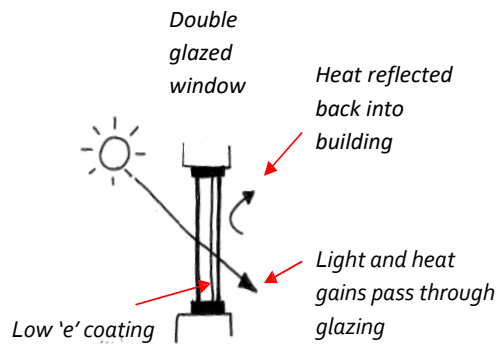
R.4 There are many different energy efficiency options. Their application depends on the type of project, and, in particular, whether it is a new development or a refurbishment project. However, buildings and developments should utilise the waste heat produced when fuel is burnt to generate electricity through CHP systems, to heat homes and water. Individual homes should install micro-CHPs as an alternative to the traditional gas central heating boiler, while also providing electricity. Furthermore, they should utilise biomass fuels from a local sustainable source using:

- stand-alone stoves providing space heating for a single room; and/or
- boilers connected to central heating and hot water systems.

Selection of materials and construction techniques

R.5 The standard of design in new developments has a major impact upon the quality of the environment. Good design can enhance the appearance of places and our use and enjoyment of them. Well-designed buildings should function well and should be able to adapt to changing circumstances. They should use appropriate materials and design details to achieve and maintain character and distinctiveness. Building features should vary throughout the different areas of the town whilst following the same basic design principles. They should draw on the scale, texture and colour of the building materials used throughout the surrounding area and use innovative design approach other than pastiches appropriate to the new town. Materials can be innovative and contemporary but should relate to the existing palette of colours and textures. Buildings should use locally sourced materials to effectively retain local

distinctiveness. This will also help reduce the impacts of transportation on the environment, thus conforming to sustainability objectives. It can also reduce development costs. They should use environmentally friendly materials and generally arrange windows and doors symmetrically; however, random arrangements can be appropriate when they form part of an organised and distinctive effect, and when they fit in with the surrounding character of the buildings. Buildings should include chimneys as appropriate to help create varied and interesting rooflines, and provide a visual connection with the architectural style of the existing area. They should ensure boundary fences, parking provision and landscaping are in-keeping with the surrounding area.



Careful attention should be paid to decisions such as whether fences or hedgerows should be used, whether paving a currently green area would cause it to stand out unacceptably, and where parking provision should be made.

R.6 These factors need to be considered at the initial design process, as they can all make a significant difference as to whether a building fits in with the surrounding context of the area or not, and whether a place is successful.

R.7 Buildings should use high thermal mass materials, such as concrete, brick and stone, to absorb and retain solar heat during the day and maximise insulation to reduce heat loss; the rate of heat transfer through building elements is measured as a 'U-Value'. The lower the U-Value is, the less significant the heat losses are, and the more energy efficient the building materials are. U-Values listed in Building Regulations should be considered as a minimum standard and should always be improved upon where viable and technically practicable.

R.8 Buildings should have high energy efficiency appliances installed at the development stage and use control systems, such as motion or light detecting sensors, to increase energy efficiency.

R.9 Construction, demolition, and excavation (C,D&E) wastes can be re-used and recycled on-site to provide an alternative to virgin aggregates such as sand and gravel. For developments that include demolition of existing structures, opportunities to reuse or recycle demolition waste should be considered when planning for the construction phase. This helps to not only reduce reliance on virgin aggregates but also promotes a circular economy for waste materials and reduces the need to transport materials to site. Reducing the need for virgin sand and gravel can also be encouraged by selecting secondary and or recycled materials for use within the project. For example, secondary and or recycled aggregates could be used as a substitute material in the production of concrete.

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Maximise resilience

Wind

R.109 Buildings should incorporate natural ventilation ensure air quality is maintained and use atria and courtyards in an effective way to maximise natural ventilation. They should ensure voids between groups of buildings to encourage natural ventilation in the centre of deep plan developments whilst minimising heat loss through air leakage and ensure junctions between different building materials do not allow air to leak in or out of the building. Wind turbines (of varying scales) should be employed as a viable form of energy generation where appropriate.

Sunlight and daylight

R.110 Buildings should provide an adequate level of daylight and sunlight and reduce the amount of artificial light required. They should have low building depths to reduce the amount of artificial light; a depth of 9-13m provides maximum flexibility for natural lighting and ventilation. Buildings should employ techniques to bring light into the building if building depths are high. This would include design features such as atria, courtyards and sun tubes and they should ensure that any new extensions do not affect the amount of natural light being received by existing buildings. Buildings should be located far enough apart to not cause overshadowing. Although, buildings which are too far apart can result in continuity and enclosure objectives not being achieved. They should maximise the benefits of 'passive solar gain' to provide environmental benefits and minimise the amount of fuel used. Buildings should be positioned carefully so that their primary frontages are orientated broadly to the south, in order to maximise the opportunity for passive solar gain and they should capture solar energy using Photovoltaic (PV) cells or solar water heating panels on south facing, unshaded roofs

Ground and air source heat pumps

R.124 Buildings should utilise the constant below ground temperate through ground source heat pumps and transfer heat from below the frost line into the building. In addition, they should extract the heat from the air using air source heat pumps.

Water consumption

R.137 Stevenage is in a region which receives one of the lowest levels of rainfall in the UK and, in recent years, the amount of water being consumed is steadily increasing. Reducing the amount of water needed for day-to-day activities is, therefore, essential for maintaining a sustainable lifestyle.

R.143 Buildings should reduce water consumption to 110 litres per person per day and collect and reuse rainwater for activities such as washing clothes, toilet flushing and garden irrigation. Care should be taken to ensure that elements of these schemes are designed into buildings effectively and are not visually intrusive

L.1 Well-designed places sustain their beauty over the long term. They add to the quality of life of their users and as a result, people are more likely to care for them over their lifespan. They have an emphasis on quality and simplicity.

Well managed and maintained

L.2 Developments should be well designed to ensure that they are robust, durable and easy to look after. They should be designed to ensure that the maintenance and management responsibilities are clearly defined and these roles are agreed by the necessary parties in advance.

L.3 Management of local waste, cleaning, parking, internal common spaces, shared spaces and public spaces should all be considered from the outset and these regimes should be considered from the early stages of the design process.

Adaptable to changing needs and evolving techniques

L.4 Consideration should be given to the changing needs in terms of health and mobility of the user. This is particularly relevant to private users of homes and gardens; such places should be designed to be flexible and able to adapt to the changing needs of the user.

L.5 This is also relevant to potential changes in lifestyle due to developing technologies i.e. electric vehicles, remote working etc.

L.6 Consideration should be given to the provision of high-speed digital connectivity in order to ensure the provision of options and information for education, health, leisure, social interaction, businesses and home working. Something that has become evident over the past year.

A sense of ownership

L.7 Well-designed places clearly define the boundaries for private, shared and public spaces; as such, occupants will place more value and take ownership of those spaces.

L.8 Shared spaces should be visible and easy to get to so that they are accessible to all users. They should also ensure that they are flexible so that they can be used for a variety of activities.

Appendix A – Stevenage Urban Character Assessments (2008, SBC)

Bedwell
General Characteristics
New Town neighbourhood
Low density Terraced blocks – 24 dph
High density flats towards western edge of neighbourhood
Low boundary walls and hedgerows to front, sometimes no distinct front boundaries
Mature and attractive landscaping
Access issues to properties, limited parking availability
Development Considerations
Off street parking which does not affect the street scene
Landscaping – this is an area with a deficiency of natural and semi-natural open space
Extensions of cycle and pedestrian links
Capitalise on central location
Borders Countryside Heritage site at Monks and Whomerly Wood

Broadwater
General Characteristics
Small pockets of medieval buildings at Hertford Road/London Road junction, Shephalbury and Bragbury End
New Town neighbourhood to north of area
Private modern estate developments to south of area (Hertford Road)
Low density, typically 2 to 3 storey developments, exception at neighbourhood centres and Roebuck Gate – 24dph
Mature and attractive landscaping
Access issues to new town neighbourhood properties, limited parking availability
Development Considerations
Off street parking which does not affect the street scene
Landscaping – there are also existing deficiencies in the quantity of amenity green spaces
Extensions of cycle and pedestrian links
Broadwater (Marymead) Conservation Area
Listed buildings on Hertford Road and at Bragbury and Shephalbury
Areas of archaeological significance, as advised by HCC, at Broadwater Farm, Wychdell and Bragbury End
Stevenage Brook runs through southern section of neighbourhood
Noise issues from railway which runs south of neighbourhood

Chells
General Characteristics
New Town neighbourhood
Low density, 2 to 3 storey developments, exceptions at neighbourhood centres – 27 dph
Mature and attractive landscaping
Access issues to front of new town neighbourhood properties due to layout of urban form
Development Considerations
Off street parking which does not affect the street scene
Landscaping – there are also existing deficiencies in the quantity of amenity green space
Extensions of cycle and pedestrian links
Borders several wildlife sites
Ancient Lane at Narrowbox Lane

Chells Manor
General Characteristics
Modern 20 th Century estate developments
Pocket of rural form along Chells Lane

High density, 2 to 3 storey developments, exception at neighbourhood centre – 35dph
Development Considerations
Landscaping
Extensions of cycle and pedestrian links
Borders several wildlife sites
Listed Buildings along Chells Lane
Ancient Lanes at Lanterns lane and Chells Lane

Coreys Mill and Rectory Lane
General Characteristics
Area of rural settlement layout along Rectory Lane and Weston Lane
Private estate development from 1960's onwards most common. Large homes on large plots
Generally, very low density and low scale development, typically 2 storeys – 16dph
Open countryside to the north of the area
Mature landscaping, on public and private property, throughout area
Typically, no on-street parking

Development Considerations
Landscaping
Parking solutions that do not affect the street scene
Extensions and improvements of cycle and pedestrian links
Several wildlife sites
Rectory Land and St Nicholas Conservation Area
Many Listed Buildings along Rectory Lane
Ancient Lanes at The Avenue and Fishers Green Lane
Area of archaeological significance at The Bury, as advised by HCC

Old Town
General Characteristics
Defined areas of historic character
Core commercial area at High Street. Residential above retail units
Employment uses centralised at Orchard Road/Enterprise centre
All low density, typically 2 to 3 storey developments, exception at Higgins Homes site and flatted developments along Primett Road
Mature and attractive landscaping. High quality public realm

Access issues for older people, limited parking availability
Development Considerations
Off street parking which does not affect the street scene
Landscaping. There are also existing deficiencies in the quantity of amenity green spaces
Extensions of cycle and pedestrian links
High Street and Orchard Road Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings throughout area
Maintain special interest of all built areas. Include small distinguishing details such as fascias, brickwork detail, traditional materials
Area of archaeological significance, as advised by HCC, at High Street
Noise issues from railway which runs west of the area
Ongoing issues with gyratory system

Pin Green
General Characteristics
New Town neighbourhood
Typically higher densities and low scale development, typically 2 storeys – except at neighbourhood centres – 32dph
Mature landscaping throughout the area
Typically no on-street parking

Development Considerations
Landscaping
Extension of cycle and pedestrian links
Several wildlife sites
Ancient Lane at Old Walkern Road
Areas of archaeological significance at Martins Wood and Hampson Park, as advised by HCC

Poplars
General Characteristics
Modern 20 th Century estate developments
High density and low scale, typically 2 to 3 storey, development – 32dph
Immature landscaping

Shephall
General Characteristics
Area of rural settlement layout at Shephall Green
New town neighbourhood surrounding

Generally, low density and low scale development, typically 2 storeys – exceptions at neighbourhood centres – 26dph
Mature landscaping throughout area
Development Considerations
Landscaping. There are also existing deficiencies in the quantity of amenity green spaces
Parking solutions that do not affect the street scene
Extensions and improvements of cycle and pedestrian links
Several wildlife sites
Shephall Green Conservation Area
Listed Buildings around Shephall Green
Ancient Lane at Dene Lane
Are of archaeological significance at Shephall Green, as advised by HCC

St Nicholas
General Characteristics
Original neighbourhood located to the south of area
New modern estate of Great Ashby located to the north of the area
High density, low scale development, typically 2 storeys – 33 dph average although higher in southern section

Limited landscaping throughout area
Development Considerations
Requirement to improve landscaping of existing neighbourhood, there are accessibility issues to natural and semi-natural open space for existing residents
Requirements for new amenity green spaces
Parking solutions that do not affect the street scene
Extensions and improvements of cycle and pedestrian links
Two wildlife sites
Borders Rectory Lane and St Nicholas Conservation Area
Borders Weston Lane and Botany Bay Lane, both Ancient Lanes.

Symonds Green
General Characteristics
Area of rural settlement layout at Symonds Green
New town neighbourhood surrounding
Modern, late 20 th Century development to north and east of area
Generally, high density and low scale development, typically 2 storeys – exception at neighbourhood centre – 32dph

Mature landscaping throughout area
Typically no on-street parking
Development Considerations
Landscaping
Parking solutions that do not affect the street scene
Extensions and improvements of cycle and pedestrian links
Several wildlife sites
Symonds Green Conservation Area
Listed Buildings around Symonds Green
Ancient Lane at Meadway and Fishers Green Lane
Areas of archaeological significance at Fishers Green and Symonds Green, as advised by HCC

Appendix B - Key shopfront components

The following are key shopfront design components you need to consider when making alterations to an existing shopfront:

Window Displays

- Shop frontages should be largely glazed to maintain a window display. Solid frontages (including obscured glass) will be discouraged.
- Vertical glazing bars (mullions) should be used to subdivide large windows in traditional shopfronts to help visually relate the shopfront with the upper elevations of the building.

Entrances

- The design of the door should be in keeping with the other elements of the shopfront. The solid bottom panel should align with the stallriser. The top of the door should align with the transom (if present).
- Decorative tiling should be retained (if present) and reinstatement is encouraged.
- All new build shop units and shopfronts should be designed to be fully accessible to everyone.
- In the case of existing buildings, particularly where a new shop front is proposed, the following guidance should be followed:
 - Shops that have a change in level from pavement to shop floor surface can usually incorporate ramped access into or within the shop.
 - Entrance doors should be accessible to all, particularly wheelchair users and people with limited manual dexterity. 1000mm minimum clear door width in new buildings and 775mm door width in existing buildings where a new shop front or alterations to a shop front are proposed.

Shopfront Recess

- Existing shopfront recesses should be retained.
- Removable timber or metal lattice style shutters are often more appropriate to protect recessed shop entrances than horizontally-operated lattice security gates, but they should not extend across windows.
- New recesses in shopfronts will be strongly discouraged due to their potential for attracting anti-social behaviour.

Fascias

- The fascia should be of a suitable size and proportion in relation to the building and should not normally extend above the cornice or below the architrave as it would upset the overall balance and proportions of a shopfront or parade
- Fascia signs should not obscure or damage existing architectural features. Deep box fascias which project beyond the shopfront frame should be avoided
- Lettering on fascia signs should be proportionate to the scale of the shopfront. To aid identification, fascia signs should include the street number of the premises
- Where a shopfront and fascia extend across two or more shop unit bays, it is not acceptable to remove the intervening pilasters as it would:
 - weaken the frame's visual support to the upper floors; and

- disrupt the character and rhythm of a shopping frontage created by the widths of individual shopfronts

Pilasters

- New pilasters are preferably placed in line with solid wall, not windows above, to emphasise their function. This is particularly important in the case of shopping frontages on sloping sites where existing stepped profiles of fascias and stallrisers should be preserved or reintroduced wherever possible.

Stallrisers

- Stallrisers consist of solid elements below shop windows. They form a base to the shopfront display, and prevent the glazing from being damaged or soiled.
- Where stallrisers are provided, they should be at least 300mm high or to the top of the pilaster base or door panel and faced in appropriate materials for the context. They should not provide ledges that can be sat upon. Glazing should be brought to the front of a stallriser.
- Stallrisers should be retained and generally incorporated to any new shopfront on a period building.

Colour and materials

- Materials should be chosen for their durability and appropriateness to their location. Traditional materials such as timber, stone and render are the most appropriate for new shopfronts, particularly for listed buildings and in conservation areas.
- More contemporary materials such as colour-coated steel, aluminium and bronze instead of timber may be appropriate in some circumstances.
- Existing glazed brickwork or tiling should be retained.
- Colour schemes for shopfronts and in particular the projecting framework should be carefully considered, particularly in conservation areas and for listed buildings.
- Proposals should be accompanied by full details of materials, finishes and colours (or sample and specification cards).

Folding shopfronts

- Folding shopfronts are not generally acceptable, particularly those on historic buildings such as listed buildings and those in Conservation Areas. When open, they erode the appearance of the shopfront, creating a visual void, and can increase disturbance to neighbouring properties, particularly in the case of food and drink premises. When closed they appear as a row of doors rather than a shopfront. This creates a heavier appearance than a shopfront mullion and reduces the area of glass in the shopfront.

Lightwells / grilles

- Pavement lights or small lightwells covered with metal grilles are typically found in front of shopfronts. These provide light into the areas beneath whilst allowing shoppers close inspection of the window display.
- Creating open lightwells with railings in front of a shopfront is not generally acceptable as it prevents window shopping and disrupts the buildings relationship to the rhythm of the street. This is also the case if the shopfront has been converted into residential accommodation.

Signs, advertisements and hoardings

- Shop and business signs should relate well to the character, scale and architectural features of the building and respect their local context.
- Properties should only have one main fascia sign and one ancillary projecting or hanging sign per street frontage. Two projecting signs may be appropriate in cases of large shopfronts stretching across two or more shop units.
- Too many adverts/signs on a property contribute to visual clutter and can detract from the appearance of the street scene. Whilst signs that are unsympathetically designed can cause significant harm to the building and the local townscape.

Projecting and hanging signs

- Projecting and hanging signs should normally be level with the fascia rather than below or above it. They should be positioned to the side of the shopfront at fascia level.
- Signs at upper floor levels will be discouraged. Advertising for upper floor premises by lettering on windows or by suspended banners on large frontages will only be considered acceptable where advertising a specific event for a temporary period.
- Advert signs, including those on canopies/blinds, should:
 - be considered as an integral part of a shopfront or building, designed in from the outset with new structures; and
 - be in harmony with the existing building, and neighbouring ones, in terms of their proportions, design and materials.

Canopies, awnings and blinds

- Blinds can add colour and interest to the street scene, however, it is important to ensure that they do not dominate a shopfront or shop parade.
- Shopfront canopies and blinds are only likely to be acceptable where they are:
 - retractable;
 - traditional canvas;
 - blind box integrated with the overall design;
 - attached between the fascia and shopfront; and be flush with the fascia level.
- In general all blinds should be designed and installed to:
 - ensure public safety;
 - incorporate a minimum of 2.3 metres between the bottom of the blind and the pavement; and
 - incorporate a minimum of 1 metre between the blind and the kerb edge.



Retractable

- Retracting awnings and blinds do not normally require planning permission, although they may require advertisement consent in certain cases. They should:
 - not obscure or damage the fascia and other important features of the shopfront and buildings;
 - be appropriate in position, design and materials to the character and scale of both the shopfront, building and locality and not have conflicting and over-dominant shapes.
- Fixed canopies require planning permission. Acrylic / plastic "Dutch blinds", or similarly reflective materials will be strongly discouraged, due to their bulk and materials and the resulting visual clutter.
- Canvas blinds are often characteristic features of historic shopfronts and should therefore be retained or replaced using a similar design – acrylic or plastic blinds are not normally suitable.
- Canopies or blinds with signage (a letter or words for advertising purposes), are treated as advertisements and therefore [advertisement consent](#) will be required rather than planning permission.

Shopfront security

Security shutters can be visually unattractive and create a 'dead', hostile appearance (especially out of opening hours), which can affect the commercial viability of an area and harm the pedestrian experience. We want to minimise the impacts on the appearance of the shopfront, the building and the character of the area.

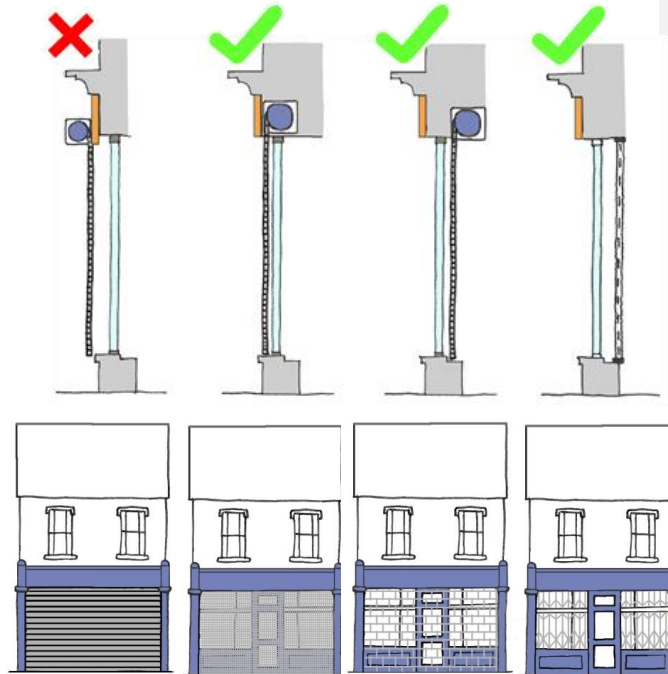
Shutters

- SBC strongly encourages internal rather than external shopfront security measures. Other forms of enhanced shopfront security should be considered instead of external shutters. For example, improved internal lighting, alarm systems, the use of toughened or laminated glass, etc.
- In cases where external measures (shutters, grilles or alarm boxes, etc.) are proposed they would only be permitted where they do not harm the character of shopfronts, such as internal brick bond grilles or collapsible gates.

- External security shutters will normally require [planning permission](#), whilst internal shutters normally do not. Where internal shutters are installed they should be set back to leave a window display.
- In the case of listed buildings, the installation of any shopfront security measures, external or internal, will require [listed building consent](#). On listed buildings, there will be a presumption against the use of external security shutters and grilles in favour of internal.
- Where an external shutter is proposed it may only be considered acceptable provided it is integrated into the shopfront in terms of design, materials and colour. External measures should avoid using solid roller shutters. This includes the 'pin-hole' versions that rely upon internal illumination for any transparent effect. These designs have negative environmental impacts including:
 - obscuring the shopfront and hiding window displays;
 - attracting graffiti;
 - preventing natural surveillance;
 - creating a hostile and unsafe appearance in streets and shopping centres; and
 - being visually unattractive.

Grilles

- Roller grilles are preferable to solid or pin-hole shutters as they provide security without obscuring window displays and allow views of the shop interior, which enhances surveillance and security.
- Removable or collapsible grilles can be used internally or externally and in both cases allow a certain degree of visibility. These only require [planning permission](#) if installed externally. However, [listed building consent](#) will also be required for internal grilles in listed buildings.
- Removable grilles are expected to remain in place only outside trading hours and should be stored inside at all other times. Any fixings should be discretely placed and must not harm architectural features or mouldings.
- Where there is a recessed entrance it is preferable to install 'Concertina style gate' between the openings.



Shutter boxes

Shutter boxes should be discrete and should not project forward of the fascia or obscure any architectural features. They should be concealed wherever possible, for example set behind or within the fascia panel, the guide rails concealed within the frame of the shopfront and the shutter should close onto the stallriser.

Finishes

All grilles and shutters should have an acceptable finish. They should:

- be coloured (painted, powder coated or stove enamelled) to match the rest of the shopfront, including signs.
- not be uncoated shutters, galvanised steel, a milled finish or anodised aluminium as these are not considered acceptable finishes.

In the exceptional cases where solid shutters are acceptable, original designs by artists will be encouraged provided they respect their location, particularly in Conservation Areas.

A-boards

- The licensing of portable advertising boards on the pavement (public highway) should be carefully controlled. Pedestrians can be put at risk through poorly sited advertisements.
- Anyone proposing to place portable advertising boards on a highway that is maintained at public expense will require a [highways licence](#) from the Highways Authority. Where it is proposed to place a portable advertising board on a privately maintained forecourt, over which the public have limited access, a licence will not be required.

Outdoor seating & spill out displays

- Many shops, particularly cafes, restaurants, greengrocers or hardware shops use an area in front of the shop for tables and chairs or to exhibit goods for sale.
- Such areas must ensure that fire tracks throughout pedestrian areas are kept clear to ensure access for emergency vehicles. Outdoor areas may require [planning permission](#) and advice should be sought from the Development Management Team. Care should be taken to avoid obstruction and to allow access for all users.
- Properties wishing to use the public realm for tables, chairs or to exhibit goods for sale must ensure that waste and recycling is managed to avoid it escaping and causing street litter. Businesses have a duty of care to dispose of their waste correctly.

Burglar Alarms

- Burglar alarm devices must be sited so that they are both adequately visible as a deterrent but do not detract from the visual character of the shopfront.

Cash machines

- Cash machines require [planning permission](#) and, in the case of listed buildings, [listed building consent](#). Illuminated advertising for cash machines should be discreet and is subject to [advertisement consent](#).
- Cash machines are only likely to be acceptable provided they are:
 - treated as an integral part of a building's design wherever possible;
 - not dominant in the shop display frontage in terms of size or materials;
 - positioned sensitively and not be located where queuing could cause problems;
 - with minimal amount of display material;
 - located on the busiest elevation of a building to reduce the risk of robbery;
 - fully accessible to people with disabilities in both location and detailed arrangement; and
 - in existing bank buildings of traditional design they are most successfully inserted into existing stone recesses or beneath window bays.

All advertisements

All advertisements affect the appearance of the building, structure or place where they are displayed, to the extent that they can sometimes be the most dominant feature in an urban setting.

Guidance on advertisements is contained within [Outdoor advertisements and signs: A guide for advertisers](#).

The guidance in this document should still be applied as a matter of good practice where advertisements have deemed consent and do not require formal advertisement consent.

Advertisements and signs should:

- respect the form, fabric, design and scale of the host building and setting.
- serve as an integral part of the immediate surroundings and be constructed of materials that are sympathetic to the host building and the surrounding area.

Interesting and unique styles of advertisements and signs will be considered acceptable where they are compatible with the host buildings and surrounding environment.

Generally, advertisements will:

- only be acceptable at fascia level or below.
- not be considered acceptable where they impact upon public safety, such as being hazardous to vehicular traffic (e.g. block sight lines, emit glare) or pedestrian traffic (e.g. disrupt the free flow of pedestrian movement).



https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/11499/326679.pdf

- require detailed consideration if advertisements are proposed in conservation areas and on or near listed buildings given the sensitivity and historic nature of these areas or buildings. Any advertisements on or near a listed building or in a conservation area must not harm their character and appearance and must not obscure or damage specific architectural features of buildings.

Advertising on street furniture

Free standing signs and signs on street furniture will not normally be accepted where they contribute to visual and physical clutter and create a hindrance to movement along the pavement or pedestrian footway.

Illumination

The illumination levels of advertisements should be in accordance with the standards set by the [Institute of Lighting Professionals Guide to Illuminated Advertisements](#).

The type, appearance and method (internal, external, lettering, neon, etc.) of illuminated signs should:

- be sympathetic to the design of the building on which it is located.
- be determined by the design of the building.
- not be flashing or intermittent, whether internal or external.
- be unobtrusively sized and sited.
- be fixed and sized as discreetly as possible, particularly spotlights and trough lights.

Corporate designs involving internally illuminated signs may need to be modified where they are considered unsuitable, especially in residential areas, or conservation areas, or on listed buildings.

To ensure that an advertisement does not become unduly dominant in the streetscene, disturb adjoining residents at night, or cause safety hazards to drivers, consideration should be given to the:

- intensity of illumination;
- surface area to be illuminated; and
- positioning and colours.

Internally illuminated box signs are discouraged. Generally, the internal illumination of individual letters, rather than the whole fascia or projecting sign on a shopfront, will be more appropriate.

Hoardings

Where [advertisement consent](#) is required for the display of hoardings, the following guidance will be applicable.

Advertisement hoardings or posters will not usually be acceptable, or will be carefully controlled:

- in predominantly residential areas.
- in conservation areas.
- on or near listed buildings to ensure that they do not detract from the areas and building's character and appearance.

However, if an area has a mix of uses or is predominantly in commercial use some poster or hoarding advertising may be acceptable where they satisfactorily relate to the scale of the host building or feature and its surroundings.

They should be designed and positioned as an integral feature of the building. Hoardings will not be considered acceptable:

- in locations where they may prevent or significantly damage views or obscure light;
- where they are forward of the face of adjoining buildings;
- where they project above roof ridge/eaves level;
- where they obscure architectural features or landmarks (including windows or window recesses); and
- on side walls where they would be unduly dominant.

Temporary poster hoardings used to screen buildings or construction sites while work is being carried out have deemed consent under [The Town and Country Planning \(Control of Advertisements\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#) for commercial, industrial or business uses only. This deemed consent is not available for any residential development and is also not available in conservation areas.

The impact of illumination will be taken into consideration and where it is considered to be a nuisance or out of character with the area then it will not be considered acceptable.

Shroud / banner advertisements

Shroud advertisements come in a range of forms but are generally large- scale and can cover the entire elevation of a building. As a result of the scale and size of shroud advertisements their appearance can create a conflict with the surrounding environment and the streetscene and, where the advertisement partially obscures a building, the visual appearance of the building itself. However, they can help to shield unsightly construction work.

Therefore, given the scale and size of shroud advertisements these types of advertisement proposals will only be considered acceptable primarily:

- in commercial areas
- where they screen buildings under construction, alteration or refurbishment

If considered acceptable they will only be allowed for a temporary period and should be removed upon completion of the works or at the end of the approved period, whichever is sooner. Longer consents will require additional [advertisement consent](#).

The erection of a banner or shroud advertisement may require a specific licence from the [Highways Authority](#). If [advertisement consent](#) is granted for a banner or shroud, this does not indicate that a licence will also be granted.

Shroud on scaffolding will only be permitted where:

- the scaffolding covers the entire elevation of the building and the netting on the scaffolding contains a 1:1 image of the completed building which is undergoing construction work (scaffolding is only to be erected for the purposes of carrying out building works and will be removed upon completion of the works); and
- the advertisement covers no more than 20% of each elevation and is not fragmented. It must respect the architectural form and scale of the host building. Where shroud and banner advertisements are considered acceptable on listed buildings or in conservation areas the advertisement should not cover more than 10% of each elevation and should not be fragmented. The location of the advertisement on the shroud will depend on the character of the local built form and the nature of views within it.
- in some highly sensitive locations or where the building plays a particularly important role in the appearance of the area, a visual representation of the building that is shrouded may be considered necessary to mitigate any harm to the appearance of the area.
- they relate to landmark or unique buildings, such as festival venues, museums, and do not detract from the appearance and form of the host building or the surrounding environment.
- in some commercial areas flags or banners may be considered a suitable form of display. Within residential areas, conservation areas, and on or near listed buildings we will be primarily concerned with safeguarding the amenity, character and appearance of these areas and buildings and therefore it is unlikely that such advertisements will be supported.

Appendix C – Residential building requirements

Building design and materials

Building features such as windows, roof pitches, overhangs, gables and chimneys should all be consistent with those of the existing property. For example, if the roof of the main building is pitched, then the extension should have a pitched roof at the same angle. However, this does not mean that contemporary design will not be acceptable, but it should respect local character and not detract from the original building.

The materials used should draw on the colour, type and texture of those used for the original house.

Privacy and outlook

Extensions should:

- be designed and orientated in relation to that of neighbouring properties
- not adversely affect the outlook from neighbouring dwellings
- not result in any significant overlooking to neighbouring houses and gardens.

The minimum separation distances set out in respect of new dwellings will be equally applied to proposals for extensions:

No of Storeys	Type of Separation	Min. 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 a 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

Scale

Generally, the extension should appear deferential to the original house; smaller in width, height and depth than the existing property, but still using the same proportions.

Sunlight, daylight and overshadowing

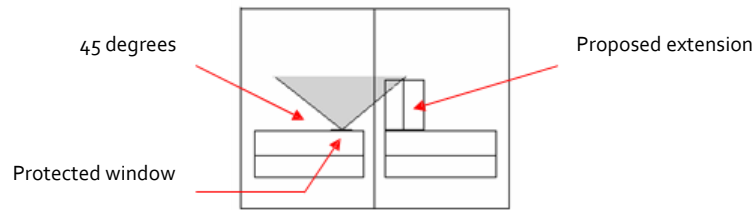
Extensions should be designed to ensure that a satisfactory level of sunlight and daylight is provided for the occupants of both existing dwellings and those adjoining or nearby.

Where there is doubt that adequate sunlight and daylight will be achieved, indicators will be used to assess the amount of light reaching a new or existing window. The Building Research Establishment (BRE) guidelines "[Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A Guide to Good Practice](#)", ~~third~~ ^{second} edition, will be used. It provides guidance on acceptable levels of daylight and sunlight within existing and proposed developments. The indicators will not be applied to all schemes but only to those where there is doubt that adequate lighting may be achieved. This can be established by undertaking a 45 degree test or a simple "25 degree ~~rule-of-thumb~~" test using the BRE guidelines. BRE's third edition of guidelines was published in 2022 and the current recommendations for effects on neighbouring properties and open spaces is untouched. The major changes in the third edition will be to assessment of proposed developments with the current daylight (VSC, ADF, DD) and sunlight (APSH) tests being superseded by the new tests.

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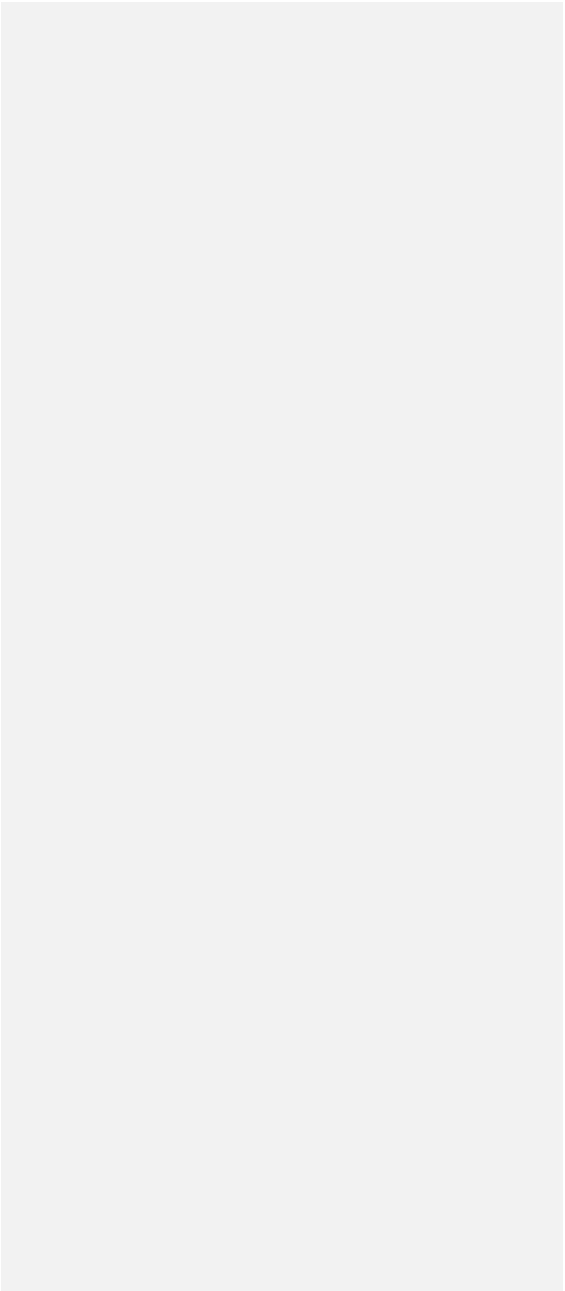
The 45 degree test

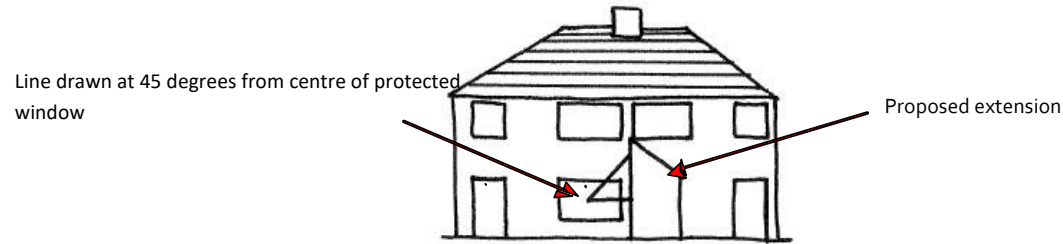
This rule applies to all types of dwellings. Firstly consider the plan layout of the proposed extension (see drawing A below). From the mid-point of a neighbour's protected window project two lines at 45 degrees from the centre of the window.



TEST 1 - the proposed extension should not project beyond the '45 degree line' into the neighbour's protected area

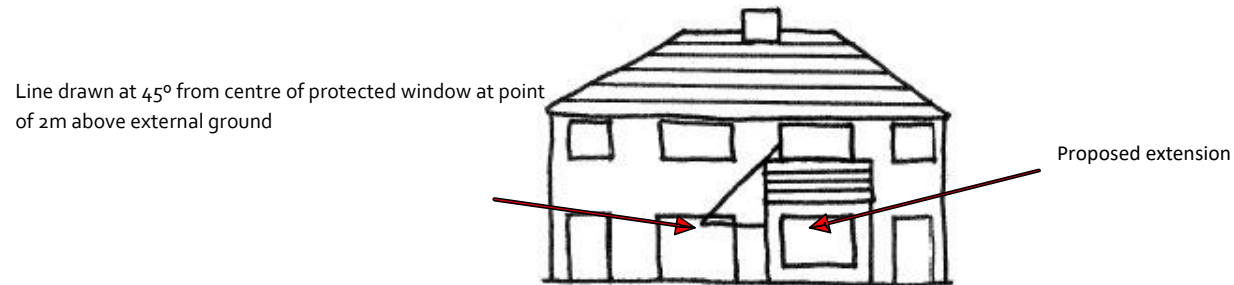
Secondly consider the elevation of the proposed extension (see drawing B below). From the centre of the neighbour's protected window draw a line at 45 degrees to the horizontal.





TEST 2 - no part of the proposed extension should encroach beyond this 45 degree line

If the 'protected window' is a floor to ceiling window (e.g. patio doors) then the 45 degree line is drawn from a point on the horizontal centre of the window at 2 metres above ground level

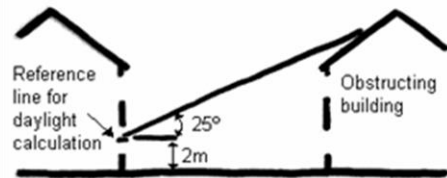


Extensions that fail both 'tests' will need to be assessed against the [BRE sunlight and daylight guidelines](#).

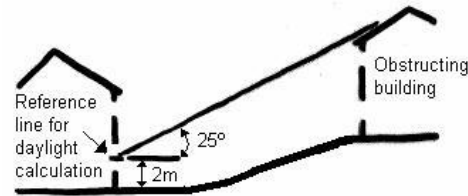
The 25 degree test

From a point 2 metres above ground level at the horizontal centre of the protected window draw a line perpendicular to the window and at an angle of 25 degrees to the horizontal (see the drawing below). If the proposed extension cuts this line then it is likely to interfere with the diffuse skylight enjoyed by the existing building. This being the case the proposed extension is likely to cause problems of loss of light and it will be necessary to undertake a detailed sunlight and daylight assessment.

BRE Guidelines: 25 Degree Test



Section in plane perpendicular to the main face of the building.



On sloping sites overshadowing is more of a problem and greater spacing is required to obtain the same access to daylight for buildings lower down the slope.

Garden size

If proposals for extensions result in the loss of garden space, SBC will ensure that a reasonable private garden area commensurate with the size of the property is retained to serve the dwelling.

Landscaping

Proposals for extensions should not result in the loss of **attractive** trees or hedgerows. If it is necessary to remove landscaping, appropriate replacements will be required. This will help to maintain biodiversity in line with sustainability objectives.

Front extensions

Generally, modest single storey front extensions will be acceptable subject to the following criteria:

- extensions to a semi-detached or terraced house that abut the boundary of another house, should project no more than 1.5 metres. A greater projection may be acceptable for detached houses;
- the shape and projection of the extension should remain subordinate in views along the street and maintain the harmony or balance between existing houses. It should respect the architectural integrity of groups of homes.
- the extension should maintain the amount of parking space available on the site below our adopted maximum standards specified in the [Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD](#). Where the extension incorporates a garage it should ensure a minimum distance of 5.5 metres between the garage doors and the back edge of the footway, so that a parking space is retained.

It is also important that if any hardstanding is added/rebuilt it is created using permeable materials.

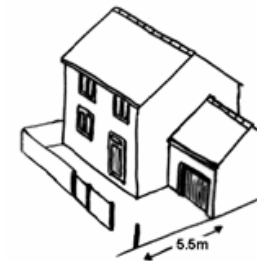
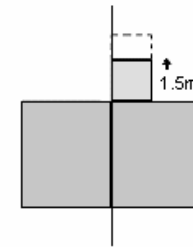
Two storey front extensions will generally not be acceptable, as they are likely to have a significant impact on the street scene, as well as seriously affecting the outlook and light of adjoining properties. In circumstances where these impacts will not occur, a two storey extension may be approved.

Porches

The addition of a porch to a property generally falls under permitted development. However, where planning permission is required it will be subject to the same criteria as front extensions, listed above.

The entrance to a house is its focal point; porches:

- can have a significant effect on a property's appearance;
- must be carefully designed so that it follows good examples from other properties along the street
- must be in keeping with the design of the dwelling;
- must not be located too close to windows.



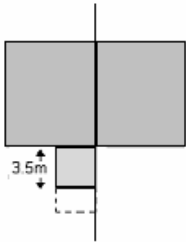
Rear extensions

Rear extensions generally have the least impact, as they do not usually affect the street scene. They can often, therefore, be the simplest way of extending a home. The most important factors to consider when assessing rear extensions are the length and height of the extension and its proximity to the neighbouring property.

Single storey rear extensions

Often, single storey rear extensions do not require planning permission; particularly if there have been no previous extensions on the original property.

This type of rear extension will be acceptable providing the following criteria are met:



- extensions within 1 metre of the side boundary of the house should not exceed 3.5 metres in depth.
- side windows should not cause overlooking of the adjoining property and subsequent loss of privacy.
- flat roofs should not be designed for use as a balcony.

Two storey rear extensions

Two storey rear extensions usually have a greater impact on adjoining properties and area. These will only be permitted where the following criteria are met:

- extensions on attached houses should not project more than 2.5 metres when they the side boundary of the house. On detached houses the degree of separation from the adjoining into account.
- side windows should have a lower sill level of at least 1.7 metres above the internal floor level of the serve unless they are obscure glazed and fixed below 1.7metres.



the appearance of the



are within 1 metre of house will be taken



room which they

Both single and two storey rear extensions

Exceptions to the above criteria may be made when:

- joint or simultaneous applications are made by applicants in adjoining dwellings;
- where adjoining properties have been extended already;
- the existing houses are in a staggered line, the depth and width of the extension should be reduced to compensate;
- the extension would be to the north of a neighbouring dwelling; or

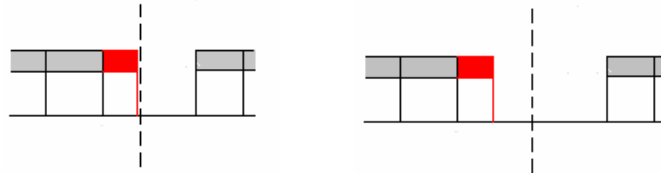
- changes in ground level increase the apparent size or impact of the extension on light and outlook, the depth and or width of the extension must normally be reduced to compensate.

Side extensions

Extensions to the side will be considered in the same way as criteria for front and rear extensions in terms of their projection forwards or backwards relative to adjoining dwellings. Special account will also be taken of the following criteria:

- the importance of the space between houses in establishing the character of the area and the need to prevent a cramped appearance
- a terraced appearance should not be created, and the rhythm of the street should not be compromised;
- the introduction of overlooking windows over a previously private area of an adjoining dwelling will not be acceptable
- where the side extension would come closer to a road or footpath it should not be overbearing or create an alleyway effect and should respect the context of the street scene;
- in certain circumstances, for two storey side extensions, it may be appropriate for the first floor element to be set-back from the front elevation to reflect the rhythm of the street scene and maintain the character and appearance of the area; and

in two storey extensions a space of at least 1 metre must normally be retained between the new side wall and the boundary of the site to prevent a terracing effect and to prevent an extension to one dwelling removing the ability of the adjoining property to similarly extend.



A 1m space has not been retained. A terracing effect would be created if the neighbouring property was to also extend

A space of over 1m has been retained. The neighbouring property can extend without creating a terracing effect.

Roof extensions

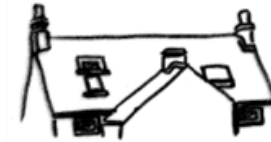
Roof extensions which project beyond the plane of any roof slope which forms a principal elevation and fronts a highway or which increase the height of the roof above the existing ridgeline will require [planning permission](#). Similarly, roof extensions to dwellings located within a conservation area will require [planning permission](#).

The addition of dormer windows can have a significant effect on the appearance of a property, as well as impacting upon the street scene as a whole.

Light and ventilation can often be provided by rooflights; these are less visually intrusive, reduce overlooking problems, and are also normally permitted development.

Where a roof alteration is proposed, the following criteria should be applied:

- the extension should remain below the existing ridgeline and must be kept as low as possible;
- the extension should be less than half of the roof slope;
- the extension should not extend off the main outside walls of the house;
- a minimum 500mm wide area of original roof should be retained at the bottom and both sides of the dormer;
- the roof extension should not extend below the height of the new window sills;
- the raising of the ridge height of a dwelling to accommodate a loft conversion will not normally be considered acceptable;
- in terraced houses the proposal must respect the integrity of the group or the street scene. We will discourage the introduction of such extensions, where there are no other examples within the street scene;
- the shape and size of the windows should reflect the proportions and finish of windows in the house, as well as lining up vertically with the fenestration on the property;
- the new windows should not overlook windows or private open space of adjoining houses or increase overlooking unreasonably. In exceptional circumstances, windows containing frosted glass and permanently fixed closed may be acceptable; and



Rooflights often offer a favourable lighting solution. However, these rooflights are not in line with existing windows, and are uncoordinated in terms of size and style.

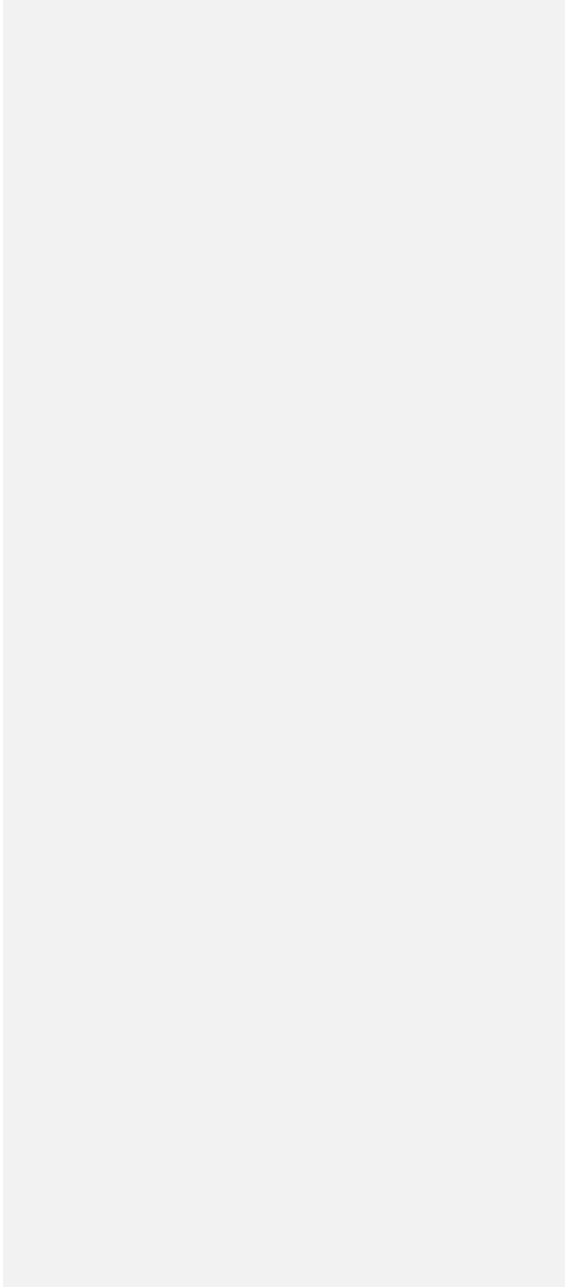
- where possible dormer windows or roof extensions should be designed with a pitched roof. Large flat-roofed dormer windows proposed in houses with pitched roofs will generally not be acceptable.



Dormer windows work well here, they do not over dominate the roof, line up vertically with the existing windows, and are of a consistent style and size.



The flat roof dormer is visually intrusive and does not follow the principles of good design.



Stevenage Borough Council

The Draft Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document

Consultation Statement

19th September 2022 – 31st October 2022



Introduction

This document has been prepared to show how the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 were adhered to during the production of the Stevenage Borough Council Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document.

The SPD will be a material consideration in planning decisions and the purpose of the SPD is to give further guidance and clarity regarding policies SP8: Good design and GD1: High quality design of the adopted Stevenage Borough Local Plan.

Town and Country Planning Regulations

The SPD has been produced in accordance with Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The most relevant regulations relating to the process are as follows:

- Regulation 12: Regulation 12(a) requires the Council to produce a consultation statement before adoption of the SPD, this must set out who was consulted, a summary of the issues raised, and how these issues were incorporated in to the SPD.
- Regulation 12(b) requires the Council to publish the documents for a minimum 4 week consultation, specify the date when responses should be received and identify the address to which responses should be sent.
- Regulation 35: Regulation 12 states that when seeking representations on an SPD, documents must be available in accordance with Regulation 35. This requires the Council to make documents available by taking the following steps;
 - Make the document available at the principal office and other places within the area that the Council considers appropriate;
 - Publish the document on the Council's website

Details of consultation

Following approval at a meeting of the SBC Executive, consultation was undertaken on the Draft Design Guidance SPD for a period of six weeks, from 19th September to 31st October 2022. Consultation was undertaken in line with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. Consultees who have previously signed up to the planning consultation list were contacted by email, or by post where no email address had been provided.

The consultation was also advertised on the Council's website home page and Planning Policy pages. It also appeared on the Stevenage Borough Council social media pages and a hard copy of the consultation document was available at the Council offices and Customer Service Centre.

Representations were submitted via the Council's website:

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/have-your-say/planning-policy-consultations> or were sent via email to Planning.Policy@Stevenage.gov.uk.

Who was consulted?

A list of consultees is provided in Appendix 1.

What were the main issues raised during the consultation?

The main topics raised during the consultation were:

Response	Reasons for Amendment
Homes and bedroom sizes	The National Described Space Standard from national government will be included within the SPD as a guide.
Appropriate buildings and forms – reflecting NPPF guidance	The Built Form section will be reviewed in line with recommendation and amendment made in line with the NPPF.
Use of Sustainable Materials - Resources	The use of recycled aggregates within the design stage is a valid request and this will be reflected where appropriate in the Design SPD and align the SPD with HCC's Minerals and Waste Local Plan.
Refer to new and updated documents from Sports England, HCC and Historic England	To ensure the robust nature of the document Incorporate guidance and best practice from Historic England, HCC and Sport England
Embed 'Active Design' into the document	Help to promote a more physically active and mentally stimulating environment in all aspects of design.
Review the proposed species for street tree planting	Biosecurity regulations, for example Ash Dieback.
Review references to hedgerows	The use of the word 'attractive' implies negativity to something that is aesthetically unattractive, would be more appropriate to use alternative language such as 'important' or 'valued'.
Socially Inclusive – Homes for older people	Incorporate SPD in line with HAPPI standards
New guidance from BRE on daylight/sunlight best practice	SPD will update the guidance in accordance with this new document

How has the Council responded to these issues and what changes has the Council made to the SPD document as a result?

The main concepts and principles of the Draft SPD have been maintained and brought forward into the draft revised version of the SPD taking into account a number of significant amendments suggested by respondents' comments.

A complete schedule of consultation responses, the Council's response to the comments and the areas of changes proposed in the SPD are provided overleaf:

ID	Name/Organisation	Comment ID	Theme of comment	Comments	SBC response and amendments
1	Member of the public	DESIGN - 001	General	Apologies if I missed this point in the document but I saw no reference to the minimum size of bedrooms. Over the last year I have visited numerous new builds and I am appalled at the size of the bedrooms. Most of these bedrooms don't allow for sufficient storage cupboards without having to squeeze past the bed etc. It is a travesty that people are paying hundreds of thousands of pounds for such 'rabbit hutches'. The developers just need to provide an extra 1m x 1m to each bedroom to make rooms practical and pleasurable to live in and allow people to sufficient storage for normal use.	Comments noted and acknowledged. The National Described Space Standard from national government will be included within the SPD as a guide.
2	Member of the public	DESIGN - 002	Design - Homes and Bedroom sizes	Most of the statements are of the blindingly obvious - A high quality environment is essential for providing a good quality of life for residents, Subways or footbridges should be well lit and as short and as wide as possible. Traffic calming not only aids pedestrian safety, but by encouraging slower driving it can also help to reduce vehicle emission levels...Play spaces for children and young people should be provided across the borough... Green roofs (is this to help compensate for all those allowed to block pave their front gardens for parking?) No thanks. I'll stick with tiles. The green roof development of homes near the roundabout at Welwyn North looks an eyesore. Overall, it will be interesting to see if the council practises what it preaches. Past evidence is not encouraging.	Comments noted and acknowledged. We look to improve things through new initiatives and will continue to be open to new ideas in order to assist with providing a high-quality environment for all.

3	Member of the public	DESIGN - 003	Heritage and Movement M.5	<p>lots of use of 'encourage' and 'principle' but not much definition of legal 'teeth'. Developers will ride all over this.</p> <p>I have no idea what the 10 are - the index says they are on page 9 but there are not 10 so</p> <p>The Built Form section contains guidance on tall buildings - not one of which has been applied in Stevenage today or in plans currently approved but not yet built.</p> <p>Section M talks about cycle paths but the current network does not integrate well - some sections are in inverse form (pedestrian on left) and new installations are moving to mixed use - just a wider pavement basically. This is not a safe environment.</p> <p>Section M5 also sets out what streets should be the original Stevenage estate separated car and people. There is no evidence of this thinking in new estates being planned now.</p> <p>Overall this document is a lovely piece of marketing spin but the reality of achieving some of this over what a developer wants to build is a flight of fancy. Look at The Icon site and the debacle and the grotesque designs.</p>	<p>Local Plan review will incorporate many of these concerns and local plan policies will be examined to ensure they are sound. This SPD is to provide guidance and where possible direct to guidance already issued. Page 8 has the diagram with 10 design characteristics, but this will be made clear within the document. The chapters have been titled with the 10 characteristics and they start from page 9. Tall buildings - going forward into the local plan review - sustainable travel and LTP4/5, will look into the problems with the current cycle ways</p>
4	Member of the public	DESIGN - 004	Movement - M.3	<p>In M.3 you say "routes for pedestrians and cyclists run alongside vehicular routes, but ... non-vehicular traffic is forced to travel under a series of underpasses in order to cross the roads. This makes it easier to travel by car, rather than promoting the benefits of sustainable transport. It also creates safety concerns, as some sections of routes receive no natural surveillance".</p>	<p>The use of sustainable travel is an important point, and this comment is noted. Our Mobility Strategy (2016), Future Town, Future Transport (2019) and Walking/Cycling Strategy (2018) work towards a modal shift and sustainable transport methods to encourage walking and cycling. This is being pushed further with Stevenage Sustainable Travel Town (STT) Implementation Plan. The key difference from previous initiatives is that the Sustainable Travel Town will fully integrate behavioural change techniques with infrastructure improvements. This will assist with the overall vision for the delivery of growth plans, sustainable development and promoting a healthy and active community. Where appropriate, the Design SPD will incorporate these comments to further support these initiatives.</p>

4	Member of the public	DESIGN - 005	Movement - M.18	<p>And in M.18 you say "Stevenage also comprises numerous subways where segregated footpaths and cycleways run under the main vehicle roads. Whilst being a useful way of ensuring the flow of traffic on both the cycle/pedestrian network and that on the road, these can cause safety concerns resulting in these routes being underutilised."</p> <p>That is mostly nonsense. Being 'forced' under an underpass is a major safety feature, as it keeps pedestrians & cyclists separate from cars, meaning it's impossible to be run over by a car. As a cyclist I feel MUCH safer thanks to this, and I think this safety-from-cars *promotes* sustainable transport. We should keep following the example of the Netherlands, whose very high bicycle usage is partly due to them keeping cyclists separate from cars (including underpasses where possible). I have no safety concerns from non-surveillance on the MAIN pedestrian/cyclist routes, as these tend to be fairly straight & so there tends to be high visibility from other people using these routes. There ARE exceptions, mainly along Gunnels Wood Road, where you can be hidden from view by sharp corners + deep underpasses, but that's more to do with poor design/planning & does not mean the whole concept of underpasses is a bad idea. (Don't throw out the baby with the bath water.)</p> <p>I presume that underpasses are more expensive to build, and that's the real for the nonsense arguments against them. I feel that people's lives are more important: Crossing any vehicle road has a relatively high risk of injury & death, for both pedestrians & cyclists. Even on Gunnels Wood Road, because the vehicle roads are busy, during the day you are clearly still much safer taking an underpass than if you had to dodge cars while crossing a busy road</p>	Lighting and anti-social behaviour are an issue but there is work ongoing with the Sustainable Travel Town (STT) and cultural and heritage strategy to improve vibrancy, which will provide good examples/case studies. Work will be ongoing to improve these issues and work towards encouraging walking and cycling. The comments are noted.
5	Member of the public	DESIGN - 006	Movement - M.20	<p>In M.20 you say "Subways or footbridges should be well lit and as short and as wide as possible. They should be visible throughout (the exit should be visible from the entrance) and CCTV should be installed."</p> <p>I strongly agree with this. Also, good lighting & CCTV are solutions to the few cases where past design/planning means there is poor visibility due to sharp corners + deep underpasses.</p>	Support is noted.
5	Member of the public	DESIGN - 007	General and typo	<p>Para M.11 typo - 4th line "behaviour change programme sand" needs to be changed to "programmes and"</p>	Noted and amendment will be provided.
6	Member of the public	DESIGN - 008	Context, Identity and Built Form - Preserving Stevenage's Heritage	<p>More emphasis on the design principles behind the now historic landscape of the New Town. The landscape designer Gordon Patterson's wish to include existing trees to give continuity, and the choice of the Norway Maple as the Stevenage NT signature trees. More emphasis on the older designed landscapes of Shephalbury and other sites incorporated into the New Town and their heritage. To be referenced in any future developments</p>	Noted and as per amendment (Tree section with Herts. County Council comments)

7

Taylor Wimpey and
Persimmon HomesDESIGN -
009

General

Paragraph 1.1 states that the draft Design Guidance supports the strategic and detailed policies in the Stevenage Borough Local Plan (SBLP) and that it forms a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which will be as an additional 'material consideration' in planning decisions. It explains that the guidance replaces the Stevenage Design Guide 2009; updating advice where appropriate and providing new guidance on matters introduced or strengthened in the SBLP, including long-term sustainability through the use of durable, low maintenance materials.

We welcome the fact that in paragraph 1.5, the Guide says that design principles are for all developments, and refers to the fact that the document is accompanied by illustrations and good practice examples, to help deliver good design and clearly signpost where more detailed guidance can be accessed. It states that it aims to be user-friendly and does not seek to replicate existing policy and regulations that will continue to apply to all development. This is important to recognise, given that SPD cannot amend regulations or policies of a higher planning status.

The Council needs to have careful regard to the content of the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). It states that Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) should build upon and provide more detailed advice or guidance on policies in an Adopted Local Plan. As they do not form part of the development plan, they cannot introduce new planning policies into the development plan. They are however a material consideration in decision-making. They should not add unnecessarily to the financial burdens on development. Regulations 11 to 16 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 set out the requirements for producing Supplementary Planning Documents. In exceptional circumstances a Strategic Environmental Assessment may be required when producing a Supplementary Planning Document.

We believe that it is particularly important that the Borough Council has very careful regard to the potential resultant cost implications in relation to the implementation of any new standards and the potential impact on housing delivery rates.

Given the pressing need for SBC to ensure that assumed housing delivery rates are achieved, it is crucial that it does not jeopardise achieving this by any inflexible implementation of its proposed new design standards.
If you require any further clarification regarding our representations, please do not hesitate to contact me.

General support noted - Local Plan Review will consider your comments in regard to housing and the desire to not unnecessarily place more financial burdens on development. SBC will continue to work with all during the Local Plan Review process to ensure policies work for the future of Stevenage.

7	Taylor Wimpey and Persimmon Homes	DESIGN - 010	Context	<p>Paragraph C.15 acknowledges that a substantial amount of new housing is now required in Stevenage in order to meet the Objectively Assessed housing figures produced by Central Government. It goes on to specify that this provides the opportunity for Stevenage to learn from any past mistakes, make a real impact in terms of urban design, by modernising the town and preserving and enhancing the existing surroundings and historical attributes of Stevenage, where appropriate.</p> <p>Paragraph C.31 says that due to growth requirements for the town, there is a need to provide a substantial number of additional homes in Stevenage. It goes on to identify higher density development is set out as a key requirement of National guidance, and, where appropriate, densities will need to be raised in order to meet these targets for new homes. This will need to be carefully balanced with the need to retain open space provision within the urban area as access to open space was a key original feature of the town.</p> <p>We consider that paragraphs C.15 and C.31 have important implications with regard to some of the proposed content of the Draft Design Guide SPD, which we discuss in further detail below.</p>	Noted
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Paragraph B.8 states that buildings should follow the existing building line of the area and respond positively to the existing frontage of a street. A sense of enclosure should be created by reducing the number of blank frontages and underutilised space. This will all contribute to improving the quality of the street scene.

Paragraph B.9 then goes on to say that setback distances should be minimised to ensure buildings interact effectively with the existing public realm. It stipulates that variation from the building line will only be allowed where it would not have any substantial impact on the surrounding environment and street scene.

We consider that the text ought to also reflect the NPPF's requirement to ensure that land is used efficiently. Consequently, we believe that the latter text should be amended to:

"...stipulates that variation from the building line will only be allowed where it would not have any substantial impact on the efficient use of land, the surrounding environment and street scene.

Noted, section will be reviewed in line with recommendation. Amend in line with the NPPF

7	Taylor Wimpey and Persimmon Homes	DESIGN - 012	Uses - U.21	<p>Paragraph U.21</p> <p>Privacy and scale</p> <p>Paragraph U.20 specifies that In order to ensure that a reasonable degree of privacy for residents is provided, both within their habitable rooms and garden areas, the position of dwellings, and the arrangement of their rooms and windows, should not create significant overlooking of other dwellings' windows or private garden areas and not lead to any overbearing impacts or adversely affect the residential amenities of existing dwellings.</p> <p>Paragraph U.21 then goes on to stipulate that the following minimum separation distances should be achieved: No of Storeys Type of Separation Min. distance (metres) see table on on page 38</p> <p>We have concerns regarding the minimum separation distances proposed under paragraph U.21.</p> <p>The above separation distances mirror those set out in Table 4: Separation distances for dwellings contained within the Adopted Local Plan. However, it is important to note that the aforementioned states that “..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” (our emphasis).</p> <p>It is important to remember that Policy HO2: Stevenage West in the Adopted Stevenage Local Plan (May 2019) stipulates that Land to the west of Stevenage, as defined by the policies map, is allocated for the development of approximately 1,350 dwellings, and indeed it is now the Council’s expectation that more than this are delivered following the resolution to grant planning permission for up to 1,500 dwellings in December 2021.</p> <p>Paragraph 5.81 of the Adopted Local Plan states that as well as ensuring the Council meet the overall housing target; national guidance also requires it to maintain a rolling five-year housing land supply. It acknowledges that the Council is reliant on a number of large schemes, and relatively few small sites, Consequently, it says that many of its new homes are likely to be delivered towards the end of the Plan period. As such, it has chosen not to phase development, so that sites can be delivered whenever the market decides. It says that it will actively encourage development to come forward towards the front end of the plan period.</p> <p>The Stevenage Five Year Housing Land Supply Update (August 2021) refers to envisaged housing delivery from Policy HO2: Land West of Stevenage – Phase 1. It identifies that Phase 1 of the development will deliver 390 dwellings in the five-year period.² It refers to the fact that a hybrid application had been submitted for 1,500 dwellings as part of a residential-led, mixed-use development at this site under planning ref. 21/00356/FPM (as noted above, this has since been approved). The Land Supply Update states that the developers and the Local Planning Authority (LPA) signed a Statement of Common Ground in August 2020 covering the detailed permission (Phase 1 only) part way through an extensive PPA pre-application process detailing key milestones and expected build out rates for the detailed scheme.</p>	Noted and minimum separation distances are taken from the Local Plan 2019 and are unchanged in the 2009 Design SPD. The Design SPD will clarify any guidance.
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Taylor Wimpey and Persimmon Homes	DESIGN - 013	Homes and Buildings H.14 and H.15	<p>Paragraphs H14 & H15</p> <p>Our Clients also have concerns regarding minimum standard garden space sizes, which the Adopted Local Plan is silent upon.</p> <p>Paragraph H.14 states that for new houses the minimum standard garden space for terraced and semidetached houses should normally be 50 square metres. It goes on to specify that each dwelling should normally have a minimum rear garden depth of 10m and that the shape and slope of the garden should ensure that it is useable. Larger detached houses will generally be required to provide a larger rear garden area. The garden should normally be enclosed by a 1.8m high close boarded fence or wall and direct access should be afforded to rear gardens for activities such as refuse storage, cycle parking and maintenance.</p> <p>Paragraph H.15 says that in new flatted developments where there is no communal space, balconies or roof gardens should be provided for the occupants of these units. SBC will normally aim to achieve a minimum useable communal area of 50 square metres for schemes up to 5 units, plus an additional 10 square metres per additional unit over 5. Garage courts, parking areas and bin storage areas are not considered as part of the useable garden amenity requirements.</p> <p>Our Clients are concerned that minimum garden size requirements could adversely affect the delivery of much needed 1 and 2-bedroom sized dwellings. This again is likely to cause issues with respect to making the most efficient use of the West of Stevenage development site, and ensuring that the approved 1,500 dwellings can all be accommodated within the residential parcels defined on the approved Land Use Parameter Plan.</p> <p>Recommendation:</p> <p>Due to the potential adverse impact on smaller sized housing provision, we recommend that minimum standard garden space size and depth requirements are only applied to dwellings of 3-bedrooms or larger in size. Accordingly, in respect of 2 bedroom houses providing not less than 10m rear garden depths, there should be no set minimum garden size.</p>	Comments Noted and will be explored through the Local Plan Review.
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	Taylor Wimpey and Persimmon Homes	DESIGN - 014	General	<p>The Council needs to have careful regard to the content of the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). It states that Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) should build upon and provide more detailed advice or guidance on policies in an Adopted Local Plan. As they do not form part of the development plan, they cannot introduce new planning policies into the development plan. They are however a material consideration in decision-making. They should not add unnecessarily to the financial burdens on development. Regulations 11 to 16 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 set out the requirements for producing Supplementary Planning Documents. In exceptional circumstances a Strategic Environmental Assessment may be required when producing a Supplementary Planning Document. We believe that it is particularly important that the Borough Council has very careful regard to the potential resultant cost implications in relation to the implementation of any new standards and the potential impact on housing delivery rates.</p> <p>Given the pressing need for SBC to ensure that assumed housing delivery rates are achieved, it is crucial that it does not jeopardise achieving this by any inflexible implementation of its proposed new design standards.</p>	Comments noted.
	The Coal Authority	DESIGN - 015	General	No specific comments to make on any stages of your Local Plan; SPDs etc.	Noted and acknowledge the Coal Authority for replying to the consultation.

<p>9</p>	<p>Hertfordshire County Council - Mineral and Waste Team</p>	<p>DESIGN - 016</p>	<p>Resources - Use of sustainable materials</p>	<p>'Homes and Buildings' is one of the ten characteristics elaborated within Part 2 of the Design Guidance SPD. This section provides details pertaining to waste storage and collection (Pages 44-47). Part 2 of the Design Guidance SPD also includes a section on Resources and details information on the selection of materials and construction techniques. It is considered that this section could go further in encouraging the sustainable selection of materials by promoting the use of secondary and recycled aggregates within the design stage. Secondary aggregates are by-products of other industrial, production or extractive processes, which can be used as an aggregate for construction purposes. These include blast furnace iron and steel slags, incinerator bottom ash, fly ash, furnace bottom ash and more. Depending on their quality and composition, secondary aggregates can be used as replacement construction aggregates, in the manufacture of concrete and concrete products, and in a range of other construction applications. Recycled aggregates are materials derived from construction, demolition, and excavation wastes (CD&E) which are reprocessed and/or re-used as an aggregate for construction purposes whenever possible. This includes crushed concrete, stone and brick, asphalt road plantings and railway ballast. Encouraging an increased use of secondary and recycled aggregates helps to reduce the need for virgin sand and gravel and other virgin aggregates such as crushed rock. Well-designed places and buildings should help to conserve natural resources.</p>	<p>A valid suggestion and is noted. The use of recycled aggregates within the design stage is a valid request and this will be reflected where appropriate in the Design SPD.</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>Hertfordshire County Council - Mineral and Waste Team</p>	<p>DESIGN - 017</p>	<p>Resources - Use of secondary and recycled aggregate</p>	<p>The county council as the Minerals Planning Authority wishes to reduce the reliance on virgin sand and gravel wherever possible and increase the use of secondary and recycled aggregate as an alternative. Sand and gravel is a priority for the Minerals Planning Authority as it is the only virgin aggregate planned for within the county. This is due to the geology of Hertfordshire and the fact that it contains no naturally occurring resources of hard rock. The adopted Minerals and Waste Planning documents include policies which encourage an increased use of secondary and recycled aggregates and resource efficiency. Adopted Minerals Local Plan Policy 7: Secondary and Recycled Aggregates states that the County Council will seek, encourage and support the increased use of secondary and recycled materials in place of primary land-won aggregates in development proposals.</p>	<p>A valid suggestion and is noted. Where appropriate, reference to the Minerals and Waste Plan will be placed with the Design SPD.</p>

<p>9</p>	<p>Hertfordshire County Council - Mineral and Waste Team</p>	<p>DESIGN - 018</p>	<p>Resources - Waste Local Plan Policy 12: Sustainability</p>	<p>Adopted Waste Local Plan Policy 12: Sustainable Design, Construction and Demolition requires development proposals to address the principles of sustainability by incorporating construction and demolition methods that minimise waste generation and re-use/recycle materials and buildings, as far as practicable on site. The policy also requires proposals to incorporate design principles and construction methods that minimise the use of primary aggregates and encourage the use of high-quality building materials made from recycled and secondary sources. It is suggested that the following wording or similar be inserted after Paragraph R.8 of the Resources chapter: 'Construction, demolition, and excavation (C,D&E) wastes can be re-used and recycled on-site to provide an alternative to virgin aggregates such as sand and gravel. For developments that include demolition of existing structures, opportunities to reuse or recycle demolition waste should be considered when planning for the construction phase. This helps to not only reduce reliance on virgin aggregates but also promotes a circular economy for waste materials and reduces the need to transport materials to site. Reducing the need for virgin sand and gravel can also be encouraged by selecting secondary and or recycled materials for use within the project. For example, secondary and or recycled aggregates could be used as a substitute material in the production of concrete.</p>	<p>A valid suggestion and is noted. Where appropriate, reference to the Minerals and Waste Plan will be placed with the Design SPD.</p>
	<p>Historic England</p>	<p>DESIGN - 019</p>	<p>Context, Identity and Built Form - Preserving Stevenage's Heritage</p>	<p>Welcome the commitment in paragraph C.5 that that the individuality of Stevenage should be preserved, and enhanced, and the acknowledgement that once Stevenage's original features are lost, they can never be replaced. However, it is disappointing that the numerous references to the historic environment within the previous draft SPD have been deleted, notably paragraphs S.1 – S.30. The importance of distinctive placemaking is emphasised in both Government and Historic England guidance. Development should draw on local vernacular/building materials and built forms, allowing development to have a clear and distinctive character. To this end we request that the analysis set out in paragraphs S.1 - S.30 of the previous draft are reinstated within the appendices of the SPD.</p>	<p>Advice is noted. The 2021 Design SPD featured a detailed section on the distinctiveness of the original architecture used in the town centre. However, Stevenage Borough Council have worked with the Building Design Partnership (BDP) to produce a Public Realm Guide for redevelopment of the town centre. This will act as a supporting document to this Design Guidance SPD. The Public Realm Guide seeks to ensure continuity between the original buildings and new development in the Town Centre. This will include specific visions for open space and ensure that the design of buildings in the town centre are reflective of the architecture tone achieved by the Stevenage Development Corporation. This will provide a detailed and appropriate guide on Stevenage's heritage and the importance of distinct placemaking, and it will replace the removed sections.</p>

10	Historic England	DESIGN - 020	Provide links to Historic England documents	The recent Historic England report on Stevenage Town Centre: https://historicengland.org.uk/research/results/reports/8209/TheNewTownCentreStev	The extra link to new documents is extremely valuable and appreciated. Where appropriate, the Stevenage Design SPD will incorporate the new links, or note.
10	Historic England	DESIGN - 021	Provide links to Historic England documents	Residential Densities: https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/increasing-residentialdensity-in-historic-environments/	The extra link to new documents is extremely valuable and appreciated. Where appropriate, the Stevenage Design SPD will incorporate the new links, or note.
10	Historic England	DESIGN - 022	Provide links to Historic England documents	Streets for All publication which focuses on public realm https://historicengland.org.uk/imagesbooks/publications/increasing-residentialdensity-in-historic-environments/	The extra link to new documents is extremely valuable and appreciated. Where appropriate, the Stevenage Design SPD will incorporate the new links, or note.
10	Historic England	DESIGN - 023	Provide links to Historic England documents	Advice for Highway Engineers and Designers Historic England (link to be added)	The extra link to new documents is extremely valuable and appreciated. Where appropriate, the Stevenage Design SPD will incorporate the new links, or note.
10	Historic England	DESIGN - 024	Amendment on para C.9	Finally, the National Heritage List for England is kept by Historic England, and not English Heritage as stated in paragraph C.9. I would be grateful if the draft could be amended accordingly.	The advice is noted, and section will be reviewed in line with recommendation.

Explain how developments can promote healthy and active lifestyles rather than encourage. - Request a specific section which list the 10 Active Design Principles from Sport England's guidance.

Support is offered for how the design guidance has implicitly encouraged physical activity through design under the ten characteristics especially in relation to mobility, nature and public spaces. However, in view of the above context it would be helpful if a section of the design guidance specifically and explicitly provided guidance on how developments can be designed to promote healthy and active lifestyles. Sport England, in conjunction with Public Health England, has produced 'Active Design' <https://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/active-design/>, a guide to planning new developments that create the right environment to help people get more active. It is therefore requested that the design guide includes a specific section which sets out advice (e.g. listing the 10 Active Design principles) on how developments can be designed to promote physical activity and this can signpost to Active Design for further detail.

The support is appreciated. In regard to 'Active Design', these are important considerations and noted. Active Design is a combination of 10 principles that promote activity, health and stronger communities through the way we design and build our towns and cities.

Sport England's partnership with Public Health England, have produced the Active Design Guidance which works as a step-by-step guide to implementing an active environment. The 10 principles have been developed to inspire and inform the layout of cities, towns, villages, neighbourhoods, buildings, streets and open spaces, to promote sport and active lifestyles. The Stevenage Design SPD has incorporated these elements but will note the principles and where appropriate, amend the SPD to emphasise the need for Active Design principles.

11	Sport England	DESIGN - 026	Movement	<p>Support guidance in para. M5, M7, M9, M10, M11, M12, M16, M19, M20, M24 and M30. Although The following suggestions are made about how the guidance could be improved to enhance opportunities for encouraging physical activity through design:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As well as developments providing connections to enhance the bridleway network as set out in M24, new developments on the periphery of Stevenage should be expected to provide pedestrian/cycle links to connect with existing public rights of way to allow residents of new development to easily walk/cycle from the development into the countryside for leisure purposes; • New pedestrian/cycle routes should be waymarked and supported by distance markers to encourage leisure use of these routes e.g. to support residents to complete daily running distances from their homes; • New pedestrian routes should be supported by seating in appropriate locations to encourage all potential users of the routes to use it e.g. for the elderly, those with health conditions, parents with young children etc; • Where possible, cycle and pedestrian paths should be segregated to avoid conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists which may discourage use; • In both residential and other developments, cycle parking should be located in prominent and secure locations to make it a more attractive option than using the car e.g. at the entrance to public buildings rather than a corner of a remote car park. In places where there is significant demand for cycle storage, provision should be made for basic bike maintenance facilities such as public foot pumps. 	<p>Support for paragraphs is noted and appreciated. The advice for encouraging physical activity through design is noted. Our Mobility Strategy (2016), Future Town, Future Transport (2019) and Walking/Cycling Strategy (2018) work towards a modal shift and sustainable transport methods to encourage walking and cycling. This is being pushed further with Stevenage Sustainable Travel Town Implementation Plan. The key difference from previous initiatives is that the Sustainable Travel Town will fully integrate behavioural change techniques with infrastructure improvements. This will assist with the overall vision for the delivery of growth plans, sustainable development and promoting a healthy and active community. Where appropriate, the Design SPD will incorporate these comments to further support these initiatives.</p>
11	Sport England	DESIGN - 027	Nature	<p>Support N5 and N6. Although the following suggestions are made about how the guidance could be improved to enhance opportunities for encouraging physical activity through design:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It should be made explicit that new open spaces should be designed so that they are multi-functional so that they encourage people to visit the spaces for a range of activities and therefore be suitable for meeting the activity needs of all groups within the community. For example, designing spaces so that they can be used for sport and informal recreation, designing SuDS so that they attract people to visit them as a destination and are supported by footpaths/seating; • Open spaces should be designed to integrate with existing and proposed active travel routes so that open spaces along the routes can be used for physical activity while people are travelling to their destination and to encourage walking/cycling to the open space for leisure purposes; • Where appropriate, open space should have waymarked routes e.g. circular walking/running routes with distance markers. 	<p>Support is noted and where appropriate include the suggestions about the guidance enhancing opportunities for physical activity through design. Many of these principles are already included in our documents Our Mobility Strategy (2016), Future Town, Future Transport (2019) and Walking/Cycling Strategy (2018) but where appropriate these principles can be enhanced through the Design SPD.</p>

11	Sport England	DESIGN - 028	Nature	<p>Welcome P3, P4, P6, P15 and P21. Although, the following suggestions are made about how the guidance could be improved to enhance opportunities for encouraging physical activity through design:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It should be made explicit that new public spaces such as civic spaces should be designed so that they are multi-functional so that they encourage people to visit the spaces for a range of activities and therefore be suitable for meeting the activity needs of all groups within the community. For example, designing civic spaces so that they can be used for events and informal activity as well as providing a community focal point, landscaping etc; • Public spaces should be designed to support informal children's play as this will encourage parents to visit and spend time in the public spaces • Where appropriate, especially in town and neighbourhood centre settings, new or enhanced public spaces should be supported by public conveniences, drinking fountains and accessible seating to encourage visits by all groups within the community and to encourage people to spend time in these spaces. 	Support is noted. Where appropriate, the Design SPD will look to include wording such as multi-functional and encourage people to visit them for a few activities/reasons.
11	Sport England	DESIGN - 029	Uses	<p>The following suggestions are made about how the guidance could be improved to enhance opportunities for encouraging physical activity through design:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It should be made explicit that community uses should be co-located wherever possible in order to support linked trips by active travel modes. For example, schools, shops, workplaces, open space. Where appropriate, uses should be integrated into the same building to encourage their use e.g., combining leisure uses with health services and community facilities; • Co-located community uses should be focal points within active travel networks. 	A valid suggestion and support the notion that community uses should incorporate active travel networks. This will be included under the Sustainable Travel Town Implementation Plan but where appropriate will include this suggestion within the Design SPD.
11	Sport England	DESIGN - 030	Homes and Buildings	<p>The following suggestions are made about how the guidance could be improved to enhance opportunities for encouraging physical activity through design of new homes and buildings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The guidance on flatted developments should encourage roof gardens and podiums to provide some communal space within the development that could provide opportunities for physical activity e.g. outdoor gym equipment, space for informal exercise; • Buildings should be designed to promote the use of the stairs and consider providing feature staircases; • Employment/community buildings should be supported by cycle storage, lockers, showers and changing rooms; • Informal sports facilities should be integrated into larger buildings e.g. table tennis in atriums/courtyards; • Space for parking wheelchairs and pushchairs should be incorporated into places of work and community buildings. 	A valid suggestion and support the notion that community uses should incorporate active travel networks. This will be included under the Sustainable Travel Town Implementation Plan but where appropriate will include this suggestion within the Design SPD.

12	TFL	DESIGN - 031	General	Thank you for consulting Transport for London (TfL). I can confirm that we have no comments to make on the latest Draft Design SPD	Noted and acknowledge TFL for replying to the consultation.
13	Member of the public	DESIGN - 032	Nature, Public Realm and Uses (mix of home tenures and shopfronts)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shop fronts with shutters look extremely unattractive and imply that there is a serious crime problem in the area. I believe shops shouldn't have shutters. • Wherever possible, solar panels should be mandated as part of building development/improvements. • Parking charges are killing the Town Centre. Parking for shoppers should be free. • Increased noise pollution from Luton Airport should be challenged possible. • New housing (whether rented or for private purchase) should be prioritised for existing Stevenage residents and their children. • HMOs should be discouraged. • Greenspace within the town needs to be protected from development. 	Noted and Acknowledged. Shutters – in-line with national guidance and businesses are required under security and practical reasons. Solar Panels - Comments noted. Parking charges - noted. Luton Airport - the Council has a position on air pollution and noise. HMOs - Article 4 - link to guidance for applying for planning permission Greenspace - reference to GI and regeneration in the town centre will be provided.

Proposed paragraph to include in the future Public Health responses to a proposed development:

“Improving housing options for older people:

- Public Health recommends the developer to sensitively plan for older person’s housing in mixed developments to encourage healthy communities that include housing suitable for an ageing population.
- All new housing for older people of any tenure should be built to accessible and sustainable standards, conforming to HAPPI design standards[1], be digitally enabled for assistive and other technology, and encourage developers to build to energy efficient and carbon neutral specifications, and thus promoting accessible, adaptable, and dementia friendly design.
- All new housing for older people should investigate options such as PassivHaus and other eco-build designs for specialist older persons housing, to reduce thermal variances and the associated costs, and assist in preventing poor health outcomes in older people.
- The development should contribute to the priorities with regard to public health and the built environment as set out in the Housing for Older People Strategy. In particular, they should be taken into account during the design stage and consideration of how they have been considered should be included in a planning application e.g. as part of the Health Impact Assessment or Design and Access Statement.”

[1] <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/Design-building/HAPPI>
the proposed wording that can be included in Public Health response to new developments.

This is a good suggestion and will be implemented within the text. Good design needs to be inclusive and, guidance needs to be incorporated for all, including older people. The Design SPD will be updated to reflect these standards.

15

HCC - Highways GI Infrastructure

DESIGN - 034

Nature - GI infrastructure/
Trees and
Movement
M.29

I do not agree with the planting proposals from Stevenage. Without knowing locations I would say the proposed species are poor.

1. We should only be planting English Oak – Quercus robur
 2. Ash should not be planted on the network, Ash Die back etc.
 3. Norway Maple – Very boring, other maples could be utilised, Paper Bark, Box Elder etc
 4. Tiliacs are good so long as they are in park land location or managed as Pollards for street trees. Here are columnar species available.
 5. Ulmus _ I would prefer Ulmus dodens, or U lutece.
- I do not agree with the planting proposals from Stevenage. Without knowing locations I would say the proposed species are poor.

The advice will be noted, and necessary changes made in the document. The types of trees used in design is incredibly important and with the threat of diseases, it is vital to include a suitable list and assess the appropriateness of tree species by a site-by-site basis. The necessary changes will be made to the Design SPD.

16

HCC - Countryside Management Service and Rights of Ways

DESIGN - 035

Movement

M27 - We think that this reference should be to the Borough's Public Rights of Way network (Footpaths, Bridleways, Restricted Byways and Byways Open to All Traffic). The network as a whole presents opportunities for active travel within and into the town from surrounding communities. It is also a recreation facility for health and wellbeing interconnecting as it does with green space and out into the wider countryside. Areas of disconnect exist in the network as a whole. This is keenly apparent for those wishing to explore by horse and pony. Cyclists and walkers may also use Bridleways. New provision to at least Bridleway status as well as upgraded routes (from Footpath to Bridleway) should be designed into and beyond developments to extend the network for users. A design Guide for Non-motorised Routes is available from the Highways Authority for Public Rights of Way (HCC) that sets out width and surface requirements where such proposals are being developed. When considering road crossings where Bridleways interface with the Highway Network, Pegasus Crossing facilities should be built into the design. These enable use of button controlled traffic lights by horse mounted users without necessitating dismounting; equestrians should be separated from other users at the crossing.

The advice is noted. The necessary wording will be amended in line with the suggestions made.

15	HCC - Countryside Management Service and Rights of Ways	DESIGN - 036	Movement M.29	<p>M.29 Tree species that should be considered are: Hackberry (Celtis australis) Elm (Ulmus minor) Common ash (Fraxinus excelsior) Wild linden Small-leaved Lime (Tilia cordata) Turkey oak (Quercus cerris) Norway maple (Acer platanoides) Ginkgo (Ginkgo biloba) Broad-leaved linden lime (Tilia platyphyllos)</p> <p>This comment adds to and reiterates comments made by LEADS on the 2021 consultation. The strikethroughs represent species of concern. There is concern for the list of proposed species and whether or not they are indeed appropriate for street tree planting in Stevenage. With regards to Ash (Fraxinus excelsior), the planting of new ash trees is subject to strict biosecurity regulations to combat the spread of 'Ash Dieback,' a disease which has led to a serious decline of Ash trees in the UK since around 2012. Ash trees are no longer available for planted as new trees in the UK. Turkey Oak is also unsuitable in areas where native Oak are present in the town and particularly in proximity to the ancient woodlands. Turkey Oak readily hybridises with the native species. A broader range of species is suggested; limiting the range in this way makes the future of trees in an environment beset with disease and the impacts of climate change uncertain. Native trees such as Field Maple and Hornbeam, tree species found growing successfully throughout the borough, should be included in any more expansive list. Native tree species support a far wider range of associated biodiversity. Species choice should also reflect the ability of tree species to intercept particulate pollutants.</p>	<p>The advice will be noted, and necessary changes made in the document. The types of trees used in design is incredibly important and with the threat of diseases, it is vital to include appropriate guidance on trees. HCC LEADS team suggested guidance from the Trees and Design Action Group, and where appropriate this will be implemented into Stevenage Borough Council's Design SPD to provide direction for the appropriateness of tree species in design.</p>
15	HCC - Countryside Management Service and Rights of Ways	DESIGN - 037	Public Spaces P.21	<p>The view that directional signage may clutter the public realm is too narrow a view. Consideration needs to be made as to the purpose of the signage. Directional signage on the Stevenage Cycle Network could be improved. The majority of cycle routes within Stevenage are sealed and separate from the broader highway network, therefore lend themselves to surface signage applications as per the Alban Way.</p>	<p>The advice is noted, and necessary amendment will be made to the wording in the Design SPD.</p>

15	HCC - Highways	DESIGN - 038	General	<p>Page 8 para 1.23 HCC is the 'highway authority' for the county, not the 'Highways Authority'. This repeats throughout the guide e.g. under 'A-boards' in Appendix B on Page 69 and in respect of banners or shrouds on page 72</p> <p>Page 8 para 1.23 the emerging guidance will be called 'Place and Movement Planning and Design Guide'</p> <p>Page 8 para 1.23 The HCC Place and Movement Planning Design Guidance [Guide] is mentioned in 1.23 however it also should feature within the Movement section on Page 20.</p> <p>Page 21 covers hierarchy of streets. HCC believes that there ought to be an equivalent to HCCs hierarchy of road users detailed in this section</p>	The advice on typos will be amended in the Design SPD.
	HCC - Highways	DESIGN - 039	Movement M.35 - 37	M.35 -M.37 - Regarding EV Charging and Parking, It is recommended that SBC would be wise to review the SPD in light of this guidance: - https://www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/our-services/events/webinars/pas-1899-launch/	The launch of BSI PAS1899:2022 is incredibly useful for the design and implementation of EV charging points. SBC will assess this guidance and where appropriate update the Design SPD.

The promotion of street trees is fully supported due to the wide range of benefits that they deliver.

There is concern for the list of proposed species and whether or not they are indeed appropriate for street tree planting. With regards to Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), there remains significant concern for the planting of new ash trees that are subject to strict biosecurity regulations to combat the spread of 'Ash Dieback,' a disease which has led to a serious decline of Ash trees in the UK since around 2006.

It is advised that the approach should reflect the recommendations of industry recognised guidance 'Trees in Hard Landscape A Guide for Delivery, Trees and Design Action Group' (TDAG) which states that "The temptation is strong to call for simple lists of "suitable trees" for urban settings. This is less useful than it might seem: "safe" lists can result in overly limited choices that produce the disease-prone monoculture biases that most towns and cities face today."

The guide goes on to say that it is essential to choose the right tree for the right place. It states that the possible combinations of the variables that influence tree choices are so numerous and recommends conducting a site-specific robust assessment with support from a knowledgeable tree expert as the best approach.

Note the support for Street Trees. The guidance suggested from the Trees and Design Action Group will be implemented into Stevenage Borough Council's Design SPD.

15	HCC - LEADS team	DESIGN - 041	Nature	<p>Nature (page 29)</p> <p>This section is titled 'Nature,' the introductory sentence refers to 'Public open spaces, and the first section talks about 'green open spaces and green corridors.' The following section is then title 'Public spaces.'</p> <p>Overall, there is concern for the lack of clarity between the different roles and functions of each open space typology – for example it should be clear that not all open spaces may be suitable for both people and wildlife, indeed there may be areas where it is important to restrict public access to protect sensitive habitats.</p> <p>It is surprising that green infrastructure (GI) is only mentioned twice within the SPD document. Multifunctionality (ecosystem services/soil/water/air regulation) and connectivity (people and/or wildlife) are at the heart of the GI approach and represent the framework of green/blue spaces that public open spaces and movement routes sit within. It is suggested that this section would benefit from being renamed as 'Green Infrastructure' and reframed to promote a GI approach and its numerous benefits.</p>	<p>This is a good suggestion. The term Green Infrastructure is an excellent term to bring together nature, public spaces and movement. However, Nature is one of the ten characteristics of the National Design Guide and this document is divided up into each of these to accurately reflect the National guidance. Although, the term Green Infrastructure can be reflected in the text to bring the elements of multifunctionality together and is noted as a term to clarify within the text.</p>
	HCC - LEADS team	DESIGN - 042	Landscaping	<p>Landscaping (page 77)</p> <p>The statement that "proposals should not result in the loss of attractive trees or hedgerows..." is not supported. Unattractive trees/hedgerows can still have historic, or biodiversity, or other importance values.</p> <p>The term "attractive" is subjective and with regards to trees, could be more strongly worded to reflect the intent of the local plan policy (NH5) for trees which states that "Existing trees must be protected and retained where possible, and sensitively incorporated into developments."</p> <p>With regards to hedgerows, the local plan under various policies refers to the importance of existing historic hedgerows that should be protected.</p> <p>It is suggested that the terms 'important' and 'valued' would be more appropriate here and reflect national/local policy.</p>	<p>The advice is noted and the Design SPD will be amended to incorporate the suggestions made by HCC.</p>

16

SBC - Planning and Regulation

DESIGN - 043

APPENDIX C - Sunlight, daylight and overshadowing - new guidance from BRE has been issued and the Design SPD will need to reflect these changes within this section.

Comments noted and the Design SPD will be updated accordingly.

Appendix 1 - Consultees

Specific Consultee Bodies and Duty to Cooperate Bodies consulted

- The Coal Authority,
- The Environment Agency,
- Historic England,
- The Marine Management Organisation,
- Natural England,
- Network Rail,
- Highways England,
- East and North Herts NHS Trust
- East and North Herts Clinical Commissioning Group
- Communications operators/organisations (including; Mobile Operators Association, BT Cellnet Limited, Telefonica, O2 UK Limited, Telereal Trillium, T-Mobile, Virgin Media, Virgin Mobile,
- Vodafone Ltd.
- The Homes and Communities Agency
- North Hertfordshire District Council
- East Hertfordshire District Council
- Other Hertfordshire authorities (including; Borough of Broxbourne, Dacorum Borough Council, Hertsmere Borough Council, St Albans City And District Council, Three Rivers District Council, Watford Borough Council, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council)
- Hertfordshire County Council (including Growth & Infrastructure Unit, Public Health, Passenger Transport)
- Hertfordshire Highways
- Hertfordshire LEP
- Parish councils (including; Aston Parish Council, Codicote Parish Council, Datchworth Parish Council, Graveley Parish Council, Knebworth Parish Council, St Ippolyts Parish Council, Walkern Parish Council, Weston Parish Council, Woolmer Green Parish Council, Wymondley Parish Council)
- Hertfordshire Constabulary
- Anglian Water
- Thames Water
- Veolia Water Central (VWC)
- National Grid

General consultation bodies/organisations

5th Stevenage Air Scout Group	Broadwater Community Association
Aberdeen Asset Management	Broom Barns JMI
Active4Less	Brown And Lee
Adlington Planning Team	Brown And Lee Chartered Surveyors
Age Concern Stevenage	Buddhist Centre
Ahmadiyya Muslim Association	Building Research Establishment
Aldi Stores	Bus Users Group Stevenage
Aldwyck Housing Association	C.D.Bayles
Almond Hill Junior Mixed School	Campaign for Real Ale
Alzheimer's Society	Campaign For Real Ale Ltd
Anglian Water	Camps Hill Community Primary School
Aragon Land And Planning	Canyon Play Association
Archangel Michael And St Anthony Coptic Orthodox Church	Carers in Hertfordshire
Arriva	Catesby Property Group
Arriva The Shires And Essex Buses	CBRE Ltd.
Ashtree Primary School	Central Bedfordshire UA
Asian Women Group	Centrebus
Association of North Thames Amenity Societies	Chair North Herts Ramblers Group
Aston Parish Council	Chambers Coaches Stevenage Ltd
Aston Village Society	Chells Community Association
Aviva Investors	Chells Manor Community Association
BAA Safeguarding Team	Chells Scout Group
Barclay School	Chelton Radomes
Barker Parry Town Planning	Christadelphian Community
Barnwell School	Churches Together
BEAMS Ltd	Churches Together in Stevenage
Bedwell Community Association	Circle Anglia
Bedwell Primary And Nursery School	Citizens Advice Bureau
Bell Cornwell LLP	Clague Ashford
Bellway (Northern Home Counties)	Codicote Parish Council
Bellway Homes	Colinade Associates Ltd
Bellway Homes Miller Homes	Colliers International
Bellway Homes, Miller Homes & Wheatley Plc	Commercial Estates Group
Bidwells	Connexions Stevenage
Bloor Homes	Cortex
Bloor Homes South Midlands	Costco Wholesale UK Ltd
Borough of Broxbourne	Countryside Management Service
Bragbury End Residents Group	Countryside Properties plc, Stevenage Rugby Club and the Homes and Communities Agency (Cambridge)
Bridge Builders Christian Trust	CPRE Hertfordshire
British Horse Society	Crossroads Care (Hertfordshire North)

Croudace Strategic Ltd	Finishing Publications Ltd
CTC The National Cycling Charity	First Plan
Cycling UK Stevenage	Fitness First Plc
Dacorum Borough Council	Friends of Forster Country
Datchworth Parish Council	Friends of the Earth (Luton)
Davies And Co	Friends Religious Society
Defence Infrastructure Organisation	Friends, Families and Travellers and Traveller Law Reform Project Community Base
Deloitte	Fusion
Department For Business, Innovation and Skills	Gabriel Securities Ltd
Department For Culture Media And Sport	Genesis Housing Group
Department For Environment Food And Rural Affairs	GHM Consultancy Group Ltd (Logic Homes)
Department For Transport Rail Group	Giles Junior School
Design Council	Giles School
Dixons Dispatch Ltd	Glanville
Douglas Drive Senior Citizens Association	Glasgow City Council
DPDS Consulting Group	GlaxoSmithKline
EADS Astrium	Government Equalities Office
East and North Herts Clinical Commissioning Group	Graveley Against SNAP Proposals (GASP)
East and North Herts NHS Trust	Graveley Parish Council
East Coast	Graveley School
East Hertfordshire District Council	Great Ashby Community Council
East Herts District Council	Great Ashby Community Group
East Herts Footpath Society	Great Ashby Community Resource Centre
East of England Ambulance Service	Greene King Plc
East Of England Local Government Association (formerly EERA)	Greenside School
Eastlake Stevenage Limited	Gregory Gray Associates
Ecovril Ltd	Gujarati Hindu Association
Endurance estates	Hanover Housing Association
Environment Agency	HAPAS
Epping Forest District Council	Heaton Planning Ltd
Essex County Council	Hermes Real Estate Investment Ltd
Executive	Hertford Road Community Association
F&C REIT Asset Management	Hertfordshire Action on Disability
Fairlands Primary School And Nursery	Hertfordshire Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
Fairlands Valley Sailing Centre	Hertfordshire Association Of Parish And Town Councils
Fairview Road Residents Association	Hertfordshire Association of Parish and Town Councils / Welwyn Hatfield Association of Local Councils
Featherstone Wood Primary School	Hertfordshire Association Of Young People
Fields in Trust	Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre

Hertfordshire Care Trust	Iceni Projects Ltd
Hertfordshire Chamber Of Commerce And Industry	Independent Custody Visitors Scheme
Hertfordshire Constabulary	Intercounty Properties
Hertfordshire County Council	J Young Investments Ltd.
Hertfordshire County Council (Archaeology)	JB Planning Associates
Hertfordshire County Council (Estates)	Jehovah's Witnesses
Hertfordshire County Council (Highways)	John Henry Newman RC School
Hertfordshire County Council Public Health	Jones Day
Hertfordshire Fire And Rescue Service	Jones Lang LaSalle
Hertfordshire Gardens Trust	Kirkwells
Hertfordshire Hearing Advisory Service	Knebworth Estates
Hertfordshire Highways	Knebworth House Education and Preservation Trust
Hertfordshire LEP	Knebworth Parish Council
Hertfordshire Police	Lambert Smith Hampton
Hertfordshire Police Authority	Land Registry Head Office
Hertfordshire Police Eastern Area	Lanes New Homes
Hertfordshire Property (HCC)	Langley Parish Meeting
Hertfordshire Society for the Blind	Larwood School
Hertfordshire Stop Smoking Service	Lepus Consulting
Hertfordshire University	Letchmore Infants And Nursery School
Hertfordshire Visual Arts Forum	Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation
Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust	Leys Primary And Nursery School
Herts Against the Badger Cull	Lincolns Tyre Service Ltd.
Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust	Living Streets
Herts Gay Community	Lodge Farm Primary School
Hertsmere Borough Council	London and Cambridge Properties Ltd
Hightown Praetorian Churches Housing Association	London Borough of Barnet
Highways England	London Borough of Enfield
Hill Residential Limited	London Borough of Harrow
HilliersHRW Solicitors LLP	London Gypsies and Travellers Unit
Historic England	Longmeadow Primary School
Hitchin Town Action Group	Lonsdale School
Holiday Inn Express	Luton Borough Council
Holy Trinity Church	Mantle
Home Builders Federation	Marine Management Organisation
Home Group	Marriotts Gymnastics Club
Homes And Communities Agency	Marriotts School
Howard Cottage Housing Association	Martin Ingram Opticians
Howard Property Group	Martins Wood Primary School
HSBC Trust Company (UK) Limited	Mayor of London
Hubert C Leach Ltd	MBDA UK Ltd
Hythe Ltd	Miller Strategic Land

Mind in Herts	Pin Green Community Centre
MKG Motor Group	Pin Green Residents Association
Moss Bury Primary School	Pin Green Residents Group
Moult Walker Chartered Surveyors	Planning Issues Ltd
MS Society Mid Hertfordshire	Planning Potential Ltd
NaCSBA	Planware Ltd
National Express	Planware Ltd.
National Housing Federation	POhWER
Natural England	Princes Trust
Network Rail	Putterills Of Hertfordshire
NFGLG	Rapleys LLP
NHS East and North Hertfordshire CCG	REACT
North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Green Party	Redrow Homes (Eastern) Ltd
North Hertfordshire College	Redrow Homes Eastern Division
North Hertfordshire District Council	Regional Land Holdings Ltd.
North Hertfordshire Friends Of The Earth	Relate North Hertfordshire And Stevenage
North Hertfordshire People First	Renshaw UK Limited
North Herts & Stevenage Green Party	rg+p Ltd
North Herts and Stevenage Community Learning Disability Team	Richborough Estates
North Herts Homes	Ridgemoor Park Training Centre
North Herts People First	River Beane Restoration Association
North Stevenage Consortium	Road Haulage Association
Odyssey Group Holdings	Roebuck and Marymead Residents Association
Office for Rail Regulation	Roebuck Nursery And Primary School
Old Stevenage Community Association	Round Diamond Primary School
On Behalf Of St. Peter's Church	RPF Developments
Origin Housing Group	RPS Planning and Development Ltd
Oval Community Centre	RSPB
PACE	Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd
Paradigm Housing Group	Savills
Passenger Transport Unit, Hertfordshire County Council	Saving North Herts Green Belt
Patient Liaison Group	Secretary of State for Communities
Peacock And Smith	Seebohm Executors
Peartree Spring Junior School	Shephalbury Sports Academy
Pennyroyal Ltd.	Shephall Community Association
Pentangle Design	Shephall Residents Association
Persimmon Homes	Showmen's Guild Of Great Britain
PHD Associates	Simmons And Sons
Physically Handicapped And Able Bodied Club	South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership
Picture Ltd	Sport England
Pigeon Investment Management Ltd	Sport Stevenage

Pigeon Land Ltd	Springfield House Community Association
St Albans City And District Council	Thames Water Property
St Ippolyts Parish Council	The Baha'I Community of Stevenage
St Margaret Clitherow RC Primary School	The Campaign for Real Ale
St Nicholas Community Centre	The Coal Authority
St Nicholas School	The Greens & Great Wymondley Residents Association
St Vincent De Paul RC Primary School	The Guinness Trust
St. Nicholas and Martins Wood Residents Association	The Guinness Partnership
Stanhope Plc	The Gypsy Council
STARCOURT CONSTRUCTION LTD	The Hitchin Forum
Stevenage And North Hertfordshire Indian Cultural Society	The Living Room
Stevenage and North Herts Women's Resource Centre	The National Trust
Stevenage Borough Council	The Nobel School
Stevenage Borough Council Transportation Development	The Salvation Army
Stevenage Business Initiative	The Theatres Trust
Stevenage Caribbean and African Association	The Woodland Trust
Stevenage Caribbean And African Association (SCARAFa)	Theatres Trust
Stevenage Cricket Club	Thomas Alleyne School
Stevenage CVS	T-Mobile
Stevenage Depression Alliance	TRACKS (Autism)
Stevenage Haven	Transport for London
Stevenage Irish Network	Trotts Hill Primary And Nursery School
Stevenage League Of Hospital Friends	Troy Planning
Stevenage Mosque	Turley
Stevenage Polish Association	Universities Superannuation Scheme Ltd
Stevenage Quakers	USF Nominees Ltd.
Stevenage Regeneration Ltd.	Veale Associates
Stevenage Sikh Cultural Association	Veolia Water Central (VWC)
Stevenage Town Rugby Club	VEOLIA WATER CENTRAL LIMITED
Stevenage Women's Refuge	Vincent And Goring Planning Associates
Stevenage World Forum For Ethnic Minorities	Virgin Media
Stevenage Youth Council	Visit East Anglia
Stewart Ross Associates	Vodafone Ltd
Strutt and Parker LLP	Waitrose Ltd
Symonds Green Community Association	Walkern Parish Council
Taylor Wimpey	Watford Borough Council
Taylor Wimpey / Persimmon	Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
Telefonica O2 UK Limited	Welwyn Hatfield Council
Telereal Trillium	West Stevenage Consortium
Terence O'Rourke Ltd	Weston Parish Council

Thames Water	Wheatley Homes
Wheatley Homes Ltd	Woolmer Green Parish Council
Willmott Dixon Housing	WPNPF
Wm Morrisons Supermarket Plc	Wymondley Parish Council
Women's Link	Wyvale Garden Centres Ltd
Woodland Trust	Young Pride in Herts
Woolenwick Infant And Nursery School	Youth Council

Approximately 950 individuals on the Council consultation register were also consulted.

**Stevenage Borough Council:
Stevenage Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document
Adoption Statement**

In accordance with Regulation 14 and 35 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) this Adoption Statement hereby gives notice that on 30th January 2023 Stevenage Borough Council adopted the Stevenage Borough Council Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document as a Local Development Document.

The main purpose of the Design Guidance SPD is to set out clear design principles for all developments, from large residential schemes to the public realm initiatives and guide future development in Stevenage.

A draft copy of the SPD was subject to public consultation in line with Regulation 13 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

In accordance with Regulations 14 and 35 of the 2012 Regulations, and the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations), the following documents have been made available:

- (i) The Stevenage Borough Council Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document
- (ii) This Adoption Statement
- (iii) The Consultation Statement

These documents can be viewed on the Council's website at:

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/planning-guidance>

and are available for inspection (free of charge) during normal opening hours at the following locations:

- Stevenage Borough Council Offices, Danestrete
- Stevenage Central Library, Southgate
- Old Town Library, 38 High Street

Any person aggrieved by the adoption of the SPD, may apply to the High Court for permission to apply for judicial review of that decision. Any such application must be made promptly and in any event not later than three months after the date on which the SPD was adopted.

For further information please contact the Planning Policy Team by email at: planning.policy@stevenage.gov.uk .

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Meeting EXECUTIVE

Portfolio Area RESOURCES / TRANSFORMATION
AND ICT / HOUSING AND HOUSING
DEVELOPMENT

Date 18 JANUARY 2023



FINAL HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET SETTING AND RENT REPORT 2023/24

KEY DECISION

Authors Ben Threadgold; Keith Reynoldson |2403

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To update Members on the final proposals on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budgets and rent setting for 2023/24, to be considered by Council on 25 January 2024.
- 1.2 To update Members on the formula for setting rents for 2023/24.
- 1.3 To propose the HRA rents for 2023/24.
- 1.4 To propose the HRA service charges for 2023/24.
- 1.5 To update Members on the 2022/23 HRA budget, incorporating the Making Your Money Count options and fees and charges.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That HRA rent on dwellings be increased, week commencing 3 April 2023 by 7% which is an average increase of £7.24 for social rents, £11.82 for affordable rents and £8.42 for Low Start Shared Ownership homes per week (based on a 52-week year). This has been calculated in line with the Government's change to rent policy announced in the Autumn Statement as set out in paragraph 3.3.
- 2.2 Council is recommended to approve the 2023/24 HRA budget set out in Appendix A.
- 2.3 The Council is recommended to approve the 2023/24 growth options as set out in section 4.7 are approved.
- 2.4 That Council is recommended to approve the 2023/24 Fees and Charges as set out in Appendix B.
- 2.5 Council is recommended to approve the 2023/24 service charges.
- 2.6 That Council is recommended to approve the minimum level of reserves for 2023/24 as shown in Appendix C to this report.
- 2.7 Members note the Rent Increase Equalities Impact Assessments appended to this report in Appendix D.
- 2.8 It is recommended that Council approve the increase to the 2022/23 Working Budget of £1,394,400, to fund pressures detailed at 4.3.
- 2.9 That Members approve the increase in tenant service charges to recover increased utility costs for the last 12 weeks of 2022/23, as set out in 4.3.5.
- 2.10 That Members note that, due to the current volatility of the market, utilities charges will be kept under close review throughout 2023/24.
- 2.11 That the contingency sum of £400K, within which the Executive can approve supplementary estimates, be approved for 2023/24 (increased from £250k for 2022/23), as detailed in 4.16.5.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is a legally ring fenced account that records the income and expenditure relating to the operation of the Council's housing stock. The main costs in the HRA relate to management, maintenance, depreciation (used to finance capital works) and interest on loans. This is mainly funded from rents that make up the majority of HRA income. Any surpluses are held in the ring fenced area and are used to contribute towards capital and offset years where the account may be in deficit.
- 3.2 The financial sustainability of the HRA is mainly reliant on rental income levels. In 2022/23 there was no change to the government rent policy issued in 2020, allowing for social housing providers to increase rents by the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) +1% for a five-year period. Guidance released in November 2020 does allow local authorities to breach this cap in

circumstances of exceptional financial hardship. However, this has not applied to Stevenage Borough Council's HRA.

- 3.3 For 2023/24, there are notable changes in Government policy that will impact on the financial sustainability of the HRA. This includes announcements in the Autumn Statement that the rent cap will be set at 7%, (4.1% lower than the previous CPI=1% formula), despite no cap on the impact of inflation and with the addition that some financial support will be in place for residents (including tenants and leaseholders) and the Council until April 2024, (albeit at reducing levels), and benefits will rise in line with inflation.
- 3.4 However, there are still developing policy issues in the HRA regarding the decent homes standard and building regulations; overall regulation of the sector and compliance requirements; and environmental improvements, like decarbonisation of the housing stock. Estimates for some of the initial potential impacts of changes in these areas have been included in the budget plans, but these will need to be refined as the position becomes clearer and updated in the 30 year business plan refresh, in time for the 2024/25 financial year.
- 3.5 Government reforms of the 'Use of Right to Buy (RTB) Receipts' reported in 2021/22 have positively benefited the Council in the short term by supporting existing development plans, in particular the simplification of the system, the extension of spending periods for receipts from three to five years and increase in the percentage of receipts that can be used in acquisitions from 30% to 40% (thus reducing the contribution per property required from the HRA). This will continue to be closely monitored as medium-term plans are developed and reviewed, including the impact of a limit on acquisitions of existing properties through open market purchase, to be phased in by 2024.
- 3.6 As with other Council services, the HRA has been impacted by the COVID pandemic and latterly by the cost of living crisis facing residents and Councils alike . In particular, rent arrears remains historically high and is continuing to rise as people struggle with increased food, energy and fuel bills. The complexity of people's financial circumstances is also increasing, leading to multiple debts and urgent requests for support.
- 3.7 The Council is also seeing an increase in requests for Discretionary Housing Payments, at the same time as reduced funding from central Government and changes to the thresholds at which people can access support.. The Council is undertaking a programme of work to support residents through the cost of living crisis (as reported to the Executive in December 2022), and the ongoing impact on the HRA will be closely monitored and responded to as appropriate.
- 3.8 The Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules in the Constitution prescribe the Budget setting process, which includes a minimum consultation period of three weeks. Under Article 4 of the Constitution, the Budget also includes: the allocation of financial resources to different services and projects; proposed contingency funds; setting the rents; decisions relating to the control of the Council's borrowing requirement; the control of its capital expenditure; and the setting of virement limits.

3.9 The Draft HRA budget was presented to the Executive in December,. Since this report was presented there have been changes to the HRA budgets for both 2022/23 and 2023/24 and these are detailed in this report.



4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1 Government Policy and Organisational Context

4.1.1 As discussed in the Background section above, there are many areas of Government policy that are currently undergoing significant changes and are either in the process of being fully understood or do not have clear timelines for being finalised. There are also a number of internal and external factors that are impacting on Council finances, including the HRA. These include:

- the highest rate of inflation for 40 years and rising interest rates as the country enters recession
- the rising cost of living, driven by increasing food, energy and fuel costs in particular
- Limit of the Government rent cap for social housing to 7%, alongside the fastest ever rate of increase in private sector rents (up 3.8% in the last 12 months)
- the ongoing impact of the Covid 19 pandemic, and planning for potential “twin-demic” this winter alongside rising occurrences of flu
- The Housing White Paper 2020, which is in the process of being implemented and set out a charter of what social housing residents should expect from their landlord including opportunities to take part in decision making.
- The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, which continues its passage through Parliament
- new Building Safety Act and Fire Safety Act being introduced by Government following a review into the Grenfell Tower fire

- reviewing the Council’s lettable standard and decent homes standard, in line with any changes to Government’s Decent Homes Standard
- Development of new homes and investment in existing stock to meet differing needs and growing demands
- Maintenance, repairs and upkeep of existing stock
- The Council’s transformation programme, putting residents at the heart of services, utilising the latest technology to support delivery and maximising efficiency, effectiveness and income
- the climate emergency and the need to improve energy efficiency, including decarbonisation of housing stock
- the impact of Brexit on the building industry in particular
- rising cost and availability of building materials
- low levels of unemployment affecting recruitment and retention of staff, but also predictions of rising unemployment during 2023 which could lead to more people losing income

4.1.2 As a result of the uncertainty caused by the factors listed above, it is particularly challenging to review the full 30 year HRA business plan at this time. All existing assumptions about future plans and spending commitments will need to be considered, and this will require time as well as more clarity and understanding of the full impact of these issues.

4.1.3 The focus has therefore been on establishing a robust budget for 2023/24, whilst also building in consideration for some of these “known knowns” and “known unknowns” over the coming 12 months, and predictions beyond that, which reflect current understanding. Current proposals reflect information from the Autumn Budget announcement, and growth requirements identified by service areas in response to increasing demand for support. These proposals will continue to be updated as things become clearer, and to reflect further Government announcements for example.

4.2 Delivery outputs for the HRA 2023/24

4.2.1 In light of the above, the investment priorities and areas of focus for 2023/24 will reflect meeting statutory and legal duties (many of which are new and represent increased burdens on the Council), and identified local priorities:

Statutory Burdens:

- Ensuring Safe Homes – that are compliant with Consumer Standards
- Decent Homes – Enhanced Stevenage Standard for 2023/24 to be set following the consultation on the new national standard
- Ensuring building safety - including in high risk settings (e.g. high rise blocks and independent living schemes (critical milestones to be met in 2023/2024)

- Enhancing tenants' voice in raising issues and concerns, and helping to identify and meet priorities

Local Priorities:

- Delivery of new social and affordable homes as scheduled for 2023/24
- Planned and preventative maintenance across the estate
- Decarbonisation Programme – deliver contracted (match funded) programme, which could be scaled up in 2023/24 subject to securing additional grant funding.
- Cost of living support for tenants
- Managing damp and condensation issues in the housing stock.

4.3 Changes to the 2022/23 HRA Working budget

4.3.1 Due to the level of inflationary pressures experienced in 2022/23 there are a number of changes to the current year's budget . These changes are detailed below.

4.3.2 **Fixed Pay Award £409,920** – this is the additional cost of the pay award, which was originally estimated at 2% versus the fixed pay award of £1,925 per pay spinal point.

4.3.3 **Electricity Costs £31,920** – this is the current projected increase based on Government support and the latest contract prices from October 2022.

4.3.4 **Gas Costs £416,770** – as with electricity costs, this shows the current projection based on Government support and the latest contract prices from October 2022.

4.3.5 **Service Charge Income (£84,210)** – Normally tenant service charges are calculated annually in advance. However, due to the exceptional increase in utility prices during 2022/23, this has left a shortfall in the recovery of these costs to date. Unfortunately, as the increased contract prices were not known until October and the majority of gas usage happens between November and February, it has not been possible to calculate an accurate increase until now. However, Members and officers have considered it would not be reasonable, or feasible, to collect the whole annual increase from tenants over the remaining weeks of this year.. For 2022/23 it is recommended that the full weekly charge is made to tenants over the last 3 months of the year to mitigate the loss to the HRA. While this would not fully recover the increased costs, but is estimated to generate an additional £84K of income.. The Government have announced support payments from January of up to £400 to help those people who do not have a direct contract with an energy supplier and cannot access the existing schemes such as those tenants on the District heat scheme. The scheme will be administered by the Shared Revs and Bens service and where applicable customers will be directed to these sources of support. Leaseholder's costs would normally be adjusted to actual charges in next year, but there are legal limits to the amounts that can be recovered. This area is currently under review, so no assumptions have been assumed in these figures at this time. The table below shows the

number of customers impacted by the changes and the average increase in charges per week.

	Customers	2022/23 Current	2022/23 Revised	Increase	12 Weeks
Tenants Charges Over 50 Weeks					
Block Electricity	1959	£1.25	£1.46	£0.21	£2.52
Sheltered Block Electricity	748	£3.05	£3.57	£0.52	£6.24
Heating	588	£8.65	£19.21	£10.56	£126.72

4.3.6 **General Fund recharge pressures £120,000** – This is the impact of additional General Fund staff and utility costs in recharged services to the HRA.

4.3.7 **Void Property Costs £500,000** – There is a backlog of void properties due to a combination of the type of void repairs required, key staff vacancies, increased costs (both materials and sub-contractors) and dealing with the return to normal activity after the Covid pandemic. In order to deal with the current list of void properties and to return them to a lettable standard as soon as possible, it is recommended that a further £500K be made available in 2022/23 together with a virement of £500K, from other existing cyclical maintenance budgets, to fund this year's programme.

4.3.8 the total impact of the pressures listed above is a further 2022/23 net cost to the HRA in 2022/23 of £1.394 Million which is higher than the delegated budget limit to the Executive and requires Council approval.

4.4 Rents

4.4.1 The total number of HRA homes in management on 31/10/2022 is summarised in the table below. The average rents for 2022/23 are based on current housing stock, any right to buys or new schemes after this date may change the average rent per property type.

Stock Numbers at 31/10/2022	Social	Affordable	Sheltered	LSSO	Homeless	Total
Number of Properties	6,877	36	850	80	185	8,028

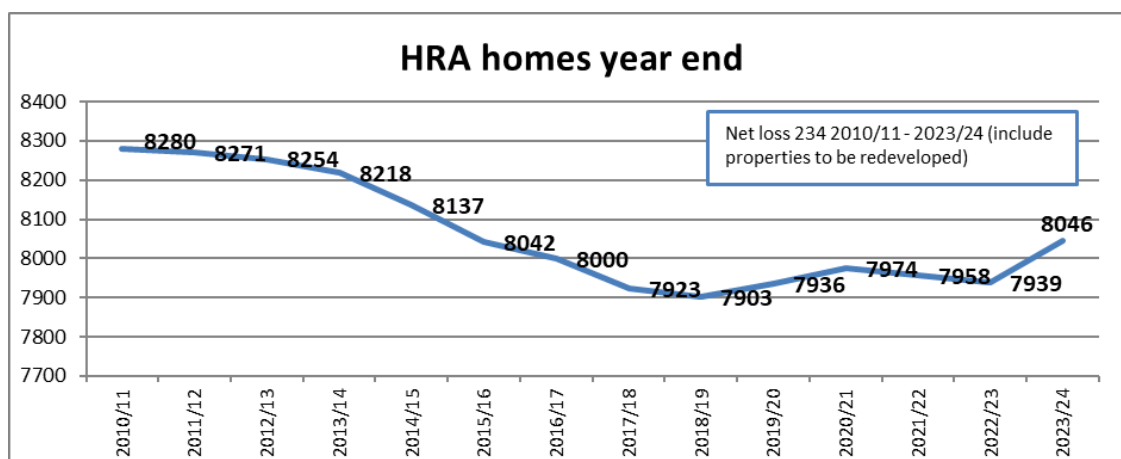
4.4.2 Rents would normally be calculated on the current agreed formula of September CPI plus 1%. However, as the September CPI was at 10.1% and would have resulted in a 11.1% increase, the Government have announced a rent cap of 7%.

4.4.3 The proposed average rents per week for 2023/24 are set out in the table below, based on a 52 week year.

Average Rents 2023/24	LSSO	Increase/ (decrease) %	social	Increase/ (decrease) %	Affordable	Increase/ (decrease) %
Average Rent 2022/23	£120.33		£103.54		£168.83	
Add rent impact 2023/24	£8.42	7.0%	£7.24	7.0%	£11.82	7.0%
Total 52 week Rent 2023/24	£128.75		£110.78		£180.65	

4.4.4 The net rental income increase for 2023/24 is estimated to be £3.3Million, which includes the impacts of estimated right to buys, a significant number of expected new properties and properties taken out of management (awaiting redevelopment).

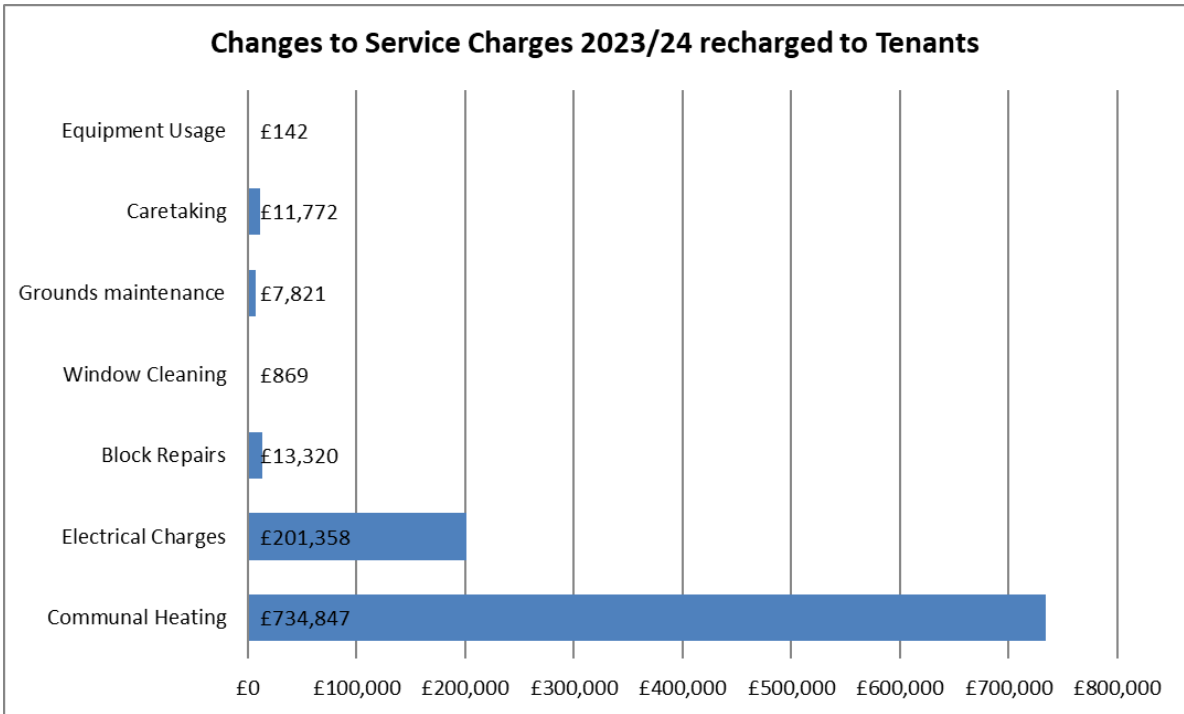
4.4.5 The total number of properties available is estimated to reduce by 234 homes between 2010/11 and the end of 2023/24, (based on the net impact of RTBs, new homes and homes awaiting development). The forecast numbers for 2023/24 continue to reflect the impact of new developments and acquisitions.



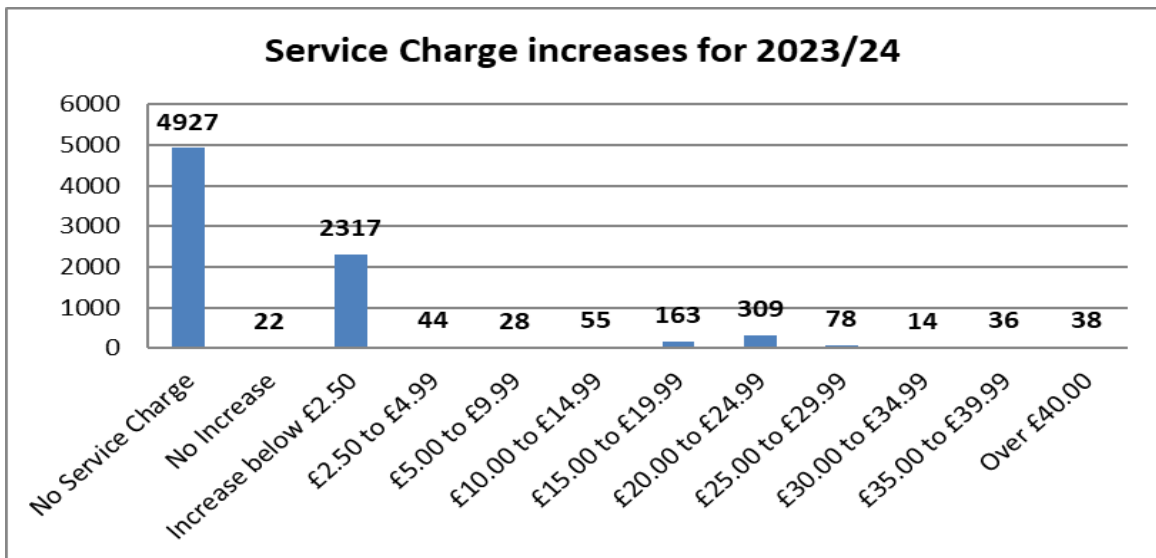
4.5 Service Charges 2023/24

4.5.1 Service charges are calculated for each block individually for the 3,063 properties, (2022/23, 2,956) or 37% of current SBC tenanted properties.

4.5.2 Service charges are not based on the rental increase of 7%, but are actual or cost recovery. For 2023/24, service charge costs will increase based on the higher inflationary pressures and changes in usage. The chart below identifies the changes between 2022/23 and 2023/24 for service charges. The estimates are based on the projected budgeted costs for 2023/24, with the exception of block repairs, which is 'smoothed' over a five-year period to eliminate individual in-year spikes in repairs spend. The graph clearly shows the very large anticipated increase in utility charges next year, in particular the rise in gas costs for those customers on communal heating systems. These prices do not anticipate any Government intervention or subsidy and do not take account of any individual payments tenants may receive to help with energy costs from other agencies.



4.5.3 The spread of service charge increases for all tenants in 2023/24 is shown in the chart below. Unlike previous years, these figures do include the communal heating charge (for those tenants receiving this service), as the impact of utility prices is so significant. The impact of these changes is that 4,927, or 61%, of homes do not receive a charge. A further 2,339, or 29%, will have increases below £2.50 per week. However, a significant minority are facing increases above this amount with 475, or 6%, of tenants facing an increase over £20 per week. The highest increase will see an additional £43 per week, or £2,236 per annum.



* note increase per week

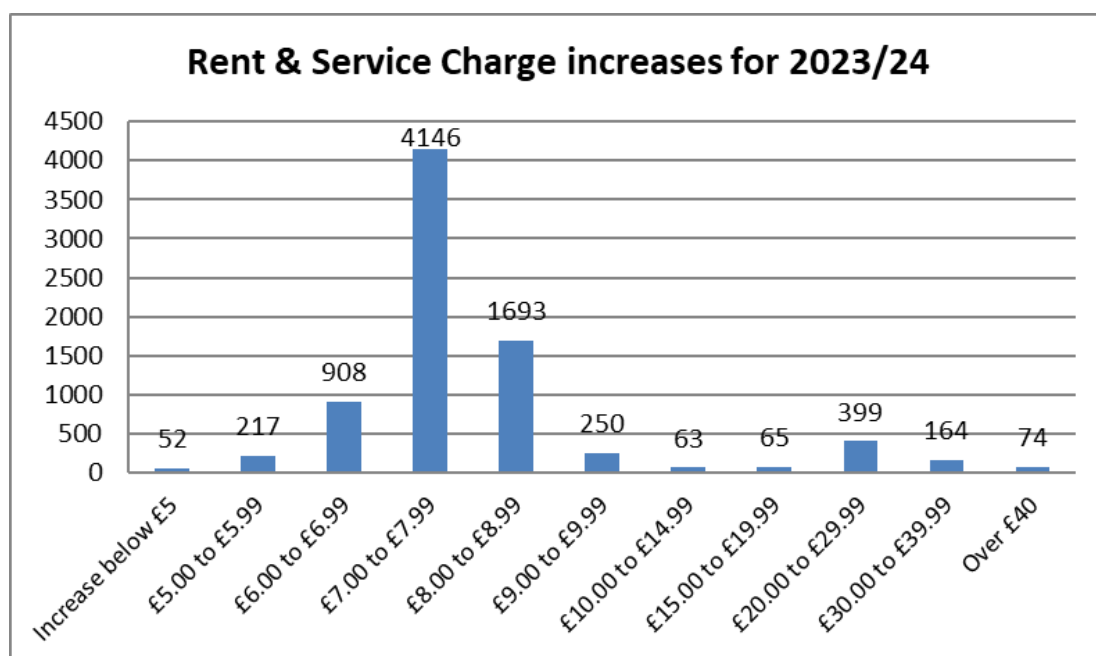
4.5.4 The impact of the current cost of living crisis and the unprecedented increase in the cost of utility supplies has had a dramatic adverse impact on service

charges. The budget has been forecast on the basis of cost recovery of these increases, in parity with those tenants who have to fund their utility costs independently, outside of rent and service charges. However, over the coming weeks those accounts with the highest increases, in service charges, will need to be carefully reviewed and charges validated. The utility bills themselves will also be subject to enhanced monitoring to ensure that customers pay the right charge and the Council will continue its programme of improvements to increase the efficiency of the housing stock. It is also possible that there will be further Government intervention, beyond the current scheme, and market prices could still move over the course of the year. Given the current volatility of the market, utilities charges will be kept under close review throughout 2023/24 and any changes in this area will be reported throughout the course of the budget year.

4.6 Rents and Service Charges

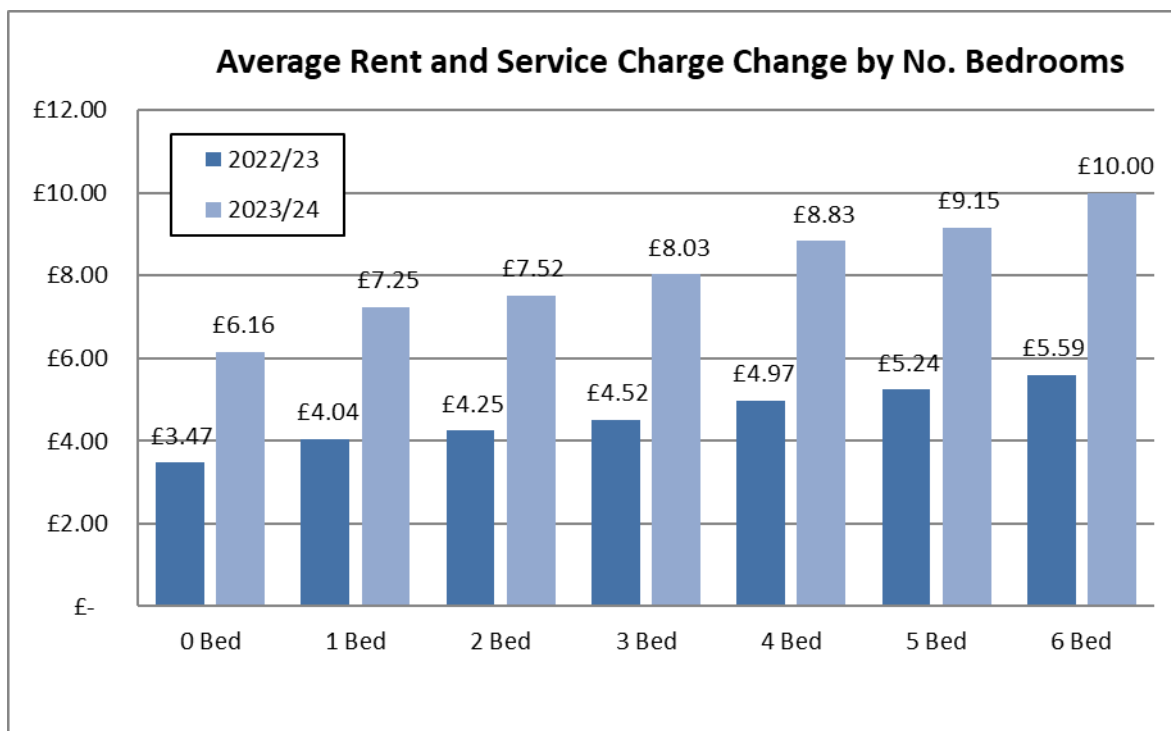
4.6.1 The impact of the 2023/24 rent increase and service charges is that 4,146 homes, or 52%, receive a weekly rent and service charge increase between £7.00 and £7.99. This is mainly driven by the proposed Government rent cap of 7%. However, due to the utility price increases highlighted in 4.5.4 above, there are a significant number of properties with combined increases in excess of £20 per week and 74 properties over £40 per week.

4.6.2 The spread of the 2023/24 rent and service charge changes are summarised in the chart below.



**note increase per week*

4.6.3 The average rent and service charge increase/(decrease) by bedroom size has also been calculated and summarised in the chart below.



4.6.4 The comparison between HRA property rents per week and private sector rents per week, for one to four-bedroom properties, is shown in the table below. A three-bedroom private sector rental property costs an additional 114%, (2022/23, 131%) more per week than an SBC council home and 28% more than the affordable let properties, (2022/23 30%).

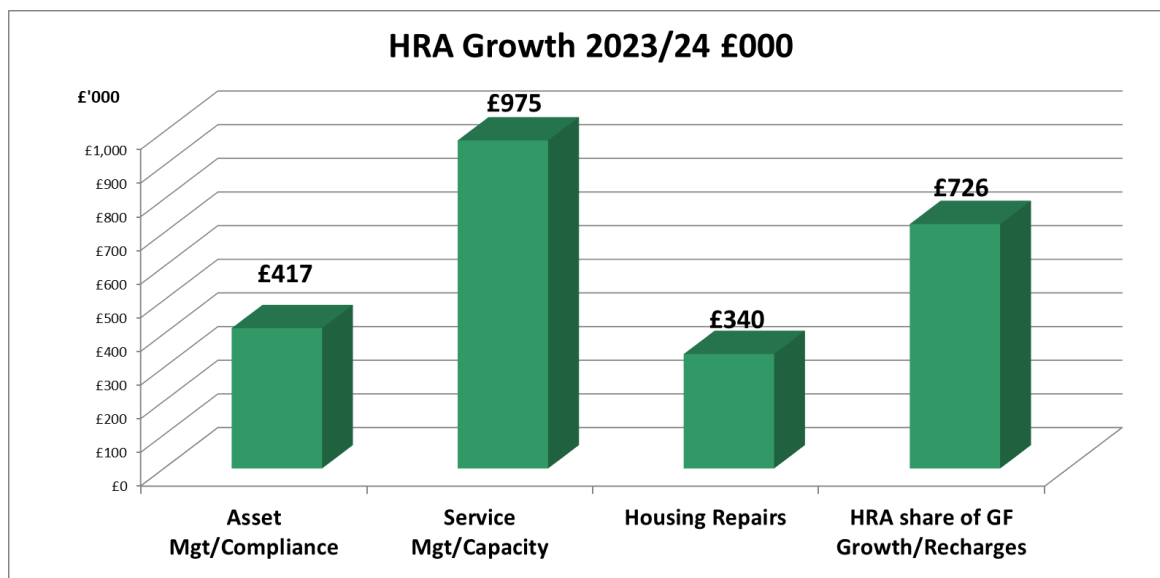
	SBC Social Rent	SBC Affordable Rent	Median Private Rent	Local Housing Allowance (LHA) 2022/23	Median % v SBC Social	Median % v SBC Affordable
1 Bed Property	£93.87	£147.52	£177.36	£155.34	89%	20%
2 Bed Property	£109.88	£187.03	£235.30	£195.62	114%	26%
3 Bed Property	£122.41	£221.61	£283.78	£241.64	132%	28%
4 Bed Property	£134.61	£259.59	£331.08	£299.18	146%	28%

Private rent Data from ONS as at March 2022 updated by ONS rental inflation for East of England to October 2022. Please note the SBC rents are April 2023 prices and the private rents September 2022 prices.

4.6.5 The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) shown in the table above is the maximum amount of housing benefit payable by property size for private rented properties.

4.7 Growth included in the HRA

4.7.1 The revenue growth included in the 2023/24 HRA budget is summarised in the chart below.



4.7.2 Revenue Growth has been grouped into four main areas:

- Asset Management and Compliance (£417K)
- Service Management and Capacity (£975K)
- Housing Repairs (£340K)
- HRA share of General Fund Growth/Recharges (£726K)

Asset Management and Compliance

Description	£000
CCTV Upgrades (revenue running costs)	£38
Compliance (Team structure changes and additional posts)	£103
Fencing	£250
Tree Surveys for Tenanted Gardens	£26
Total Growth	£417

4.7.3 **CCTV upgrades** – additional revenue funding is required to support the ongoing maintenance and monitoring of the Council’s CCTV systems once they are upgraded to the required digital standard, and to move all schemes across the to the monitored CCTV service. The capital costs of this upgrade are included in the Capital budget for 2023/24.

4.7.4 **Compliance** – Building safety and compliance is a core function to managing the safety within Council-owned homes. As detailed in earlier sections, recent and emerging changes to building safety and fire safety legislation, along with the requirements of the social housing regulator, present significant challenges for Councils and it is essential there is sufficient and competent resource to deliver this service. The Council has carried out a review of the current team structure and have identified the need for a restructure of

existing resource plus additional roles to meet these requirements effectively, including posts dedicated to Building Safety and additional surveying capacity in response to increased damp and condensation cases anticipated due to cost of living pressures.

- 4.7.5 Fencing** – additional resource is required to meet the backlog of fencing repairs and maintenance issues that have been reported to and identified by the Council. The growth requested will support clearing the backlog, as well as an ongoing programme of proactive maintenance to reduce the impact of further periods of bad weather.
- 4.7.6 Tree Surveys for Tenanted Gardens** – it has been identified that many properties have large, overgrown and in some cases unmanaged trees in their gardens. Whilst tenants are responsible for the maintenance of their gardens, as the landlord the Council could still potentially be liable for any damage or harm caused by these trees, as well as rectifying any structural damage the trees cause to the housing stock. It is therefore proposed that a tree survey is undertaken in all Council properties to assess the extent of the problem, the number of trees, their condition, level of maintenance and level of future risk, followed by ongoing survey work and tree maintenance in future years.

Service Management/Capacity

Description	£000
Fixed Term Posts from BUR and Covid Response	£655
Senior Housing Management Structure	£50
Housing Officer - x4 FTE additional permanent posts	£160
Hoarding service	£30
2x Specialist Support Officers - Community Support	£80
Total Growth	£975

*BUR (Business Unit review)

- 4.7.7 Fixed Term Posts from BUR and Covid Response** - following a comprehensive business unit review staff numbers in the HRA were reduced, on the assumption that new business process improvements and transformation would lead to efficiencies. However, it was recognised that transition posts would be required to bridge the gap between the old and new structures. Initially it was projected that the posts would end in 2021/22, but the impact of the pandemic and cost of living crisis, and accommodating new ways of working, has led to a request to fund the transition stage into 2023/24.

Since introducing three temporary complaints management posts, levels of customer service have increased significantly by responding to complaints in a timely manner and improving the quality of responses. It is therefore proposed to make these posts permanent.

There are also several areas in the income team in particular where increasing demand for support can only be met by increasing capacity, including income reconciliation, service charge setting, tenant arrears, and emergency / temporary accommodation. Some of these posts are important

in supporting frontline teams, whilst others are self-financing through the additional income that will be received as a result of their work.

It is proposed that there will be a full review of the HRA establishment during 2023, including links across to the establishment in other council services. The outcome of this work will be included in the new HRA Business Plan proposals for 2024/25 onwards.

- 4.7.8 **Senior Housing Management Structure** – with the significant increase in compliance requirements, and continuing challenges in working across business units to deliver technical solutions to repairs, maintenance and voids, it is proposed to increase senior officer capacity to lead on technical compliance. This will help to provide clear leadership across functions and provide necessary technical expertise to drive service improvements.
- 4.7.9 **Housing Officer capacity** – it is proposed to replace existing, temporary and unfunded posts with permanent employees, increasing Housing Officer capacity to drive tenancy audits and meet regulatory burdens. Benchmarking with other similar authorities shows that other authorities have higher staffing levels, allowing for reduced caseloads and increased capacity to meet fire safety practices in property inspections.
- 4.7.10 **Hoarding storage and clearance** – this is linked to new legal duty extending the period which items must be retained for if unclaimed or removed from properties, as well as the safeguarding and welfare priorities from reducing hoarding in properties. There is currently no budget allocated for storage of items, and with cases increasing it is anticipated that costs will be significantly higher next year than current levels.
- 4.7.11 **Specialist Support Officers capacity for complex needs** –this additional capacity is needed to support increasing demand for support, and these two posts will provide additional support for people with complex needs including those leaving care.

Housing Repairs

Description	£000
Capacity to defend Disrepair Claims	£100
Repairs - Complaints Officer	£30
Repairs - Surveyors (x2)	£130
Repairs - Business Improvement Officer	£40
Damp and Condensation Customer Support Officer	£40
Total Growth	£340

- 4.7.12 **Capacity to defend disrepair claims** – there is a growing legal industry for disrepair claims, with tenants being enticed to make claims against their landlords. Whilst we are committed to improving, enhancing and optimising services to mitigate the potential for successful claims, there is increasing capacity required to prepare and defend these claims. Without additional resource there is a risk that operational service delivery will be negatively impacted.

- 4.7.13 **Repairs Complaints Officer** – the service seeks to ensure that complaints are responded to in a timely and appropriate manner. Currently complaints are being handled by employees that have a range of other duties, and due to the current demands, response times are not always met, which can then result in an escalation. It is therefore proposed to employ a dedicated Complaints Officer to respond to complaints in a timely manner. Officers are continuing to develop and optimise the service which over time should also lead to reduced complaints.
- 4.7.14 **Repairs Surveyors** – two professionally recognised repairs surveyors are required to ensure that the housing stock is maintained and repaired to an appropriate standard, in a timely and cost-effective way. There is currently insufficient professional capacity in the Repairs service to adequately resource this function, making complex cases particularly challenging to resolve promptly. Qualified repairs surveyors would ensure that Council housing stock is maintained and repaired to a professional standard rather than just best endeavours.
- 4.7.15 **Repairs Business Improvement Officer** – the recent review has addressed legacy issues with systems and processes in the service. However, there is no capacity to monitor and improve these systems and processes alongside meeting increasing operational demands. It is therefore proposed to employ a dedicated Business Improvement Officer, to ensure that systems and process continue to be developed and enhanced to help improve and optimise service delivery in line with the Council's digital transformation objectives.
- 4.7.16 **Damp and Condensation Customer Support Officer** – in response to the recent tragic case in Rochdale and the increased likelihood of damp and condensation issues in poorly, or unheated homes, due to the cost-of-living crisis, it is proposed that an 18 month position is created to provide customer support and to help early intervention in this area. This is an immediate response to the current operating environment, but further measures may be needed to respond to any regulatory requirements that emerge in the coming year.

HRA share of GF Growth/Recharges

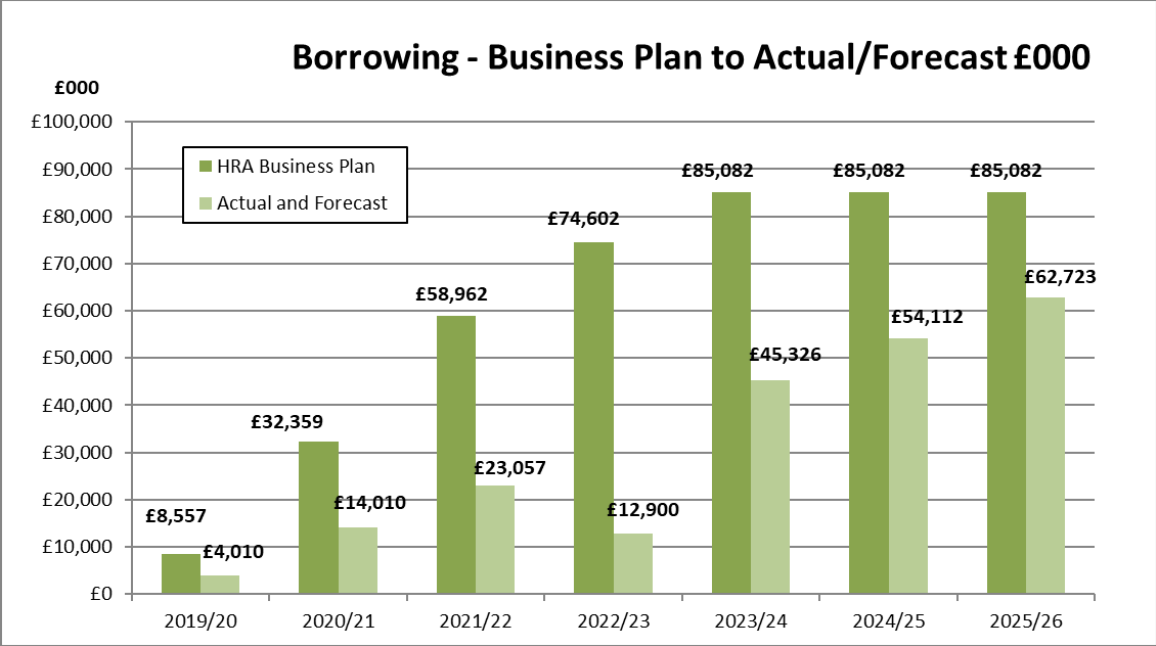
Description	£000
Climate Change Growth	£57
Net Increase GF charges to the HRA	£300
Reallocation of domestic abuse costs to current	£97
Insurance	£45
Final Recharge adjustments HRA to GF	(£27)
Increased Recharges from SDS	£64
Increased Vehicle recharges	£101
Increased Cost of Pensions	£89
	£726

- 4.7.17 **Climate Change Growth - £57K** – HRA share of the General Fund growth item to increase resources for the Council’s climate change programme reported to the November Executive and included in the Draft budget report in January 2023..
- 4.7.18 **General Fund Recharges to the HRA - £300K** – higher inflationary costs identified as part of the General Fund setting process (as reported to this Executive) has increased the cost of recharges to the HRA (e.g. HR, CSC, payroll, Finance ICT, Pension costs).
- 4.7.19 **Reallocation of Domestic Abuse Costs - £97K** (as identified as part of the MYMC savings report to the December Executive) – the HRA and GF share the costs relating to domestic abuse prevention and casework. A recent review of caseloads indicated that the proportion of cases relating to the HRA is higher than currently recharged leading to this correction of the allocation.
- 4.7.20 **Insurance - £45K** - insurance premiums are now estimated to be £45K higher than the premiums included in the draft budget.
- 4.7.21 **Final Recharge Adjustments HRA to GF – (£27K)** - after final overhead allocations have been calculated there is a net increase of £27K in recharges from the HRA to the GF for 2023/24.
- 4.7.22 **Increased Recharges from SDS - £64K** – the management recharges from Stevenage Direct Services (SDS) for the responsive and void repairs service has increased by £64K, largely due to inflationary pressures impacting other recharges.
- 4.7.23 **Increased Vehicle costs - £101K** - the majority of this increase relates to an additional accounting charge for depreciation of £68K that will contribute towards the major repairs reserve. However, insurance costs have also increased by £15K and parts and labour costs are also up by £17K.
- 4.7.24 **Increased Cost of Pensions - £89K** in December 2022 the Council received triennial pension review figures from the scheme actuaries. This has increased the estimated employer’s contribution in next year and lowered the historic cost payments made into the scheme. The net impact of these changes is an increased cost of £89K over that estimated.
- 4.7.25 As noted in point 4.7.7, there will be a full review of the establishment linked to the HRA during 2023. This will include the posts above, in particular the Business Improvement Officer and Complaints Officer, to ensure the most efficient and effective alignment of resources to meet service priorities and demands.

4.8 Borrowing

- 4.8.1 Based on current forecasts, new loans totalling £9.0Million and £25.0Million are expected to be taken in the current and next financial years for 2022/23 and 2023/24. However, the timing of when to take the new borrowing will be reviewed, weighing up the cost of carry and the prevailing PWLB rates. The interest payable in 2022/23 and 2023/24 is estimated to be £7.338Million and £8.699Million respectively.

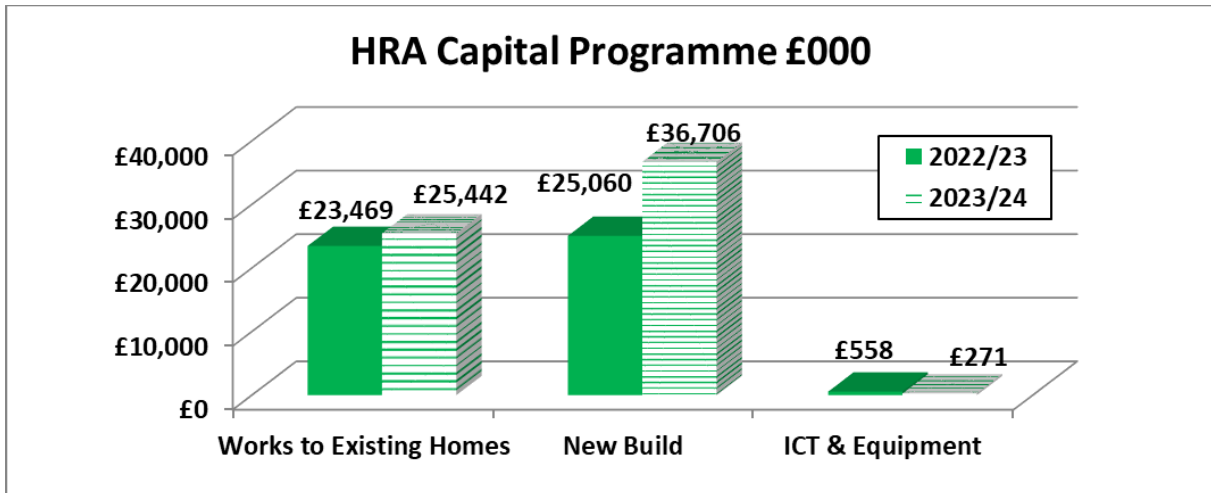
4.8.2 During this year interest rates have been increasing from the unusually low levels seen in the past decade to closer to normal long-term averages. This had been anticipated within the HRA business plan with future loan interest assumed at 4.5%, roughly where PWLB borrowing currently stands. However, some loans that are due to be taken in both this and next year will have a slightly higher interest rate than originally anticipated in the plan. The table below shows the cumulative borrowing in the business plan compared to the current actual and projected loans.



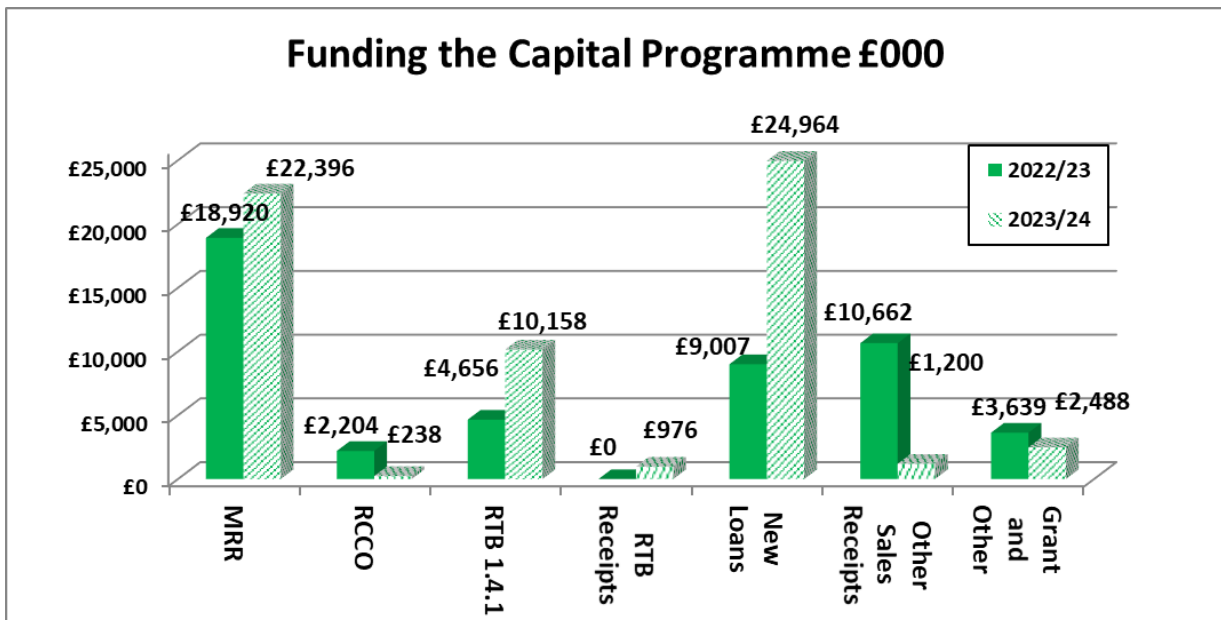
4.8.3 The graph shows that a significant amount of debt is due to be taken in 2023/24 as planned to invest predominately in new homes, but overall borrowing will still be less than originally forecast in the business plan. This is partially due to the timing of capital spend and also due to the high level of balances held by the HRA that have allowed “internal borrowing” to fund capital works. Overall, in the longer-term annual interest will be slightly higher than planned, but this has been mitigated by current interest savings and the interest rate reserve of £3.4Million that was set aside to cover these fluctuations.

4.9 Capital Expenditure

4.9.1 The table below shows the revised capital programme for 2022/23 and the proposed spend for 2023/24. This allows for slippage on current schemes and growth items of £5.1Million that will be detailed in the capital report for next year.



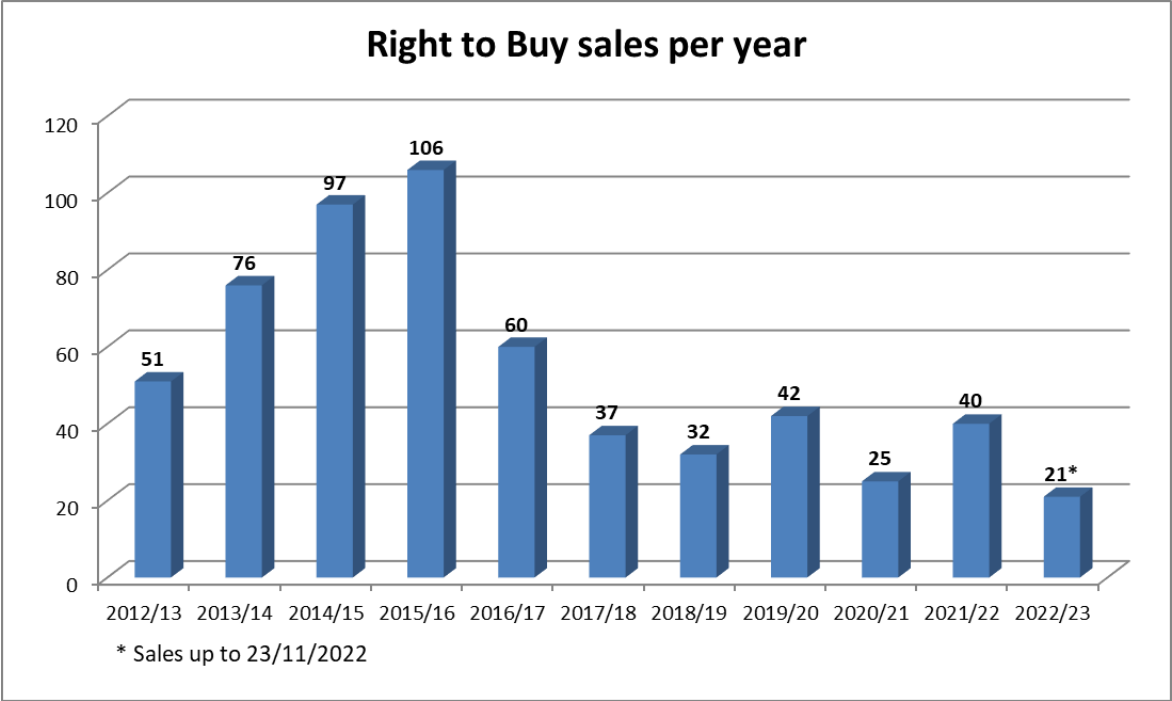
4.9.2 The majority of the growth relates to decarbonisation and building safety works. The decarbonisation works will relate to the success of the latest grant bid for Government funding, and this has been assumed within the current budget proposal. The table below shows the funding sources for the programme including the anticipated grant. Most of the work to existing homes continues to be financed from the major repairs reserve (funded from depreciation charges to the HRA) and the new build costs from loans and receipts.



4.10 Use of One for One Receipts

4.10.1 As mentioned earlier in the report, the Government has now amended the rules regarding the use of capital receipts arising from the sale of Right to Buy (RTB) properties and the Council has entered into a new retention agreement that reflects these changes. This has reduced pressure on the use of RTB receipts, particularly as the Council is currently delivering major developments that can use these restricted funds.

4.10.2 Sales of properties remain lower than the recent peak in 2015/16 and it looks likely that they will be in line with projected estimates of 35 properties for 2022/23. The budget for 2023/24 continues to assume sales of 35 properties for rent budgeting and capital receipts purposes. The graph below shows recent sales activity by year.



4.11 Options to Reduce Cost in the HRA

4.11.1 The savings targets included in the 2021 MTFS for the HRA, including the 2% repairs saving, have been removed for 2023/24 due to the current operational pressures. The HRA’s full business plan re-write in 2023/24 will determine future MYMC targets.

4.11.2 Additional fees and charges totally £21,980 as set out in Appendix B, have been included in the 2023/24 budget for approval.

4.11.3 As discussed previously, a full review of the posts and resources linked to the HRA will be undertaken over the next 12 months. This will be focused on ensuring that the right resources are prioritised in the areas that will have the

greatest impact and will ensure all regulatory and compliance requirements are met. This work will identify and agree a staffing cost envelop for the medium to longer term that ensures stability within the HRA whilst also driving the delivery of Council priorities.

- 4.11.4 Work is also planned to model the longer-term funding requirements for a number of areas, including the emerging asset management strategy including compliance costs, the housing development programme, decarbonisation of housing stock to at least EPC rating C, and meeting Decent Homes Requirements.

The outcome of all this work will inform a fundamental review and redrafting of the full 30-year HRA business plan, as well as a detailed budget for 2024/25, to be agreed by Council in January 2024.

4.12 Focus for Housing Investment in 2023/24

- 4.12.1 The key areas of focus for the investment service are captured in the HRA Asset Management Strategy and the associated action plan. Key themes include:

- *Delivery of the capital programme including Decent Homes & MRC*
- *Ensuring homes are safe and compliant. Implementation of the compliance and building safety action plans.*
- *Ensuring homes meet the Social Housing Regulators consumer standards.*
- *Decarbonisation of the housing stock and working towards all properties being EPC C by 2030.*
- *A review of the Aids & Adaptations service and policy.*
- *A review of the Damp and Condensation service and policy*

4.13 Focus for Repairs and Voids in 2023/24

- 4.13.1 The fundamental objective for the Repairs service is to continue to optimise the quality and efficiency of the services it provides to residents, covering repairs, void repairs and caretaking. To achieve this, additional staffing resources are required to enhance capacity, as set out in this report, and there is a need to address the additional budgetary demands as a result of inflation and higher than inflation increases e.g. the cost of materials. The revised Housing asset management strategy also presents an opportunity to enhance the planned and cyclical works undertaken to the housing stock, which should lessen the burden on a reactive repairs services, and will help to ensure that the existing stock is maintained to the necessary standards

4.14 Focus for Housing Development 2023/24

- 4.14.1 The Housing Development programme continues to deliver essential new schemes for the HRA. These meet acute housing need but also add to the HRA's financial sustainability by maintaining the stock base & future rental streams as well as capital injections through open market sales. During the life of the current HRA Business Plan 347 new homes have been delivered and £5.3m in sales receipts have been generated. Schemes are presently

on site at Symonds Green, Dunn Close, and Kenilworth Close. Schemes to have completed this year include North Road, Oaks Cross and Hitchin Road.

- 4.14.2 The progression of the HRA development programme into and beyond 2023/24 involves the continuation of the development of new housing schemes throughout the town that adhere to the approved “five-star” quality development principles. These are; promoting sustainable development, pursuing genuinely affordable rents, mixed but tenure blind housing, making best use of land, and starting with community-led consultation
- 4.14.3 The HRA business plan development budgets are not proposed to be increased and instead rely on procuring wisely and developing business cases for future borrowing where it may be needed and considered advantageous to do so. However, in general approved budgets within the programme will be utilised to start on site, over a five-year period, and deliver (subject to planning) approximately 165 new homes amongst the following schemes: Brent Court Garages, Burwell Road Phase 2, Ellis Avenue, a further garage site and Symonds Green. These schemes and Development programme will continue to benefit from the oversight of the Housing Development Working Group.

4.15 Focus for Housing Management in 2023/24

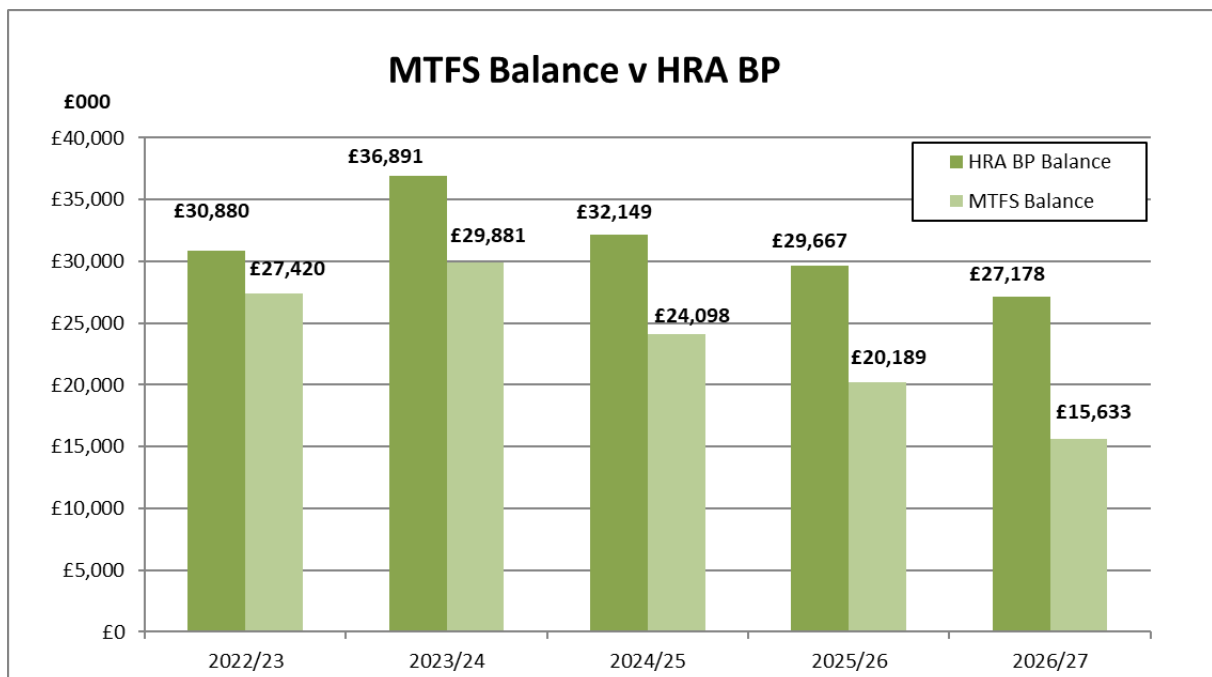
- 4.15.1 The focus will be engaging with residents and making sure services are set up to deliver an efficient and effective customer service. The community support offer will be increased to support more people who are struggling with hoarding and other complex issues. Pre-tenancy interviews will help to identify specific needs and support people at the start of their tenancy and to help them sustain it.
- 4.15.2 The Voids end-to-end process will be fully reviewed to achieve optimum service performance and return to the HRA. Officers across Housing and Stevenage Direct Services are working collaboratively to identify areas for improvement. This will include reviewing the Lettable Standard and identifying reasons for refusals, reviewing the programme of tenancy audits and pre-void inspections, reducing void repairs times, ensuring data collection allows more accurate reporting capability and benchmarking with a comparable Local Authority to understand relative performance and identify examples of good practice.
- 4.15.3 The personal charges for Emergency and Temporary Accommodation will also be reviewed to ensure the charging model is more efficient and in line with current costs, whilst being fair to occupants.

4.16 Final Budget Proposals

- 4.16.1 The Final 2023/24 HRA budget is estimated to be a net surplus of £1,792,270, a net reduction of £709K. The table below shows the main movements from the draft to the final budget and includes all the growth proposals for 2023/24 detailed in 4.7 above.

Summary of 2023/24		
Draft HRA 2023/24 budget		(£2,501,610)
Changes from Draft to Final Budget		
Net Increase GF charges to the HRA	£299,750	
Reallocation of domestic abuse costs to current	£97,340	
Insurance	£45,400	
Final Recharge adjustments HRA to GF	(£27,570)	
Increased Recharges from SDS	£64,140	
Increased Vehicle recharges	£100,850	
Damp and Condensation Customer Support Officer	£40,000	
Increased Cost of Pensions	£89,430	
Total Changes:		£709,340
Final HRA 2022/23 budget		(£1,792,270)

4.16.2 After these adjustments to the 2022/23 set out in section 4.3 and the adjustments above the graph below compares the expected business plan balance to the latest MTFS projection.



- 4.16.3 While the gap is just under £3.5Million at the end of this year, by 2026/27 it is forecast to have opened to £11.5Million. As these balances are required to repay the self-financing loans from 2026/27, next year's revision of the business plan will need to address this problem and rebalance the account in the medium to long term.
- 4.16.4 All HRA balances, in excess of the minimum balance held for assessed risks in year, are required to fund the HRA 30-year capital programme. A risk assessment of balances has been completed and is in Appendix C to this report.

HRA Balances:	2022/23	2023/24
	£	£
HRA Balance 1 April	(28,207,279)	(27,419,789)
Use of balances in Year	787,490	(1,792,270)
HRA Balance 31 March	(27,419,789)	(29,212,059)
Minimum Balances	(3,320,000)	(3,310,000)
Debt Repayments	(24,099,789)	(25,902,059)

- 4.16.5 Currently, the delegated authority, to the Executive, for additional budget approvals is £250,000 for the year. Due to the current economic climate, including increased risk factors from inflationary pressures and the impact of the costs of living crisis on customers and their ability to pay for services, it is recommended that the contingency sum is raised to £400K to match the General Fund.

4.17 Consultation

- 4.17.1 The proposals in this paper are the result of detailed consultation with Executive Members, Senior Executives and service managers across the Council.
- 4.17.2 The Draft budget was considered at the December Overview and Scrutiny meeting where the report was considered by the committee.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

- 5.1.1 The HRA is heavily reliant on rental income to support the management, maintenance and investment in the housing stock and a medium and long term view of resources is required (MTFS and 30 year business plan) to ensure the HRA has sufficient resources to meet its statutory obligations and its financial in terms of ability to repay the self-financing debt of £199Million and further borrowing to maintain a level of homes to meet housing needs.

- 5.1.2 The level of additional growth requested for 2023/24 is not sustainable in the medium to long term without significant compensatory savings. This requires a number of actions, a refresh of the 30 year business plan, in addition with the implementation of the Transformation programme to reduce HRA costs. .

5.2 Legal Implications

- 5.2.1 Legal implications are included in the body of the report.

5.3 Staffing Implications

- 5.3.1 The unions will be consulted on the options contained in this report, where there is an adverse impact on staffing resources. Human Resources staff will co-ordinate centrally the implementation of any staff related savings from the budget process.

5.4 Risk Implications

- 5.4.1 Due to frequent Government policy changes, there are significant risks in setting the HRA budget. Historically the ring-fenced account has relied almost solely on rent income to finance both revenue and capital works. However, the Government has changed rent setting criteria again for 2023/24, with a 7% rent cap outside of the current five-year policy statement. Overall risks have also increased with the removal of the debt cap in 2019, as the Council is making long term financing decisions, on capital investment, based on income streams set by the current policy.
- 5.4.2 Currently one of the continuing risks to the account is a large increase in arrears. These have increased, in part as a result of tenants switching from housing benefits to Universal Credit, but mainly due to the past impact of the COVID 19 pandemic and the measures put in place by the Government, which included a suspension of evictions and the ongoing cost of living crisis. To mitigate this position increased resources are still in place to help recover rent owed and the provision for bad debt has been increased to recognise that not all the outstanding debt will be recovered.
- 5.4.3 Current high inflation rates may put pressure on capital and revenue repairs budgets and may put further pressure on HRA resources. There are also significant risks in recovery of utility costs from tenants and leaseholders, due to the unprecedented increase in costs.
- 5.4.4 The full operational implications of regulatory changes after the Grenfell tragedy are still being implemented, in particular the response to the Housing White Paper. As policy and best practice across the sector is developed this could increase budget pressures on the HRA.
- 5.4.5 There is a risk of interest rates being higher than projected and leading to a reduction in the amount of expenditure for both revenue and capital.
- 5.4.6 The HRA will have a full business plan review in 2023/24 to make sure that capital and revenue spend remains affordable over the life of the plan. This will also include a full operational review to ensure that current staffing levels and budget heads meet the needs of the service and are sustainable over

the life of the plan. It is also likely that savings and efficiency targets will be built into this process to ensure value for money is achieved.

5.5 Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 5.5.1 In carrying out or changing its functions (including those relating to the provision of services and the employment of staff) the Council must comply with the Equality Act 2010 and in particular section 149 which is the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Act replaced three previous equality legislations – the Race Relations Act (section 71), the Sex Discrimination Act (section 76A) and the Disability Discrimination Act (section 49A). The Council has a statutory obligation to comply with the requirements of the Act, demonstrating that as part of the decision-making process, due regard has been given to the needs described in the legislation. These duties are non-delegable and must be considered by Council when setting the budget in January 2022.
- 5.5.2 To inform the decisions about the Budget 2023/24 officers have undertaken Brief Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) for service-related budget proposals, which will be further developed as proposals are agreed and implemented. Where there is a potentially negative impact, officers have identified further action needed to inform a final decision and to mitigate the impact where this is possible.
- 5.5.3 Attached as Appendix D is an EqIA for increasing the rent charged by 7% per annum, including the mitigations that will be implemented to lessen the impact wherever possible.

6 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- BD1 Draft Housing Revenue Account Budget Setting and Rent Report 2023/24 – December 2022 Executive

7 APPENDICES

- Appendix A – Housing Revenue Account Summary
Appendix B- Fees and Charges
Appendix C – Risk Assessment of Balances
Appendix D - EQIA for HRA Rent

	Actual 2021/22 £	Original Budget 2022/23 £	Working Budget 2022/23 £	Original Budget 2023/24 £
Summary of Expenditure				
Supervision and Management	9,191,322	8,445,450	8,955,480	9,715,400
Special Services	5,201,815	5,232,580	6,203,090	7,451,310
Rent, Rates, Taxes and Other Charges	673,023	548,990	663,990	709,610
Repairs and Maintenance ⁽¹⁾	9,482,073	9,996,700	11,517,090	10,616,720
Depreciation	12,319,781	11,900,420	11,900,420	13,568,080
Corporate and Democratic Costs	1,085,808	1,106,780	1,106,780	1,209,640
Contribution to the Bad Debt Provision	298,927	224,220	224,220	375,000
Total Expenditure	38,252,750	37,455,140	40,571,070	43,645,760
Summary of Income				
Rental Income:				
Dwelling Rents	(40,471,428)	(43,020,770)	(42,382,430)	(45,678,620)
Non Dwelling Rents	(97,359)	(92,120)	(92,470)	(93,120)
	(40,568,787)	(43,112,890)	(42,474,900)	(45,771,740)
Charges for Services & Facilities - Tenants	(2,287,975)	(2,485,700)	(2,050,710)	(3,361,740)
Leaseholder Service Charges	(865,788)	(895,850)	(1,066,390)	(1,006,540)
Contributions Towards Expenditure	(597,676)	(346,800)	(352,810)	(308,520)
Reimbursement of Costs	(313,022)	(345,540)	(345,540)	(354,540)
Recharge Income (GF & Capital)	(2,252,208)	(2,374,980)	(2,374,980)	(2,546,480)
Total Income	(46,885,456)	(49,561,760)	(48,665,330)	(53,349,560)
Gain on sale of HRA Non-Current Assets	(6,722,889)	0	0	0
Interest Payable	7,168,156	8,277,040	7,338,460	8,698,640
Interest Receivable	(201,830)	(330,380)	(660,470)	(1,025,180)
Capital grants & Contributions receivable	(3,548,590)	2,203,760	2,203,760	238,070
Pension Interest and return on assets	395,354	0	0	0
Net (Surplus)/Deficit For Year	(11,542,506)	(1,956,200)	787,490	(1,792,270)
Movement on the HRA				
Accounting basis to funding basis under statute	8,565,501	0	0	0
Transfer to Reserves	164,000	0	0	0
Housing Revenue Account Balance				
Net Expenditure/(Income) for Year	(2,813,005)	(1,956,200)	787,490	(1,792,270)
Balance B/Fwd 1 April	(25,394,274)	(28,207,279)	(28,207,279)	(27,419,789)
HRA Balance C/Fwd 31 March	(28,207,279)	(30,163,479)	(27,419,789)	(29,212,059)

Appendix B

Description of Chargeable Service		2022/23 GROSS FEE PAYABLE BY CUSTOMER	NET FEE (2023/24)	VAT (exemption can be applied for on certain fees)	2023/24 GROSS FEE PAYABLE BY CUSTOMER	Gross Increase £	Increase %	2022/23 Working Budget	Increase in budget due to proposed fee increase	2023/24 Proposed Budget
Housing Revenue Account										
Specialist Support										
Guest Bedrooms										
	Silkin Court, Walpole Court, Scarborough Avenue, Southend Close, Pinewoods & Fred Millard.	£13.00	£11.50	£2.30	£13.80	£0.80	6.19%			
Guest flats	Norman Court, Silkin Court	£23.00	£19.50	£3.90	£23.40	£0.40	1.72%			
Short Stay Units	Assessment (per day)	£11.60	£11.70	£0.00	£11.70	£0.10	0.86%			
	Respite	£23.00	£23.40	£0.00	£23.40	£0.40	1.74%			
								10,630	270	10,900
Laundry Charges										
	Sheltered schemes first wash (per week)	£3.20	£2.75	£0.55	£3.30	£0.10	3.00%			
	Second wash and thereafter	£3.20	£2.75	£0.55	£3.30	£0.10	3.00%			
	Guest bedrooms and short stay (per wash)	£3.20	£2.75	£0.55	£3.30	£0.10	3.00%			
								7,400	200	7,600
Room Hire										
	Hairdressing at Silkin/Fred Millard, (Hourly charge) *	£5.50	£5.00	£1.00	£6.00	£0.50	9.17%			
	Private chiropodist and other services, (per hour) *	£5.50	£5.00	£1.00	£6.00	£0.50	9.17%			
								1,870	130	2,000
Support Services and careline for HRA tenants										
	Housing related support (includes all services shown under careline alarms)	£19.65	£19.65	£0.00	£19.65	£0.00	0.00%			
	SIM Careline Unit (additional weekly charge)	£1.00	£1.00	£0.20	£1.20	£0.20	20.00%			
	independent living and flexi care support charge for previous HRS protected clients and new residents entitled to HB	£10.00	£10.50	£0.00	£10.50	£0.50	5.00%			
	response service for new customers (50 weeks)	£8.70	£7.25	£1.45	£8.70	£0.00	0.00%			
	Response service to other provider equipment (50 weeks)*	£4.92	£4.10	£0.82	£4.92	£0.00	0.00%			
	Monitoring only service (50 weeks) *	£3.78	£3.25	£0.65	£3.90	£0.12	3.17%			
								450,000	17,500	467,500
Careline Alarm- private (Shortfall funded from General Fund)										
	Response service (52 weeks) *	£8.70	£7.25	£1.45	£8.70	£0.00	0.00%			
	Response service out of area (52 weeks)*	£8.70	£7.25	£1.45	£8.70	£0.00	0.00%			
	Response service to other provider equipment (52 weeks)*	£4.92	£4.10	£0.82	£4.92	£0.00	0.00%			
	Monitoring only service (52 weeks) *	£3.78	£3.25	£0.65	£3.90	£0.12	3.17%			
								91,400	1,600	93,000
Replacement Pendants										
	Careline (Winkhaus) keys*	£13.80	£12.00	£2.40	£14.40	£0.60	4.35%			
	Fobs - Sheltered Schemes (Black)	£22.38	£19.25	£3.85	£23.10	£0.72	3.22%			
	Fobs - Sheltered Schemes (Shark)	£13.08	£11.50	£2.30	£13.80	£0.72	5.50%			
	Tynetec pendant	£57.60	£50.00	£10.00	£60.00	£2.40	4.17%			
	Doro pendant	£48.00	£42.00	£8.40	£50.40	£2.40	5.00%			
Key safe										
	Chiptech		£44.15	£8.83	£52.98	£52.98	new			
	Supply	£22.00	£18.50	£3.70	£22.20	£0.20	0.93%			
	Fit	£63.70	£53.50	£10.70	£64.20	£0.50	0.79%			
Lock Change										
		£90.00	£78.00	£15.60	£93.60	£3.60	4.00%			
								3,700	150	3,850
General Needs Tenants and Leaseholders:										
Key Fobs										
	Old Style "Black fobs"	£22.40	£19.25	£3.85	£23.10	£0.70	3.11%			
	New "Shark" Fobs*	£13.10	£11.50	£2.30	£13.80	£0.70	5.31%			
Communal door entry keys										
	Replacement keys for entry doors to flat blocks.	£21.50	£18.40	£3.68	£22.08	£0.58	2.68%			
Laundry charges - Roundmead										
	Wash tokens	£6.00	£5.20	£1.04	£6.24	£0.24	4.00%			
	Dry Tokens	£3.25	£2.80	£0.56	£3.36	£0.11	3.32%			
Management Fees for Westwood Court & Kilner Close										
	Administration Fees	£1.20	£1.05	£0.21	£1.26	£0.06	5.00%			
								7,270	230	7,500
Stores										
	Callout	£145.00	£127.00	£25.40	£152.40	£7.40	5.11%	16,000	1,000	17,000
	Admin charge	£52.00	£45.50	£9.10	£54.60	£2.60	5.01%	0	400	0
	Charge		POA					11,000		11,400
								27,000	1,400	28,400
Tenant's Retrospective Charges										
		£0.00		£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	n/a			
Inspection charge - depending on cost of work										
	From £0 to £999	£225.00	£235.00	£0.00	£235.00	£10.00	4.44%			
	From £1,000 to £1,999	£230.00	£240.00	£0.00	£240.00	£10.00	4.35%			
	From £2,000 to £2,999	£250.00	£260.00	£0.00	£260.00	£10.00	4.00%			
	From £3,000 to £3,999	£260.00	£270.00	£0.00	£270.00	£10.00	3.85%			
			From £4,000 to £4,999	£310.00	£320.00	£10.00	3.23%			
			From £5,000 to £5,999	£420.00	£430.00	£10.00	2.38%			
Administration										
		£160.00	£170.00	£0.00	£170.00	£10.00	6.25%			
								6,400	0	6,400

**APPENDIX C: RISK BASED ASSESSMENT OF THE LEVEL OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT
BALANCES 2023/24**

Potential Risk Area	Comments including any mitigation factors		
Income from areas within the base budget where the Council raises "Fees and Charges"	Potential risk that the budgeted level of income from activities where the Council is charging for services will not be achieved. This is anticipated largely to be as a result of the downturn in economy and the current cost of living crisis, but could also be as a result of increased void rates, lower collection rates, disputed bills. All "fees and charges" income is reviewed as part of the monthly/quarterly budget monitoring process. All budgets are profiled over the year based upon previous experience.		
	Calculated Risk		
Specific Areas	Estimated Income	Risk assessed at	Balances Required
Rechargeable works not raised or recovered	£183,460	10.00%	£18,346
Leaseholder charges not realised (excluding insurance)	£846,020	5.00%	£42,301
Rental income (increase in voids rates)	£45,630,620	0.75%	£342,230
Service Charges (increase in voids rates)	£2,162,440	0.75%	£16,218
Heating charges	£832,150	5.00%	£41,608
Total			£460,702

Potential Risk Area	Comments		
Demand Led Budgets	Potential risk that spending on parts of the budget where the Council has a legal duty to provide the service increases significantly, including due to regulatory requirements. Individual budgets reviewed as part of the monthly budget monitoring process. All budgets are profiled over the year based upon previous experience and so any variances should show up during the year.		
	Calculated Risk		
Specific Areas	Estimated Exposure	Risk assessed at	Balances Required
Storm damage and fire damage uninsured costs (excess is £25,000 for fire damage)	£25,000	100.00%	£25,000
Response and Emergency repairs increase as a result of inflationary pressures or unforeseen repairs	£8,309,400	5.00%	£415,470
Unforeseen Capital works not budgeted for requiring a contribution to capital (based on a proportion of the capital programme)	£58,851,110	2.00%	£1,177,022
Inflation pressures on capital works requiring additional revenue resources to fund the shortfall	£58,851,110	0.75%	£441,383
Insufficient budget identified for damp and mould works	£250,000	10.00%	£25,000
Total			£2,083,876

Potential Risk Area	Comments including any mitigation factors		
Changes since budget was set	Potential risk that things change since the budget estimates were made and the estimates are then under budgeted for.		
	Calculated Risk		
Specific Areas	Estimated Exposure	Risk assessed at	Balances Required
Increase in borrowing costs for internal borrowing	£3,000,000	0.25%	£7,500
Transitional Vacancy Rate 4.5% not achieved	£266,600	10.00%	£26,660
Increase in bad debt provision	£375,000	10.00%	£37,500
Utility inflation (Electricity increase in April 2018, Gas increase from Oct 2018)	£819,930	5.00%	£40,997
NEW pay award is higher than budgeted for	£10,215,810	0.50%	£51,079
Total			£163,736

Potential Risk Area	Comments including any mitigation factors		
Income from areas within the base budget where the Council raises "Fees and Charges"	Potential risk that changes in government policy and legislation mean income from activities where the Council is charging for services will not be achieved.		
	Calculated Risk		
Specific Areas	Estimated Income	Risk assessed at	Balances Required
Increased Right to buys as a result of Government initiatives reducing the amount of collectable rent. Assume an additional 20 RTB's increasing the number to 55 in 2023/24	£115,211	50.00%	£57,606
NEW higher rent arrears as a result of cost of living crisis	£500,000	2.50%	£12,500
Total			£70,106

Potential Risk Area		Comments including any mitigation factors	
Estimated balances required for any over spend or under -recovery of expenditure		This calculation replaces the calculation based on Net Expenditure	
		Calculated Risk	
Specific Areas	Estimated Exposure	Risk assessed at	Balances Required
Gross Expenditure (excluding fixed interest costs and depreciation and RCCO)	£26,452,360.00	1.50%	£396,785
Total			£396,785
Potential Risk Area		Comments including any mitigation factors	
Greater exposure to interest rate changes		Moving from RCCOs to new borrowing to support capital increases the risk of higher borrowing costs due to increased interest rates.	
		Calculated Risk	
Specific Areas	Estimated Exposure	Risk assessed at	Balances Required
General allowance in the balances to meet any potential increased cost of borrowing (new 2023/24 loans)	£23,814,260	0.56%	£133,598
Total			£133,598
Level of Balances Assumed in Housing Revenue Account Based on risk			£3,309,060
Balances held for future debt and capital programme.			£27,112,339
Total Required balances			£30,421,399

Appendix D

Full Equality Impact Assessment Rent and Service charges 2023- 2024 Changes

What is being assessed?		HRA: Rent and Service Charge 2023/24			
Lead Assessor	Rob Gregory			Assessment team	Elizabeth Ddamulira Ben Threadgold
Start date	Jan 2023	End date	Jan 2025		
When will the EqIA be reviewed?	Jan 2024				

Who may be affected by it?	All tenants
What are the key aims of it?	<p>Rent increases are prescribed by Government and it is extremely difficult therefore not to apply the determination made by Government annually.</p> <p>To increase the rent on dwellings from week commencing 3 April 2023 by 7%, which is , an average increase of £7.24 for social rents, £11.82 for affordable rents and £8.42 for Low Start Shared Ownership homes per week (based on a 52-week year). This has been calculated in accordance with the announcement made in the Governments autumn statement that has imposed a cap on the previous policy of CPI +1% and the Council's Rent and Service Charge Policy.</p>

The Council's Rent and Service Charge Policy provides a framework for setting rents and service charges within legislative requirements. The rent and service charge income underpins the delivery of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan's key housing objectives to deliver effective services, to invest in its properties to ensure homes are of a modern standard and to provide new social housing to rent. The policy was revised in December 2019.

The revisions aimed to ensure that the policy complied with the government's direction on the Rent Standard 2019 and to clarify the Council's position in relation to service charge increases and affordable rents. A further aim since 2020 is to mitigate the impact of COVID 19 and Cost of Living Crisis (CoL) on customers and their ability to pay rent and service charges. Key elements include:

- To increase rents on social rent and affordable rent properties by up to CPI+1% each year from 2020, for a period of at least five years.
- Increase the rents for all excluded properties by CPI +1%, e.g. LSSO
- Set the rent for a proportion of new build homes at affordable rents.
- Set the rent where adaptations or extensions have resulted in the property being increased in size (for example, an additional bedroom), in accordance with the formula rent as detailed in the policy.
- Further to the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016, charge the rent payable by new tenants of existing social rent housing at the higher of the formula rent (i.e. the 'social rent rate'), or the actual rent (i.e. the 'assumed rent rate') as at 8th July 2015, with the appropriate rent increase applied in line with the current Rent Standard Direction (February 2019).
- Charge actual costs for service charges but with the provision to apply a cap, subject to any legal constraints, on affordability grounds where appropriate.
- Mitigation of COVID19 impact and Cost of Living Crisis (CoL)

What **positive measures** are in place (if any) to help **fulfil our legislative duties** to:

Remove discrimination & harassment		Promote equal opportunities	The aim of the Rent & Service Charge Policy is to provide a fair method of calculating rents and service charges for all of our tenants. It also aligns with the council's Concessions for Fees and Charges Policy, and the principle of recovering the cost of providing services.	Encourage good relations	
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What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing, February 2019 • Direction on the Rent Standard, 2019 • Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 • Housing and Planning Act 2016 • Rent and service charge policy agreed by Exec December 2019 and recommended to Council in January 2020 • Rent account information • Housing System data • Supported housing service data
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In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?	<p>Approval to increase rents by CPI + 1% for 5 years from 2020/21 required a revision of HRA Budget plans priorities. The HRA Business Plan was agreed at the December 2019 Executive Meeting.</p> <p>The average rent increase for 2023/2024 is 7%, in line with Government announcements in the Autumn Budget on 17 November 2022.</p>
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When calculating rents and service charges accounts, consideration will be taken of the need to balance any increase in the combined rent and service charge with the potential financial impact on customers. This relates to 37% of homes to which a service charge applies, which are predominantly flats as well as sheltered accommodation. The Council must recover the actual cost of providing the service and service charge costs will increase with inflationary pressures and changes in usage.

The impact of the 2023/24 rent increase and service charges is

- 269 homes or 2.7% receive a rent and service charge increase less than £6 per week;
- 7,266 homes or 90% of households will receive a weekly rent and service charge increase of less than £10 per week (based on 52 weeks).

We had 6877 general social rented properties, 36 affordable rent properties, 850 Sheltered Accommodation and 80 LSSO as at October 2022. The setting of a proportion of new build lets at affordable rents will contribute positively to increasing the supply of new homes in Stevenage. All target groups will benefit given the need for affordable housing is common across all socio-economic and minority groups. The current low supply of new affordable housing and the high cost of the private rented sector in Stevenage have impacted adversely on those groups whose incomes are average or below average.

This also further supports work with people who need help to live independently at home and those at risk of homelessness, through wider housing options, continued provision of support, and financial assistance for adaptations and more homelessness preventative programmes respectively.

Any groups that are potentially disadvantaged are still expected to be able to benefit from a council property set at a social rent.

	Tenants benefited from four years of rent reduction from 2016-2020 so the impact of the rent increase is mitigated partially by having to use a lower base than it would have been had there not been a mandatory rent reduction (cumulative) of 1 % between 2016-2020.
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Evidence and impact assessment

Explain the potential impact and opportunities it could have for people in terms of the following characteristics, where applicable:

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Age					
Positive impact		Negative impact	Residents may be experiencing exceptional economic hardship as a result of the cost of living crisis, and increases in energy, food and fuel costs in particular. This may have a greater impact older people, who may have additional needs for heating and to run particular equipment, and may also have lower income / be reliant on pensions and/or benefits (which have been	Unequal impact	The increase is applied to all properties; it is not possible to exempt any particular groups. A proportion of tenants may see an increase in service charges in any given year. The majority of tenants who are charged for services live in flats and/or sheltered accommodation. Tenants living in sheltered housing do so because they have additional needs that require support relating to age, disability or both. The minimum age for entry into sheltered housing is 55 years and data from Northgate indicates that the proportion of tenants aged 60+ in sheltered housing, is almost three times the proportion for all tenant housing.

			<p>increased in line with inflation)</p>		<p>In relation to flat blocks, the data indicates that there is a higher proportion of people aged 18-29 years in flat blocks compared with all SBC housing.</p> <p>For people living in independent living/flexicare schemes, in addition to basic rent and service charges, those who pay for the support/emergency response services that are not eligible for Housing benefit may see an increase in overall payment due each week .</p> <p>We currently know that COVID-19 and Cost of Living Crisis (CoL) is disproportionately of particular risk to older people and those with underlying conditions. This may result in in this age group incurring extra expenses that may affect their ability to pay rent and service charges.</p>
<p>Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment</p>			<p>See page two and three.</p>		
<p>What opportunities are there to mitigate the impact?</p>	<p>Ongoing and day to day consultation will take place with residents in 2023/24 to establish the impact of the rent & service charge increase. Please also refer to the mitigations outlined in the socio-economic section below, most of which will also apply to this protected characteristic group.</p>			<p>What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)</p>	

Disability

Positive impact		Negative impact	Residents may be experiencing exceptional economic hardship as a result of the cost of living crisis, and increases in energy, food and fuel costs in particular. This may have a greater impact on people with a disability, who may have additional needs for heating and to run particular equipment, and may also have lower income / be reliant on benefits (which have been increased in line with inflation)	Unequal impact	<p>The increase is applied to all properties; it is not possible to exempt any particular groups. Northgate data on tenants in relation to disability is collected at the lettings stage and in most cases this was a number of years ago and is not up to date. This information was also disclosed at the tenants' discretion so some tenants may not have provided it. To give some context, the data indicates that the proportion of tenants in sheltered housing declaring that they had a disability was almost double the proportion for the whole SBC tenant population.</p> <p>The proportion of tenants living in flat blocks declaring a disability was very similar to the proportion living in all properties; therefore a disproportionate impact on these tenants is not anticipated.</p>
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment			See page two and three.		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?				What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Gender reassignment, Marriage or civil partnership, Pregnancy & maternity, Race, Religion or belief, Sex, Sexual orientation N/A					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	

Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	There is no evidence to suggest any specific impacts on customers within any of these protected characteristic groups.		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

<p style="text-align: center;">Socio-economic¹ e.g. low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users</p>					
Positive impact		Negative impact	<p>The rent increase will be applied across all tenancies prescribed by the Work and Welfare Reform Act and in line with the current Rent Standard Direction (February 2019) regardless of circumstances. This will be applied for 2023/2024. Those reliant on Housing Benefit (HB) and Universal Credit (UC) Housing costs to cover their full rent and eligible service charges won't be affected by the increase in rent and service charges as their benefit award will be recalculated.</p> <p>The number of bids on the new build properties let at affordable rents are similar to the number received for new build let at social rents. There is a mixture of employed and unemployed applicants. Applicants in receipt of benefits are not excluded or unfairly treated.</p>	Unequal impact	

¹Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.

			<p>Those who receive services for which a service charge is made will be charged the actual cost of those services. Heating charges are exempt from HB and tenants are expected to pay this. Water charges are also exempt from HB and are set by the Water Authority. SBC collects the water charges on behalf of the Water Authority.</p> <p>Residents may be experiencing exceptional economic hardship as a result of the cost of living crisis, and increases in energy, food and fuel costs in particular. Households in the general rented homes, especially those on lower incomes, in general pay more of their income on housing costs and have less resilience to cope with financial shocks. This is anticipated to lead to a significant increase in fuel poverty, and extreme fuel poverty.</p> <p>By pushing those who had previously been coping into financial hardship, it is very likely that the rise in cost of living is going to intensify health inequalities that have already been exacerbated by the Covid-19 crisis and we know that poverty and health inequalities are inextricably linked.</p>		
<p>Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment</p>		<p>See page two and three</p>			

<p>What opportunities are there to mitigate the impact and promote equality and inclusion?</p>	<p>The policy allows for capping of service charges, subject to any legal constraints. As a means of mitigating the impact of an increase that would cause hardship, the council may subsidise the costs.</p> <p>Rent increase information will be published on the Council website early February 2023 to start preparing tenants.</p> <p>The rent notification letter (to be sent out at the end of February) will offer tenants the opportunity to discuss any queries they have with staff. It will explain why the rent has increased and also explain any increase in service charges. Where a property has a number of service charges they will be fully explained, with a summary of how the weekly charge has increased overall.</p> <p>Where support charges are also included (mainly but not exclusively for sheltered and flexi care schemes) separate notifications will be sent out to these residents to ensure it is clearly set out how each element of the weekly charge is made up.</p> <p>To ensure that this is explained as clearly as possible there will be a FAQ sheet and details on the website and hard copies available for those who need them.</p> <p>The policy states that the Council will have regard to the Local Housing Allowance when setting affordable rents. If affordable rents are set at this level, HB/ UC housing cost will cover the rent in full for those tenants who are entitled to the maximum amount of housing benefit. Setting at the Local Housing Allowance will also benefit tenants who are, for example on a low wage or zero hour contracts and where partial housing benefit can be paid.</p>	<p>What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)</p>	<p>ongoing consultation will take place with residents throughout 2023/24 to establish impact of the rent & service charge increase and put in place systems to mitigate this accordingly</p>
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For those moving into Affordable Rent (AR) properties a comprehensive affordability assessment is carried out prior to offer to ensure that the tenancy is sustainable.

The implementation of the policy in respect of Affordable Rent will be kept under review by the Housing Development Executive Committee and should adverse impacts be identified this will inform future decision making in this regard.

Support provision for this group has been increased as part of an Income Recovery Action plan and it has been extended for a further 2 years to ensure that they can pay through sustainable arrangements to maintain payments towards rent and service charges and have access to required support . Additional staffing resources have been secured to continue work to target and support UC cases to maximise income collection and minimise the level of arrears for this group of tenants.

The Council will make links to support and guidance clear on all of its communication platforms.

The Council will prepare staff to enable them to respond effectively and empathetically with tenants.

There is Officer Working Group - Cost of Living & Cost of Living Action Plan in place to mitigate some of the worst impacts of the cost of living crisis, the action plan seeks to minimise the negative on people in Stevenage. The action plan also considers the role of Stevenage Borough Council, as employers, recognising the

	impact of the CoL on low paid staff. It is therefore expected that the action plan will also have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of staff as well.		
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Other				
please feel free to consider the potential impact on people in any other contexts				
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment				
What opportunities are there to mitigate the impact?				What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)

What are the findings of any consultation with:

Residents?	Although time has not allowed for formal consultation, ongoing consultation will take place with residents throughout 2023/24 to establish impact of the rent & service charge increase and put in place systems to mitigate this accordingly. Please also refer to the mitigations outlined in the socio-economic section above.	Staff?	N/A
Voluntary & community sector?	N/A	Partners?	N/A

Other stakeholders?	<p>Housing Management Advisory Board (HMAB) was consulted in November 2019 and was supportive of the policy to charge service charges at actual costs but with the provision in the policy to cap any increases if this would cause hardship.</p> <p>In terms of affordable rents, HMAB broadly supported this policy. There are still some concerns about the affordability of such schemes and the position if tenants lost employment/were on a low wage. The rent would be covered in full for those tenants entitled to full HB/ UC housing costs due to the rent being set at the LHA level. Also those in low paid employment may be entitled to partial HB/ UC housing costs. Thorough affordability assessments will be carried out.</p>	
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Overall conclusion & future activity

Explain the overall findings of the assessment and reasons for outcome (please choose one) :		
1. No inequality, inclusion issues or opportunities to further improve have been identified		
Negative / unequal impact, barriers to inclusion or improvement opportunities identified	2a. Adjustments made	
	2b. Continue as planned	<p>The future viability of the HRA Business Plan is reliant upon us being able to maximise income collection, recover arrears and the costs of service provision where it's possible to do so.</p> <p>Only a proportion of new builds will be at affordable rent in line with the revised HRA Budget plan. The proposal to offer a mix of new build rents at affordable rent levels and at social rent levels would result in additional income to the HRA over 30 years which makes a significant contribution</p>

		<p>to the sustainability of the plan and the Council’s ability to build new homes and to deliver other housing priorities.</p> <p>There are plans to build 151 social rented and 283 affordable rented properties over the 5 years of the revised Business Plan. The policy and the aim is for a 50/50 split, but due to the timing of delivery on schemes the weighting is slightly biased towards affordable, but it evens out over the whole 30 year plan.</p> <p>This means that there will be a total of approximately 4% of council homes at affordable rent at the end of the 5 year period. The majority of annual lettings (i.e. of new build and re-let properties) would continue to be at a social rent level and it is estimated that after 30 years the vast majority of council property rents (an estimated 88%) will be set at the social rent rate, subject to any changes in legislation or Government guidance.</p>
	2c. Stop and remove	

Detail the actions that are needed as a result of this assessment and how they will help to remove discrimination & harassment, promote equal opportunities and / or encourage good relations :				
Action	Will this help to remove, promote and / or encourage?	Responsible officer	Deadline	How will this be embedded as business as usual?
Consultation with residents to establish the impact of the rent increase	Remove discrimination and promote equal opportunities.	Elizabeth Ddamulira	March 2024	Systems will be put in place to mitigate impacts

	put in place systems to mitigate this accordingly			
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Approved by Assistant Director (Housing and Investment) : Rob Gregory

Date: 21/11/2022

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Part 1



Agenda item:

Meeting EXECUTIVE
Portfolio Area RESOURCES
Date 18 January 2023



DRAFT GENERAL FUND AND COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2023/24

KEY DECISION

Authors Clare Fletcher
Contributor Senior Leadership Team
Lead Officers Clare Fletcher | 2933
Contact Officer Clare Fletcher | 2933

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider the Council's draft 2023/24 General Fund Budget, Council Tax Support Scheme and draft proposals for the 2023/24 Council Tax.
- 1.2 To consider the projected 2022/23 General Fund Budget

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The 2022/23 revised net expenditure on the General Fund of £11,938,420 is approved as set out in paragraph 4.10.1.
- 2.2 Members note the inclusion of the 2023/24 Fees and Charges of £325,840 including the 5% increase in market rents approved for inclusion at the December Executive, (Appendix B to this report), in the draft 2023/24 budget.
- 2.3 The draft General Fund Budget for 2023/24 of £10,723,320 (is proposed for consultation purposes), with a contribution from balances of £664,462 and a Band D Council Tax of £232.31, (assuming a 2.99% increase).

- 2.4 The updated position on the General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as summarised in section 4.12 be noted.
- 2.5 The minimum level of General Fund reserves of £3,419,753, in line with the 2023/24 risk assessment of balances, as shown at Appendix C to this report, is approved.
- 2.6 The contingency sum of £400,000 within which the Executive can approve supplementary estimates, be approved for 2023/24, (reflecting the level of balances available above the minimum amount).
- 2.7 The 2023/24 Making Your Money Count (MYMC) options as set out in section 4.2 and Appendix A, totalling £1,373,999 and £32,502 (cost) for the General Fund and HRA respectively, be included into the Council's budget setting processes for consideration by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, subject to recommendation 2.8.
- 2.8 That for 2023/24 £32,000 be transferred from the Business Rates Gains allocated reserve to fund next year's firework display and town twining event, together with the reviews set out in paragraph 4.7.12 and 4.7.13.
- 2.9 The Growth options included in section 4.8 are approved for inclusion in the 2023/24 General Fund (£73,150) and HRA (£56,892) budgets.
- 2.10 That the pressures identified in sections 4.2 and 4.9 to this report are noted.
- 2.11 Members note for 2023/24, £300,000 budget to pump prime Transformation and included in the General Fund budget setting processes, to enable to significantly contribute to the savings targets as set out in section 4.12.
- 2.12 Members approve the use of the business rate gains only once realised and ring fence the use for financial resilience of the Council.
- 2.13 That the decisions taken on recommendations 2.3 – 2.12 above be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework rules in the Council's Constitution.
- 2.14 That Members note the Equalities Impact Assessments appended to this report in Appendices D and E.
- 2.15 That key partners and other stakeholders are consulted and their views considered as part of the 2023/24 budget setting process.

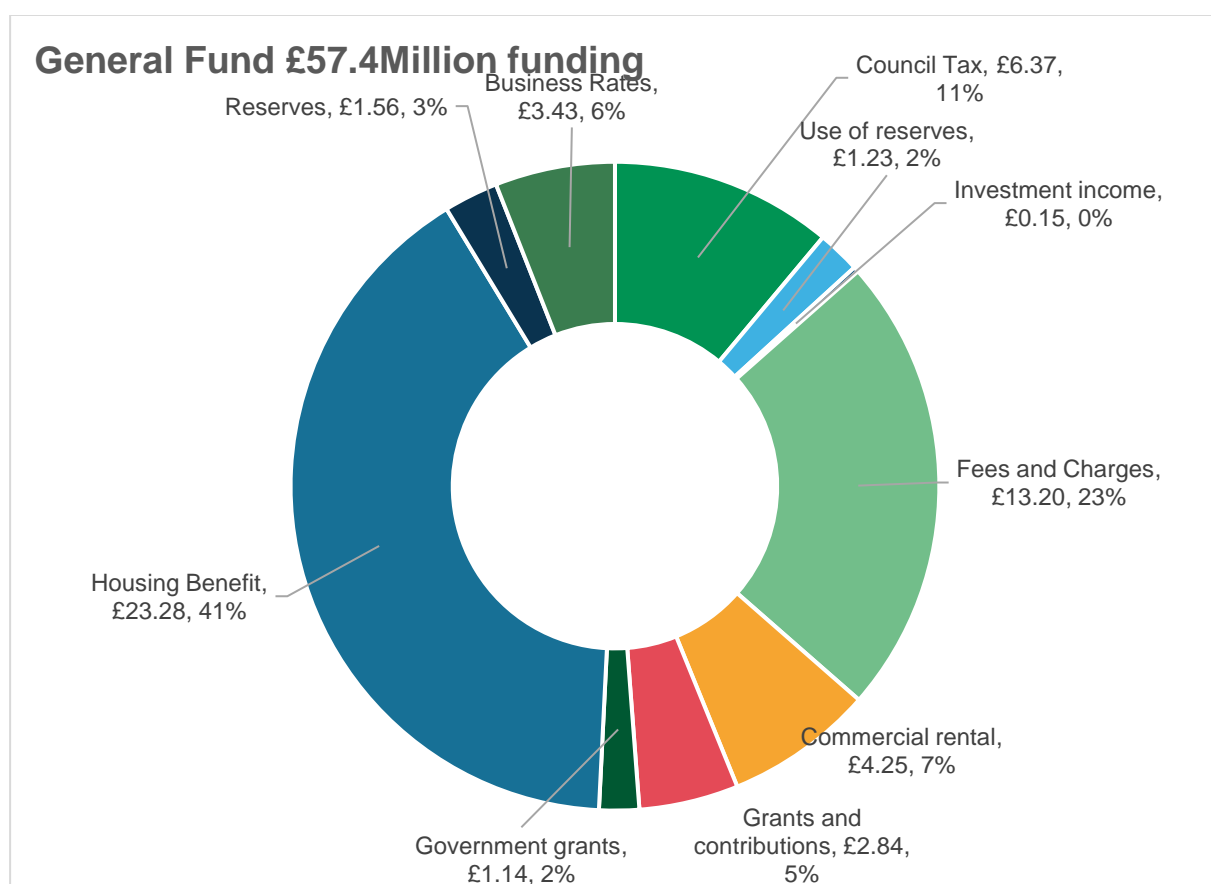
3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 This report sets out the 2022/23 draft General Fund Budget including Making Your Money Count (MYMC) options, growth bids and pressures. The General Fund Budget forms part of the Council's Budget and Policy Framework. Under Article 4 of the Constitution, the Budget includes: the allocation of financial resources to different services and projects; proposed contingency funds; setting the council tax; the council tax support scheme; decisions relating to the control of the Council's borrowing requirement; the control of its capital expenditure; and the setting of virement limits
- 3.2 As set out in the November and December Making Your Money Count (MYMC) reports, the 2023/24 budget setting process has been undertaken

during a very financially challenging period for the public sector as well as the broader national economy. The Council has weathered the operational and financial impacts of COVID during 2020/21-2021/22 which resulted in a net cost to the Council of circa £4Million, whilst still delivering the majority of its services and progressing a range of major regeneration and housing development projects. This has now been exacerbated by the current significant financial challenge of the 'Cost of Living' crisis which has resulted in a dramatic increase in inflationary pressures as set out in the September 2022 Executive Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) report and again in the November and December MYMC reports.

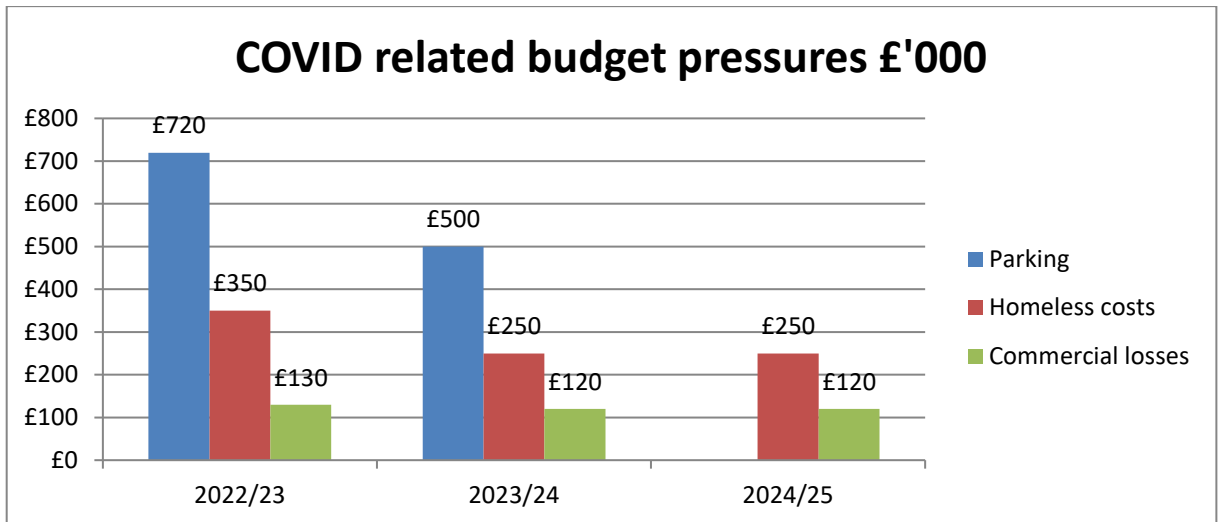
3.3 Since the December MYMC report the government has published the Finance Settlement for Councils for 2023/24. A summary of what this means for the Council is set out in section 4.1 and the General Fund resource projections have been updated accordingly.

3.4 The original 2022/23 SBC General Fund net budget of £11.15Million (gross £57Million) is funded as set out below.

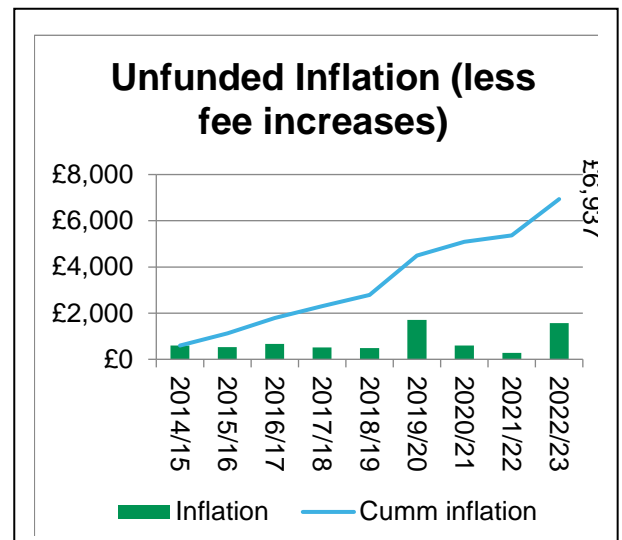
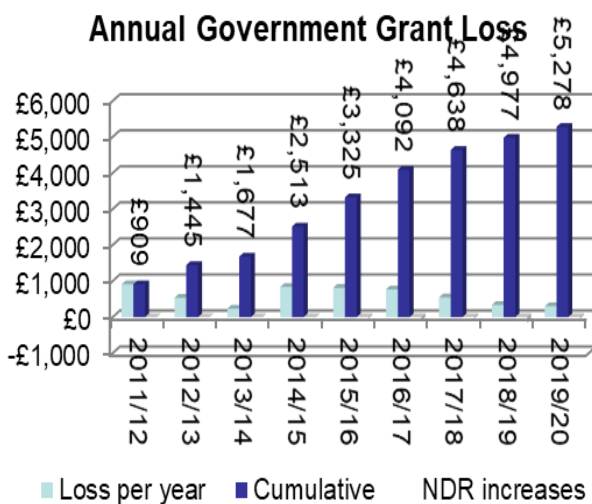


Note: government funding includes a £500K of Homeless funding, The income shown excludes HRA income (£7Million) as this has been treated reducing expenditure.

3.5 The 2022/23 budget still included COVID related pressures for income loss (£850K) and additional costs (£350K) totalling £1.2Million. The September COVID MTFS (September 2022) assumptions are summarised in the chart below. In addition to these assumptions, parking income losses have subsequently been reported to be a further £300K lower than the original budget. These impacts remain under constant review and will be refined up to and including the February 2023/24 Council report.



3.6 The ability to set a balanced budget and at the same time retain the same level of services has become harder due to the combined financial impacts of government grant reduction and absorbing inflation (see below).

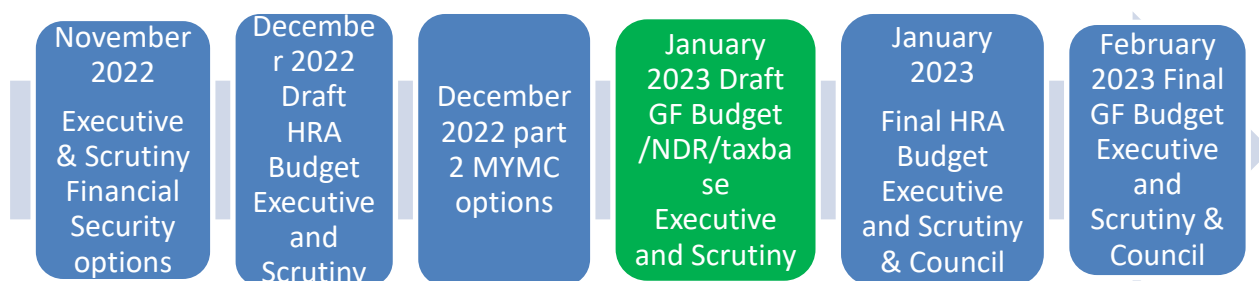


3.7 New pressures, a more to less certainty over funding, government policy changes with a financial impact, COVID losses and now high inflation make the ability to fund within the existing financial footprint impossible. At the same time there has been a transition towards more inherent risk within local government funding, where resources can fluctuate significantly between years, such as new homes bonus or business rates and annual specific service grant awards.

3.8 The DCN have commented that the 2022 finance policy statement contained good news that all councils will be guaranteed an increase of at least 3% in their spending power next year. On top of the previously announced flexibility for district councils to raise council tax by 3%, going some way to addressing the budget gap that all councils are confronting. However, it still means district councils face a real-term cuts in their spending power next year as inflation outstrips the new funding support. This comes at a time when demand for a range of important services, such as housing support and homelessness

prevention, is rising. Income from fees and charges remains below pre-pandemic levels. District councils have warned they faced a collective funding gap of at least £500m in 2023-24. That's equivalent to almost 15% of their net budget. The new support announced only covers a small proportion of the gap.

- 3.9 While the magnitude of savings required for 2023/24 a one year budget setting process has been adopted. To prevent a further erosion of services it is critical beyond 2023/24, that the Transformation and the Co-operative Commercial insourcing Strategy and services and assets are reviewed during 2023/24 to ensure the Council continues to be able to function and still deliver the required future years savings.
- 3.10 The Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules in the Constitution, prescribe the Budget setting process, which includes a consultation period. The timescale required to implement this process is outlined below.



4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1 Stevenage Borough Finance Settlement 2023/24

- 4.1.1 On 19 December 2022, the Secretary of State for the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) released a written statement to Parliament on the provisional local government finance settlement 2023/24. The settlement is for two years and is based on the Spending Review 2021 (SR21) funding levels. The National Core Spending Power figures show an increase of 9.2% for 2023/24, however this includes assumptions about increases in council tax, which increases core spending power by 6% nationally.

National Provisional Funding Settlement	2022-23 £Million	2023-24 £Million	Variance £Million	% change
Settlement Funding Assessment	£14,882	£15,671	£789	
Under-indexing the business rates multiplier	£1,275	£2,205	£930	
Council Tax Requirement exc. parish precepts	£31,922	£33,838	£1,916	6.0%
New Homes Bonus	£556	£291	(£265)	
Services Grant	£822	£464	(£358)	
Grants rolled in (including council tax support)	£239		(£239)	

National Provisional Funding Settlement	2022-23 £Million	2023-24 £Million	Variance £Million	% change
Funding Guarantee	£0	£136	£136	
Rural Services Delivery Grant	£85	£85	£0	
Improved Better Care Fund	£2,140	£2,140	£0	
Social Care Grant	£2,346	£3,852	£1,506	
Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care Fund	£162		(£162)	
ASC Mkt Sustainability and Improvement Fund		£562	£562	
Lower Tier Services Grant	£111		(£111)	
Adult Social Care Discharge Fund		£300	£300	
Core Spending Power	£54,541	£59,544	£5,003	9.2%

4.1.3 The lower Tier grant has not been continued into 2023/24, (Stevenage received £177,337 in 2022/23). In addition, the 2023/24 Service Grant has been reduced for the reversal of the Adult Social Care National Insurance (1.25%).

4.1.4 The council tax referendum limit will be 3% or £5 on a Band D, whichever is the greater for local authorities, with social care authorities allowed an additional 2% social care precept.

4.1.5 As announced in the SR22, the business rates multiplier has been frozen for 2023/24, but does include within that 3.74% inflation increase, (the third bullet point below)

- Reduction in the multiplier of equal and opposite magnitude to offset the impact of the national change in Rateable Value due to Revaluation 2023 (assumed to reduce it to 46.5p).
- Allowance for subsequent appeals from Revaluation 2023 (estimated 3.3%, taking the multiplier to 48.0p).
- Element for inflation, assumed at 3.74%, taking the multiplier back to 49.9p.

4.1.6 The government committed to an increase for Councils in business rates income in line with September CPI of 10.1% and the multiplier allowance only has 3.74% included, so there is a further increase required within the Under-Indexing Business Rates Multiplier funding of 6.26%.

4.1.7 New Homes Bonus (NHB) 2023/24 allocations have been announced at £291Million, a reduction of £265Million from the current year. There have been no technical changes to the scheme for next year, but with just a single year's new allocation made and no legacy payments (contributing to the year-on-year national reduction). The Stevenage NHB allowance for 2023/24 is £86,736 (one off).

4.1.8 Top Up/Tariff Adjustments (Negative RSG) – As in previous years, the government has decided to eliminate the negative RSG amounts, this would have been a cost of £27,146 to the Council in 2023/24.

4.1.9 A summary of the settlement versus the September and then December MTFS assumptions are shown in the table below with funding £106,302 higher than estimated in the December MTFS.

Provisional Finance Settlement (2023/24)				
	September MTFS	December MTFS	Settlement	Variance (= less)
Business Rates	(£2,926,302)	(£2,926,302)	(£ 2,770,756)	£ 155,546
Under indexing	(£ 186,035)	(£ 186,035)	(£ 454,589)	(£ 268,554)
Total Business Rates	(£3,112,337)	(£3,112,337)	(£ 3,225,345)	(£ 113,008)
New Homes Bonus (NHB)	£ 0	(£ 82,862)	(£ 86,736)	(£ 3,874)
2022-23 Services Grant	(£ 120,000)	(£ 88,669)	(£ 99,927)	(£ 11,258)
3% guarantee			(£ 82,513)	(£ 82,513)
Grants now in the settlement:				
Council Tax Support	(£ 104,350)	(£ 104,350)		£ 104,350
Total	(£3,232,337)	(£3,283,868)	(£ 3,494,520)	(£ 106,302)

4.2 Pressures and Gains currently assumed in the General Fund 2023/24

4.2.1 The General Fund budget assumptions for 2023/24 now include growth pressures of £2.862Million and budget reductions of £287K, as set out below.

New Pressures	2023/24	Comments
Car Park income losses	£600,000	The November MTFS had losses of £700K for 2023/24 (with £200K already removed from the base budget), however based on current projections for 2022/23, next year's projection has been amended by £100K. The new Railway station MSCP should come on stream for 2023/24 which is anticipated to improve income received.
Garage income losses	£200,000	2023/24 Income will continue to be impacted because of the asbestos issue in the garages, a report has been commissioned to consider what the next steps are for the affected sites.
REVISED :Inflation pressures	£1,650,084	This is based on the latest projections for utilities and a 3% pay award. The figure shown is net of costs charged to the HRA.
Homeless costs	£260,000	The cost assumed in 2022/23 was £410K, this has assumed to reduce (with new properties coming on stream), however the Cost-of-Living crisis may cause a surge in demand.

New Pressures	2023/24	Comments
Borrowing costs	£77,310	Increase in borrowing costs for the General Fund based on higher interest rates (assumed 5.5%)
Local Plan survey costs	£75,000	There is a need to complete further work over the next three years for the revised Local Plan. 2024/25 £125K (350K from local plan reserve), 2025/26 £100K. An equivalent amount has been drawn back from the NDR reserve to meet this pressure in both years.
Total Pressures identified	£2,862,394	

New Budget reductions	2023/24	Comments
Investment interest	(£287,005)	This is based on a 4% investment yield for 2023/24. This anticipated to reduce for 2024/25, however this will depend on market reaction to government policy, unchanged from the November estimate as higher interest rates had already been factored in.

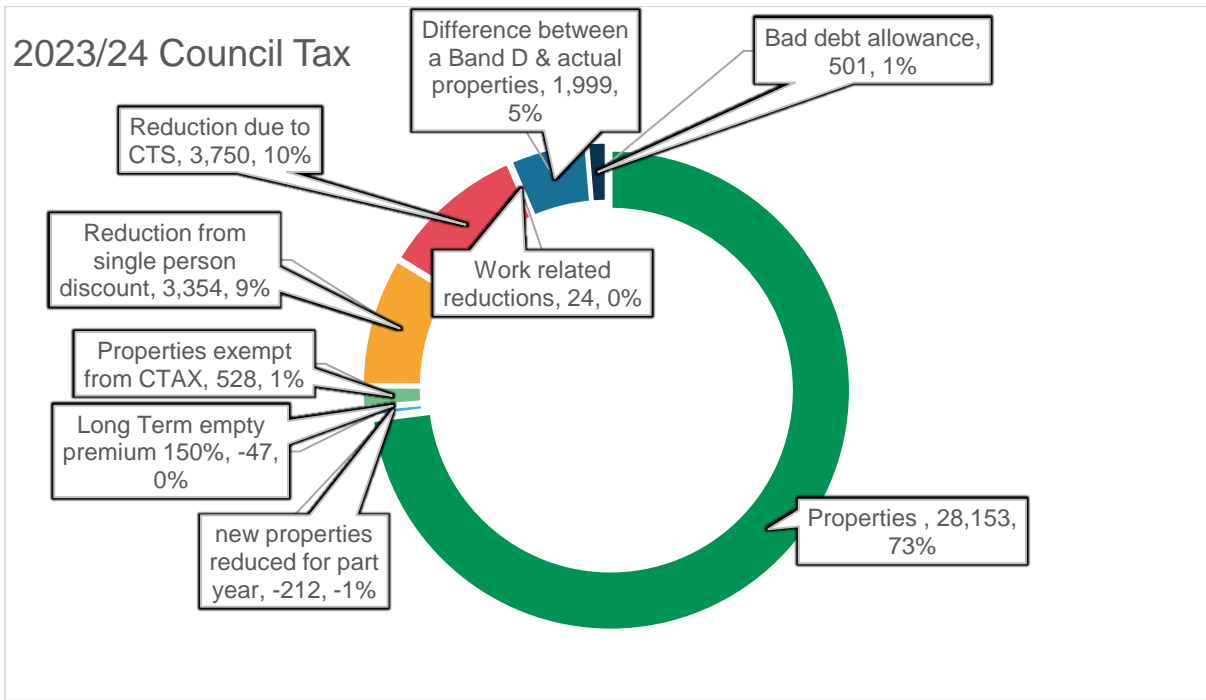
4.2.2 The need to find savings has been exacerbated by:

- Higher inflationary pressures 2022/23 pay award estimated at 2%, actual 5.67%, with a 3% pay award assumed for 2023/24 (previously 2%)
- Higher Utility costs increase 2022/23 which are £278K above the budget, with 2023/24 additional utility and fuel costs

4.3 Council Tax

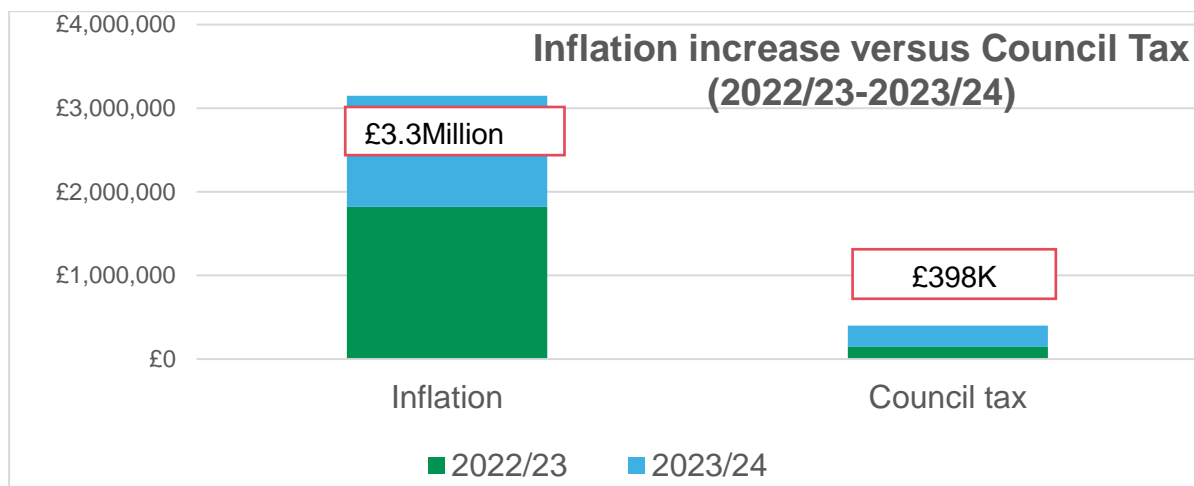
4.3.1 The Council Tax base report to the December Executive showed an increase in the tax base of 0.53% compared to 2022/23 and includes an increase of 5% in the CTS caseload, (compared to the October 2022 caseload) and known new housing developments.

4.3.2 The impact of discounts and reliefs on the gross tax base or number of properties in Stevenage is summarised in the chart below.



4.3.3 The December MYMC report recommended that Members approve an increase of 2.99% for the Stevenage Borough Council share of the council tax which equates to an additional £223,575 of income. Under the referendum regulations, the County Council (HCC) can increase by 3% and a further 2% for the Social Care precept and the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) can increase their share of council tax by up to £15 on a Band D.

4.3.4 The ability to increase council tax by a further 1% (by moving the referendum criteria from 2% to up to 3%) generates an additional £63,505, which falls significantly short of the inflationary pressures identified in this report. Members are recommended to approve a 2.99% increase in Council Tax as part of the savings to close the budget gap for 2023/24.



4.3.5 Members should note that SBC only retains a relatively small part of the overall Council Tax raised for the year. To illustrate this, taking a Band C property,

(which is the biggest proportion of properties in Stevenage) the relative shares of council tax for a band C property are shown below.

Authority	2021/22	2022/23	Cost per week	Increase	Share
Hertfordshire County Council	£1,307.22	£1,359.38	£26.14	3.99%	77.32%
Stevenage Borough Council	£196.06	£200.51	£3.86	2.26%	11.40%
Police Crime Commissioner	£189.33	£198.22	£3.81	4.70%	11.27%
Total	£1,692.61	£1,758.11	£33.81	3.86%	100.00%

4.3.6 An estimate of the 2.99% increase in council tax for Stevenage Borough Council is summarised in the table below.

Council Tax increase modelled for Stevenage Precept 2023/24				
Council Tax band	2022/23	2.99% increase	Total cost per year	Total cost per week
A	£150.38	£4.49	£154.87	£2.98
B	£175.44	£5.25	£180.69	£3.47
C	£200.51	£5.99	£206.50	£3.97
D	£225.57	£6.74	£232.31	£4.47
E	£275.70	£8.23	£283.93	£5.46
F	£325.82	£9.74	£335.56	£6.45
G	£375.95	£11.23	£387.18	£7.45
H	£451.14	£13.48	£464.62	£8.94

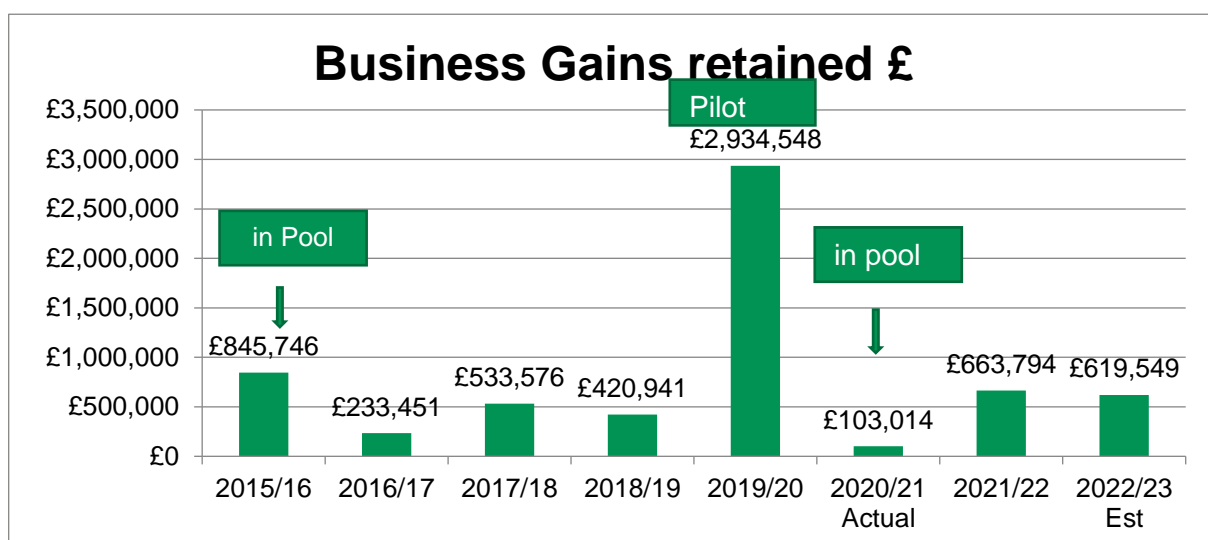
4.4 Business Rates Income

4.4.1 The MTFs currently only includes the 2023/24 base line funding for business rates, or the amount the government has assessed the Council needs under its funding formula. In year gains are not guaranteed and have fluctuated each year and cannot fund on-going spend.

4.4.2 Any NDR gains above the baseline have been used previously to fund time limited growth and regeneration objectives. The rules governing NDR accounting mean any estimated gains are taken in year and any difference between the actual and the estimate are taken from or, in the case of losses refunded to, the Collection Fund in future years. The CFO recommends that

any business rate gains are transferred to the NDR reserve to improve the resilience of the General Fund.

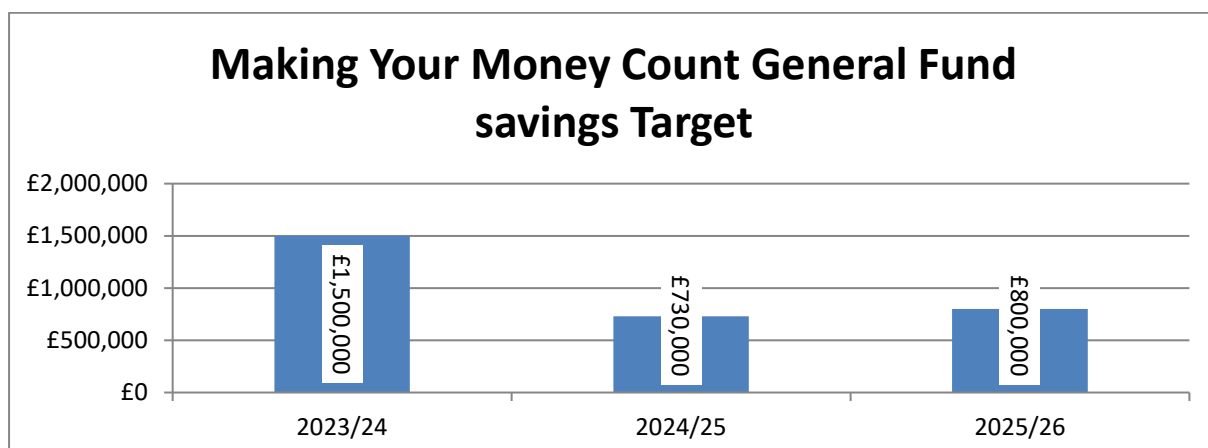
- 4.4.3 The completion of the NDR1 form issued by the government determines the level of business rates collectable, level of reliefs to be given in 2023/24 together with the current business rate yield in January. The November MYMC report recommended this be delegated to the CFO after consultation with the Resources & Information Technology Portfolio Holder.
- 4.4.4 In order to complete the NNDR1 and the projected business rates for 2023/24 the year end release needs to go into system and tested and this means that a first draft will not be completed until 18-20 January and as such after the publication of the January draft budget report.
- 4.4.5 The 2022/23 business rates will be reviewed as part of the NNDR1 activity, as at the 1 December there were reductions to the current year's yield as a result of prior year adjustments totalling £2.3Million. Based on the current data and without compensatory reduction in the appeals provision, this would mean 2022/23 business rate income would be £200K lower than estimated, with the difference repaid to the Collection Fund in 2023/24. However, it is anticipated the majority relates to appeals from the 2017 rating list and will be funded from the appeals provision.
- 4.4.6 Business rate gains fluctuate between financial years as shown below and as they cannot be guaranteed are used for financial resilience of the General Fund (i.e. in year shortfall on savings due to part year implementation), rather than used to fund the running of day to day services.



4.5 The MYMC Savings Target to Find

- 4.5.1 The November MYMC report set out the increased savings target as a direct result of projected increases in utility and pay costs. The September 2022 MTFS report identified a total £2Million funding gap for 2023/24 but recognised the balance between the level of reserves held versus the ability to find large

scale reductions and therefore a target lower than the budget gap was recommended.



4.5.2 The MYMC savings target will need to be kept under constant review, due to the considerable uncertainty surrounding local government finance and other economic pressures. The level of reserves required and therefore the level of savings to achieve is based on a risk assessment. Some of those more significant risks which could materialise and increase the need for further savings are summarised in the table below.

Expenditure and Income	Impacted by	Risk (to increase cost)
Inflation	Increases in utility costs continue to be in the order of 300% on gas and 150% on electricity in 2023/24 and beyond, currently the indication is up to £300K more than the MTFS assumption	high
	The MTFS assumes a 3% pay award for 2023/24, a continuation of higher inflation may drive much higher pay negotiation outcomes. A 1% increase in the pay award equates to an additional £200K of costs.	high
	Projections for inflation of CPI at 10.1% (September) will exacerbate inflationary pressures in the General Fund and HRA for pay, goods and services.	high
Demand for services	There may be an increase for support services such as homeless and advice and this puts further pressure on the Council's budgets	high
Retention and Recruitment of staff	The ability to recruit and retain staff in the current employment market may lead to the need to increase salary costs and use a higher level of agency workers to ensure service continuity	high

Expenditure and Income	Impacted by	Risk (to increase cost)
Fees and Charges	The impact of COVID and new ways of working in addition to the Cost of Living Crisis may impact of the Council's fees and charges income which is required to support the funding of services.	high
Core funding	New Homes Bonus although likely to be in place for 2023/24-2024/25 can fluctuate from year to year and has to exceed the threshold calculation.	high
	The Government reviews the base line funding for Council's, while there is insufficient time for 2023/24, this may be a way to reduce the cost of the Local Government in future years.	Medium
	Grant funding for new burdens is announced annually such as homeless or rough sleeper funding which makes recruitment and retention difficult on a permanent basis	high

4.6 The 2023/24 Making Your Money Count Options process for the General Fund and HRA.

4.6.1 The Council's Senior Leadership Team in recognising the scale of the savings required, agreed with the Executive Portfolio holders that a star chamber process would be held with all Assistant Directors, looking at;

- New surplus income streams
- Opportunities for grant funding
- Services provided for third parties recover all our costs and management time
- What discretionary services could potentially be reduced or stopped
- For all services what would a reduction in service feel like e.g. from gold standard to bronze (whilst ensuring that statutory services continue to be provided).
- In addition, cross cutting areas such as training, post etc would be reviewed.

4.6.2 Executive portfolio holders met and considered the MYMC budget options included in the November MYMC report. Only one of those options presented was not recommended for consideration, which was a 50% reduction in Local Community Budgets totalling £30K.

4.6.3 Since the November Executive the Senior Leadership Team considered further options to meet the £429,551 savings gap identified and these were contained within December MYMC report and are incorporated into Appendix A to this report.

4.6.4 Due to the scale of the 2023/24 budget challenge and the difficulties and time spent in identifying a package of savings, there was not sufficient time and resources to meet with the Leaders Financial Security cross party group to consider the savings package proposed.

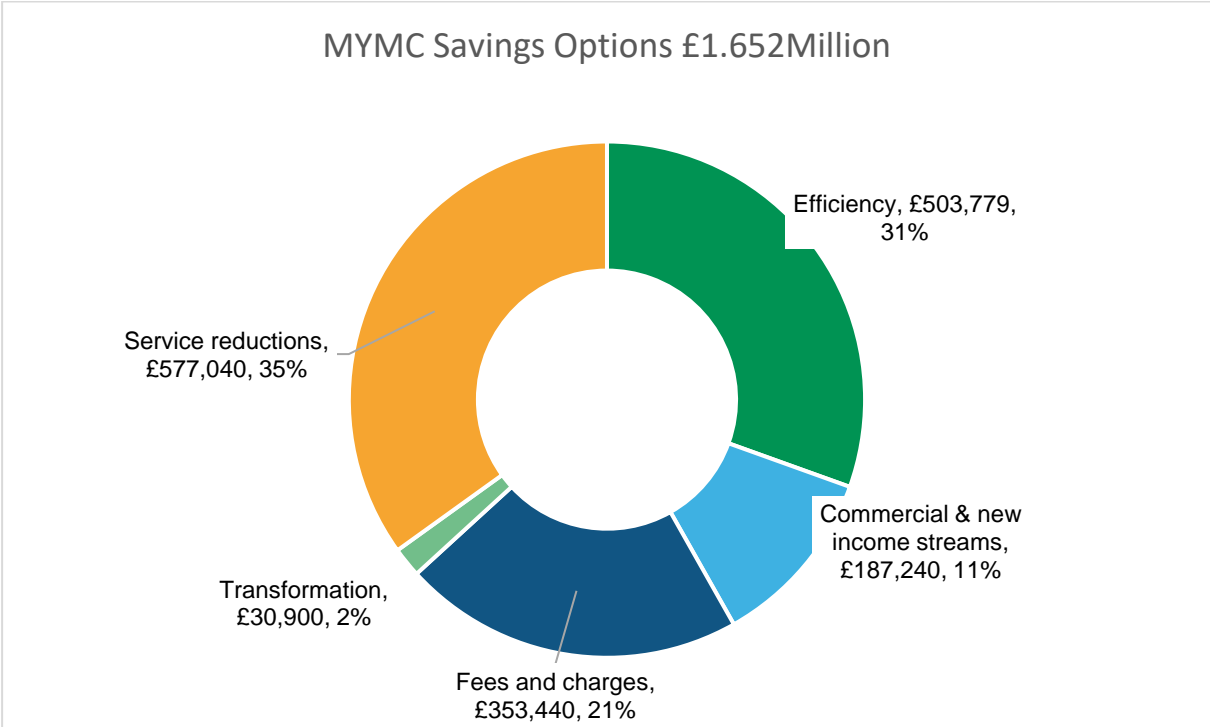
4.7 Making Your Money Count (MYMC) Savings

4.7.1 As already stated elsewhere in this report, the 2023/24 budget gap has been one of the most difficult challenges to address, in the wake of years of austerity grant funding reductions whilst at the same time absorbing significant unbudgeted inflationary pressures. Followed by the impact of Covid making the financial position more difficult and now the Invasion of Ukraine along with the Cost of Living crisis adding additional pressure. This has meant that this Council along with many others has had to recommend service reductions in order to set a balanced budget.

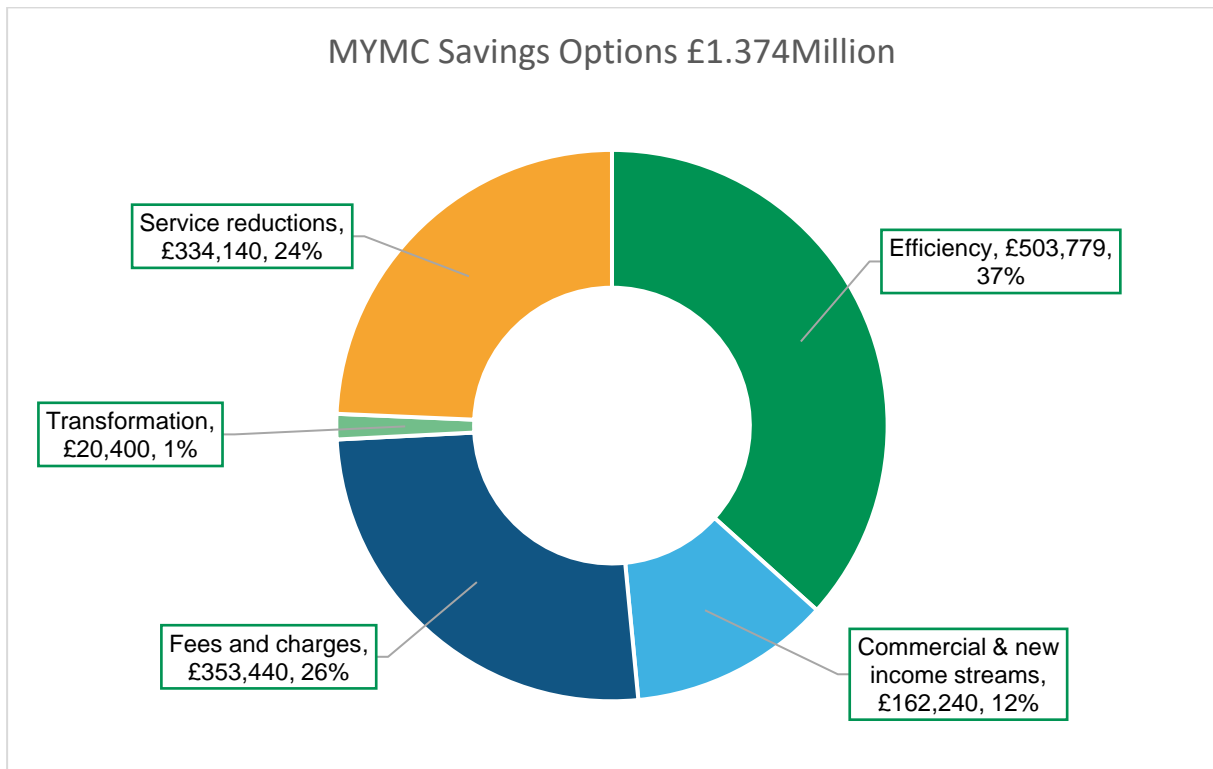
4.7.2 Finding £1.5Million plus of savings because of this heightened inflation, (compared to the original MYMC target of £830K) has proved to be difficult. The December MYMC report also identified a further increase in inflation pressures of circa £300K, potentially increasing the draw on balances to potentially £900K, versus the £563K assumed in the September 2022 report.

4.7.3 As stated in the two MYMC reports to the November and December (2022) Executive, some of the options are not recommended lightly and represent a balance between having to increase an achievable level of fees but also needing to make service reductions to set the budget for next year. With no easy options left, the preferred approach was to look for some larger savings options in specific areas, in favour of having dozens of smaller cuts.

4.7.4 The total value of options now recommended for approval is summarised in the chart below and total £1.652Million (as a result of higher inflation).

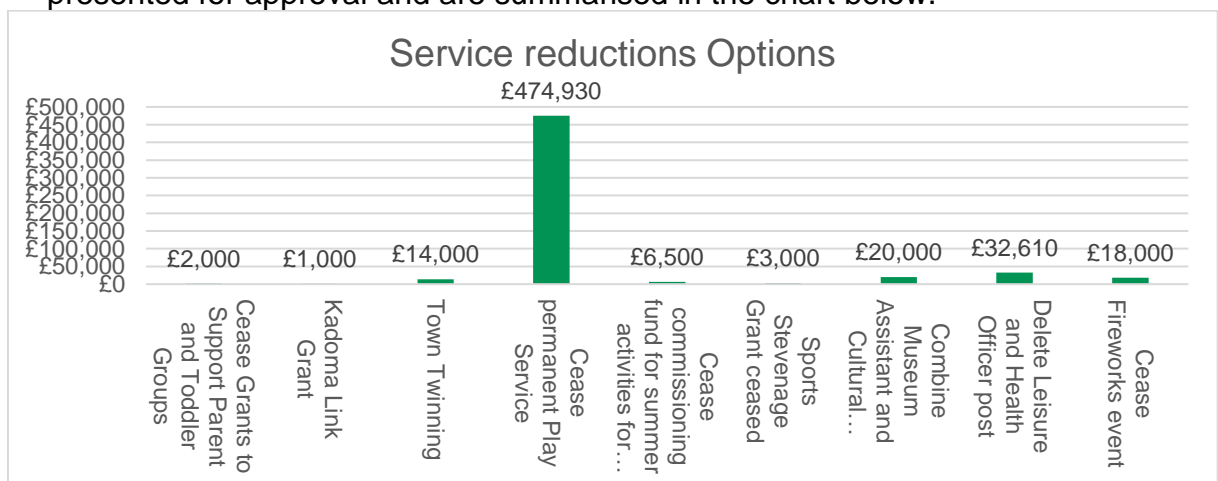


4.7.5 However, a number of the options require an implementation time period and an assessment of this has been made and detailed in Appendix A and the realistic level for 2023/24 is summarised in the chart below.



4.7.6 The amount of savings that can be achieved in 2023/24 (£1.374Million) would mean a draw on balances of £942K, however, with such a large budget gap and more difficult options to implement and the need to meet necessary consultation timescales, the CFO recommends that if the options are approved a sum of £270K is transferred from the NDR allocated reserve to effectively bridge the gap between the in-year and full year impact of the recommended options.

4.7.7 The full year impact of service reductions total £577K or 35% of total options presented for approval and are summarised in the chart below.



- 4.7.8 The largest service reduction relates to the play, the cost of running the service is £451K before recharges and with them £601K (excluding depreciation costs) which equates to £566 per child, based on the 1,063 registered children. Since COVID the level of children attending the centres has reduced and in particular after school attendance. This may reflect the increased after Schools provision developed over recent years. Due to the cost of the service and the level of savings required it is recognised that the statutory responsibilities for children, education and health and wellbeing sit with the County Council and the Borough Council is not in a financial position to provide this level of investment to maintain the service.
- 4.7.9 There are other staff related service reductions including the deletion of the Leisure and Health officer post. This would mean the Council will not be able to offer sports development and it would also limit the Council's ability to run activities such as cycling and walking festivals along with supporting club development. The new Leisure contract does include an outreach service and this post could be deleted noting that the new provision will commence from April 2023. There are two posts in the service and one is vacant.
- 4.7.10 There is one further staff impact related saving which is to combine a museum assistant post with the culture post to maintain a cultural focus but reducing cost and assimilating the museum cultural offer more closely with the wider town cultural offer.
- 4.7.11 The detail relating to the remaining non staff related budget options are set out in Appendix A and are event based or grant funding reductions. These again are only recommended due to the financial position the Council finds itself in for the reasons that have previously been stated.
- 4.7.12 Since the December report was published, further liaison has taken place with the Fire Service concerning the cessation of the fire work display. Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service maintain that a managed display can help to reduce the number of injuries resulting from private firework functions. Accordingly, Members are asked to consider taking £18,000 one off funding from the business rates gain reserve to fund the display for 2023/24 to give event planning certainty. Running parallel with this a review of all events in the Town to include fireworks will be undertaken during 2023/24 to inform the 2024/25 budget setting process.
- 4.7.13 Given the perceived value to the town and the Council of maintaining the historic and successful relationships with Ingelheim and Autun and noting the aforementioned planned broader review of key corporate events, it is proposed that the associated funding be reinstated for 2023. To give planning certainty, as a one off, £14,000 will be taken from the business rate gains reserve to fund the visit to France.
- 4.7.14 The options recommended for approval are estimated to impact on 14 council officers and lead to a maximum of 12 redundancies with an estimated cost of £322K. The Council will always look to redeploy staff as a preference and there are a number of job opportunities identified in the Housing Revenue Account

report to this committee. While the implementation costs may seem high, they are one off expenditure and the General Fund also has the additional business rate and Income Equalisations reserve monies available for one off spend.

Option	Staff Number	*Cost £	Note
Play Service Reduction	12	£322,000	1 Member of staff retiring and a further officer seconded and likely to be redeployed in that role.
Sports Development reduction	1	£0	Maybe redeployed subject to consultation
Combine Museum Assistant and Cultural Manager post	1	£0	Likely to be redeployed
Total	14	£322,000	

**Redundancy costs are known of £162K with the pension impact still to be advised by the pension fund.*

4.7.15 The Council's Transformation programme (reported to the October 2022 Executive) is seen as the key option to seek to maintain as much as possible of the Council's remaining services by reducing the Council's financial footprint through more online service provision which will realise efficiency gains. This approach is deemed to be preferable to seeking year on year service cuts to meet the shortfall between funding and spend although it is likely that an element of year-on-year savings will still be required.

4.7.16 In addition, it is imperative that the Council can continue to function and deliver services which means a need to review services and assets held to withstand further inflationary and unfunded pressures as Local Government enters another ongoing period of financial uncertainty. This should include a review of the level of assets held and the level of service provided across the Business Units.

4.7.17 To illustrate the financial pressures the Council faces an initial review of utility and fuel costs for 2023/24 indicates that the total increase has risen from an estimated £732K to circa of £1.082Million resulting in a total annual cost of over £2Million.

4.7.18 In addition, at the December Executive, Members approved a number of further lines of enquiry to work through and to be brought back to as part of a future savings package to ensure the on-going financial resilience of the Council, together with further Transformation options during 2023/24 to meet the 2024/25 MYMC target.

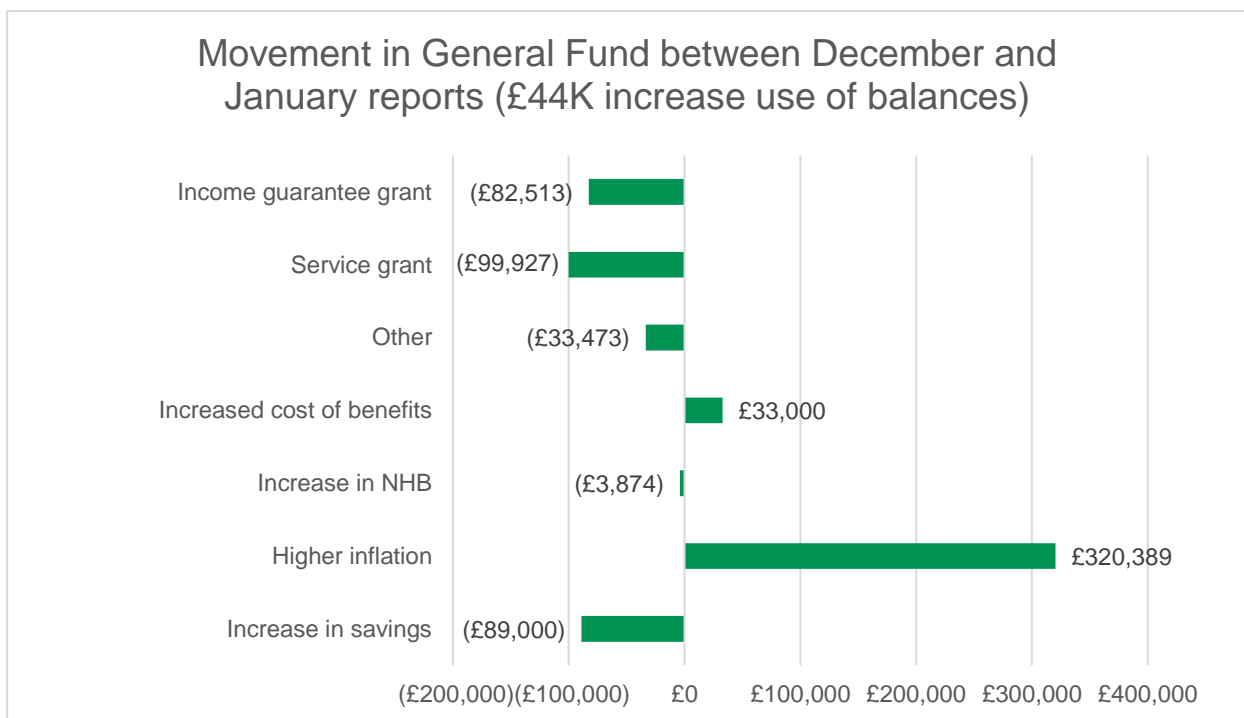
4.8 Growth Options

4.8.1 The 2022 MTFS did include a small allowance (£75K) for priority growth and the bids remain unchanged from the November MYMC report.

Description of Growth Proposal	Impact of Growth Proposal	£ General Fund	£ HRA
Climate Change Head of Service post	This post will help drive the further development and implementation of the Climate Change Strategy and investigate options for inward funding and strengthen the Council's ability to meet its climate change priorities	£41,115	£41,115
Commercial Sales Officer	This officer would increase the commercial income team to two and would actively strive to bring in new business and promote the Council's services. It is envisaged that this post would be self-funding beyond year two	£32,035	£15,777
		£73,150	£56,892

4.9 Changes to the 2023/24 General Fund budget versus the December and September MTFS

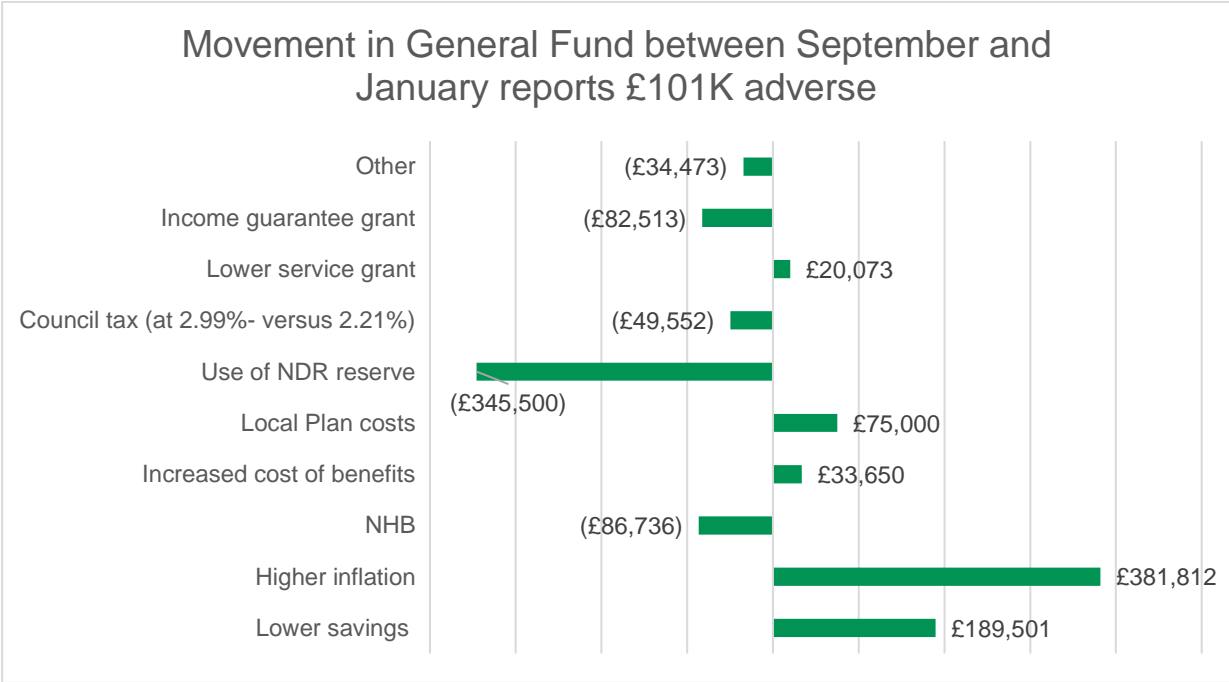
4.9.1 The General Fund budget is now projected to be £10.723Million with a draw on balances of £664K, versus the December General Fund projection of £10.383Million and a draw on balances of £620K, an adverse difference of £44K. This is largely an increase in inflation projections, offset by additional government grant and the increase in savings approved of £89K (play part year saving and increase in market rents). This is summarised below.



4.9.2 Compared to the September MTFS, which recommended the £1.5Million savings target, the draw on General Fund balances is now £101K higher than in the September MTFS, (offset by use of Business rates allocated reserve). This is for a number of reasons which are:

- Higher inflation pressures including £61K increase in staff costs and £381K relating to utility inflation (the utility contract renewal for many sites is 1 October) much of the increase was identified between the December and January period as shown in the chart in paragraph 4.9.1
- The assumption in September was service grant of £120K but this was reduced following the Autumn Statement and there were no assumptions around NHB and income guarantee funding.
- Increase in Council tax as set out in the finance Settlement, prior to that only the £5 on a Band D as in previous years had been assumed.
- The increased costs have been ‘dampened’ by use of the NDR reserve to offset the part year implementation of savings options and the Local Plan costs.

4.9.3 The increase in General Fund spend compared to the September MTFS is summarised below.



4.9.4 At the time the report was due to be published a further pressure had been identified relating to the pension contributions from the triennial review for the period 2023/24-2025/26, this indicates there is a further General Fund pressure of £102K, with pension employer costs projected to be higher than estimated for both the General Fund and the HRA. Members will be updated about the impact on the General Fund as part of the February budget report.

4.10 2022/23 Budget changes

4.10.1 The 2022/23 General Fund budget is projected to increase by £760,730, predominately as a result of the 2022/23 pay award being higher than budgeted (5.67% versus 2%) and the implementation costs for the MYMC savings options. The implementation costs have increased due to the recommendation to completely cease the play service. A summary of the changes is detailed below.

Changes to the 2022/23 Budget		
Expenditure and income	2022/23	Comments
General Fund working budget	£11,177,690	
Increased pay award	£573,530	The impact of the pay award over than budgeted
Shared service Revenue and Benefits	£33,450	The impact of the 2022/23 pay award on SBC
Shared ICT service	(£26,430)	The impact of the 2022/23 pay award on EHDC
HRA costs	(£120,160)	An estimate of the impact on the HRA of support services increased pay award costs.
Implementation costs	£301,000	Increase in implementation and redundancy costs estimated (subject to consultation) over and above the £90K approved budget
Council tax annexe grant	(£660)	Notification in December for new burdens grant
Total Changes	£760,730	
Revised General Fund budget	£11,938,420	

4.11 Level of Balances required for General Fund and projected balances

4.11.1 The September 2022 MTFs assumed that the minimum level of balances required would be £3.57Million and a full assessment has been carried out and detailed in Appendix C and totals £3,419,753, however this will need to be kept under review based on the risks set out in this report.

4.11.2 The projected General Fund balances and council tax requirement are below, this does not include an assumptions regarding business rate gains for 2023/24 or a revision to 2022/23 which will be included in the General Fund February Draft budget report.

General Fund Budget	2022/23 Estimate	2022/23 Projected	2023/24 Estimate
Net Expenditure	£11,151,760	£11,938,420	£10,723,320
(Use of)/ Contribution to Balances	(£1,055,629)	(£1,995,970)	(£664,462)
Budget Requirement	£10,096,131	£9,942,450	£10,058,859
Lower Tier Grant	(£117,682)	(£117,682)	£0
Service Grant	(£177,337)	(£177,337)	(£99,927)
3 % guarantee grant			(£82,513)
Total grant support	(£295,019)	(£295,019)	(£182,439)
Business Rates net of tariff and levy	(£1,785,034)	(£1,785,034)	(£2,410,116)
S31 grants NNDR	(£1,618,316)	(£1,618,316)	(£815,229)
Total in year business rates	(£3,403,350)	(£3,403,350)	(£3,205,129)
(Return) /Contribution to Collection Fund (NDR) re 2021/22	£2,928,560	£2,928,560	(£171,689)
(Return) /Contribution to Collection Fund (NDR) re 2020/21	£816,665	£816,665	£86,839
Transfer from NNDR reserve	(£3,776,102)	(£3,622,421)	£0
Collection Fund Surplus (ctax)	(£50,090)	(£50,090)	(£25,855)
Council Tax Requirement	£6,316,795	£6,316,795	£6,540,369
Council Tax Base	£28,004	£28,004	£28,153
Council Tax Band D	£ 225.57	£ 225.57	£ 232.31
Council Tax Band C	£ 200.51	£ 200.51	£ 206.50

4.12 Medium Term Financial Strategy General Fund Summary

4.12.1 The MTFS modelling has been updated to reflect the contents of this report and is summarised below.

General Fund balances £'000	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Opening Balance	(£6,907)	(£4,911)	(£4,247)	(£3,659)	(£3,537)
In Year	£1,996	£664	£588	£122	(£55)
Closing Balance	(£4,911)	(£4,247)	(£3,659)	(£3,537)	(£3,591)
Minimum balances	(£3,471)	(£3,419)	TBD	TBD	TBD
Closing Balance versus minimum level	(£1,440)	(£828)			

()=more balances than the minimum level

4.12.2 The December MTFS had a 2023/24 draw on balances of £620K (September MTFS £565K) and the latest projection is £664K. However, the latter includes:

- NDR reserves have been utilised to fund the delay in introducing MYMC options and the cost of the Local Plan studies.
- A net increase of £106K of government funding over than previously estimated, as set out in paragraph 4.1.9 of which £86K of New Homes Bonus is one off (if a similar increase in the council tax base is not achieved).

4.12.3 The MTFS does require on-going savings with the added pressure of significant further inflation risks and uncertainty about future funding and there continues to be a draw on General Fund balances to 2026/27.

4.12.4 In addition to General Fund balances, there are two further allocated reserves which are available to support the Fund's financial resilience and the projections are summarised below. The CFO recommends they are held for this purpose.

Reserves £'000	Closing 2021/22	Use	Closing 2022/23	Use	Closing 2023/24
Income equalisation Reserve	(£258)	(£200)	(£458)	£50	(£408)
Gains (NNDR)	(£1,017)	(£145)	(£1,162)	£173	(£989)
Total Available to support the GF	(£1,275)	(£345)	(£1,620)	£223	(£1,397)

4.12.5 This means the total balances available to the General Fund are shown below, which represents 10% of the estimated gross original budget for 2023/24.

Reserves £'000	Closing 2021/22	Use	Closing 2022/23	Use	Closing 2023/24
General fund	(£6,907)	£1,996	(£4,911)	£664	(£4,247)
Income equalisation Reserve	(£258)	(£200)	(£458)	£50	(£408)
Gains (NNDR)	(£1,017)	(£145)	(£1,162)	£173	(£989)
Total Available to support the GF	(£8,182)	£1,651	(£6,531)	£887	(£5,644)
% of net budget	77%		59%		53%
% of GF gross expenditure	14%		11%		10%

4.12.7 The General Fund has additional reserves allocated for specific purposes, these are summarised below.

Reserves £'000	Closing 2021/22	Use	Closing 2022/23	Use	Closing 2023/24
NHB reserve	(£479)	£479	£0	£0	£0
Transformation Reserve	(£506)	£230	(£276)	£276	£0
Homeless reserve	(£544)	£0	(£544)	£0	(£544)
Planning Delivery	(£62)	(£77)	(£139)	£139	£0
Queensway Car Park monies	(£39)	(£43)	(£82)	(£43)	(£125)
Town square reserve	(£649)	£40	(£609)	£40	(£569)
Regeneration Reserve	(£380)	£166	(£214)	£68	(£146)
Insurance reserve	(£65)	£54	(£11)	£0	(£11)
ICT reserve	(£316)	£151	(£165)	£0	(£165)
Town centre	(£42)	£14	(£28)	£0	(£28)
Leisure	(£363)	£363	£0	£0	£0
Commercial Property repair reserve	(£41)	£0	(£41)	£0	(£41)
Revenue Reserves for specific purpose	(£3,486)	£1,377	(£2,109)	£480	(£1,629)

4.12.8 This includes monies relating to:

- Planning Delivery £139K, required to support the surveys for the Local Plan, with a further £75K included in the budget.
- Queensway Car Park Monies, this is the income from the Queensway LLP for parking income, this money has been ringfenced to support the fit out of future commercially tenancies on Queensway North.
- Homeless grant £544K, the amount required for 2023/24 will be assessed as part of the budget setting process
- Town Square Reserve £609K, monies held to support the assets acquired for regeneration purposes.

4.13 Chief Finance Officer's Commentary

4.13.1 The Chief Finance Officer is the Council's principal financial advisor and has statutory responsibilities in relation to the administration of the Council's financial affairs (Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 and Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988). This commentary is given in light of these statutory responsibilities.

4.13.2 The Council has evolved its budget strategy to meet multiple challenges as set out in this report and the financial strategy to deal with this is the 'Making Your Money Count' (MYMC) strand of 'Future Town Future Council'.

4.13.3 Officers regularly update the MTFs to ensure that a clear financial position for the Council can be demonstrated over the next five years. This medium term view of the budget gives a mechanism by which future 'budget gaps' can be identified allowing for a measured rather than reactive approach to reducing net expenditure. The MYMC year round approach to identifying budget options means that work is on-going throughout the year to bridge the gap.

4.13.4 The Council has taken significant steps over recent years to balance its budget but as yet does not meet the principle aim of the MTFs to: 'achieve an on-going balanced budget until by 2024/25 by ensuring inflationary pressures are matched by increases in fees and income or reductions in expenditure'.

4.13.5 The impact of COVID and now the Cost of Living crisis has increased financial risk as is illustrated by the significant increase in inflation projected during this and next financial year. This has been a very difficult budget to set, particularly the balance between the need to increase fees and charges when the economy is still recovering from COVID and now in the throws of a recession versus other measures. The sheer size of the inflationary pressures faced by the Council have meant the need to find a bigger savings target than initially planned and larger than normally required as a result of government funding and council tax increases not meeting in year inflation. However, the financial resilience measures taken/for approval which increase the security of the Council's position, are:

- A risk assessment of balances to ensure general reserves held take into account increased risk from recessionary pressures.

- The income equalisation reserve (£408,000 by 31 March 2023) which can be returned to the General Fund if fees and charges are lower than projected.
- Reduce the use of reliance on Revenue Contributions to Capital (RCCO) by identifying sites for disposal and using capital receipts rather than revenue (September 2020 MTFS report).
- Identification of a sufficient level of on-going MYMC options to ensure General Fund balances are above or at the minimum level required for 2023/24 and the continued work on lines of enquiry for potential savings as noted in the November and December Executive MYMC reports.
- The December MYMC report also identified and recommended that there is a need to review physical assets held and services provided to ensure that the Council can continue to be financially resilient, with work to review this on-going.
- Use of any business rate gains only when realised and ring fenced to maintain the financial resilience of the General Fund and thereafter FTFC priorities. The projected balance as at 31 March 2023 projected to be £988,677.
- A transformation programme to deliver savings from 2023/24 onwards, with a further report to the Executive in 2023.

4.13.6 There is a draw on balances in 2024/25 of £587,773 fuelled by utility inflation, with a contribution to balances projected in 2026/27, however there is a significant draw on balances through the MTFS period and a need to deliver savings through the MTFS timeframe.

4.13.7 The current projections of balances and the measures the Council has taken to date, and as set in this report, have meant the level of balances projected are sufficient to set the 2023/24 budget, if the options included in the report are approved.

4.13.8 While delivering one of the most difficult budgets, the Council is also continuing with one of its most ambitious phases with the Council looking to redevelop and regenerate the town centre and at the same time improve the housing market in Stevenage. Both these priorities come with the risk of potentially needing to invest more resources. There is a ring-fenced reserve for Regeneration and further estimates of resources have been included in the General Fund MTFS.

4.14 Contingency Sums

4.14.1 The Executive will recall that a Contingency Sum needs to be determined by the Council as part of the Budget and Policy Framework in order to avoid the need for Council to consider all supplementary estimates during the course of the year. This contingency sum constitutes an upper cumulative limit during the financial year within which the Executive can approve supplementary estimates, rather than part of the Council's Budget Requirement for the year. A sum of £400,000 is proposed for 2023/24, this remains unchanged from the current year, however due regard will need to be given to breaching minimum balances.

4.15 Consultation

4.15.1 The 2021/22 Residents survey shows that resident's preferences with regards to achieving budget savings are firstly to reduce costs through the provision of more on line services. This was ranked the highest (out of five options in 2021 and 2017) with 41%. This first rate ranking has increased from 2017 and supports the Transformation programme as a method to reduce costs and improve efficiency / productivity.

Please tell us your order of preference for each of the following options by ordering them 1 to 5	2021 rank	2017 rank	1st
Reduce time and money spent on paperwork by interacting with more residents and customers online	1	1	41%
Increase income from fees and chargeable services, to keep the council's element of Council Tax as low as possible	2	3	24%
Spend less by reducing or cutting the services that you tell us are not a priority	3	2	16%
Make money by selling more of our services to residents and customers	4	5	9%
Increase our element of Council Tax (for example from 51p per day to 55p per day)	5	4	10%

4.14.2 The 2021 residents' survey asked residents whether the council tax represented value for money. While strongly disagree has increased (from 7% to 15%), overall 52% up from 46% agree it represents value for money as shown in the chart below.

	Responses	2021	2017	2015	2013	2011
To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Council Tax paid to Stevenage Borough Council provides good value for money?	Strongly agree	16%	10%	7%	6%	6%
	Tend to agree	36%	36%	39%	39%	40%
	Neither	18%	30%	30%	35%	33%
	Tend to disagree	10%	17%	18%	17%	16%
	Strongly disagree	15%	7%	6%	5%	5%
	Don't know (DNRO)	4%				
	Summary: Agree	52%	46%	46%	45%	46%
	Summary: Disagree	26%	24%	24%	22%	21%

4.14.3 Due to the level of savings required the CFO intends to set out the issues in a media communication campaign so that residents and businesses understand why the Council is facing budgetary as well as how it is seeking to respond. However, due to the Purdah period this will need to take place after the current bi-election to be held on the 19 January 2023.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

- 5.1.1 The report deals with Council finances and as such all implications are contained in the main body of the report.
- 5.1.2 Savings options are required to follow the Budget and Policy Framework as set out in Paragraph 3.1.10. Fees and charges require a report to the Executive and are included for note and to give the complete range of budget reductions for 2023/24.

5.2 Legal Implications

- 5.2.1 The Council is required to set a balanced budget each year. The Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires the Council to estimate revenue expenditure and income for the forthcoming year from all sources, together with contributions from reserves, in order to determine a net budget requirement to be met by government grant and council tax.
- 5.2.2 The Borough Solicitor has considered and confirmed that the Council has the necessary statutory powers to provide & charge for services as detailed under this report. This will be kept under review.

5.3 Policy Implications

- 5.3.1 The report deals with Council policy and as such all implications are contained in the main body of the report.

5.4 Staffing and Accommodation Implications

- 5.4.1 The 2023/24 budget options include staff implications and these are summarised in paragraph 4.7.12. All the options are subject to consultation and the financial outcomes assumed may change as a result of that consultation taking place.
- 5.4.2 In compliance with SBC's Organisational Change Policy any proposals involving potential redundancies will be fully consulted on with the trade unions and affected staff for a minimum 30-day consultation period, and again may therefore change depending on the outcomes of the consultation process.
- 5.4.3 Officers will continue to work in an open and transparent way with the trades unions, and will provide them with the information required, in accordance with statutory requirements and best employment practice, as soon as this is available. The trades unions will be provided with all relevant information in accordance with the Council's legal obligations.
- 5.4.4 Wherever possible staff who find themselves in a redundancy situation will be redeployed to a suitable alternative post. If that redeployment results in the staff

affected moving into a lower-graded, post pay protection will apply for a 12-month period.

5.5 Equal Opportunities Implications

5.5.1 In carrying out or changing its functions (including those relating to the provision of services and the employment of staff) the Council must comply with the Equality Act 2010 and in particular section 149 which is the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Council has a statutory obligation to comply with the requirements of The Act, demonstrating that as part of the decision-making process, due regard has been given to the need to:

- Remove discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is unlawful under this Act
- Promote equal opportunities between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Encourage good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

5.5.2 These duties are non-delegable and must be considered by Council when setting the Budget in February 2023.

5.5.3 To inform the decisions about the Budget 2022/23 officers have begun Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) for service-related savings proposals. These are currently in draft form, since they must consider appropriate evidence and the findings of consultation with various stakeholders to inform the decision by Council in February 2022. Where there is a potentially negative impact, officers will collect further information and identify actions to mitigate the impact as far as possible. These EqIAs are summarised and attached in **Appendix D** with further information on the process to date and planned activity. EqIAs for future years' savings will be presented alongside the draft Budget for the relevant year. .

5.5.4 An overarching EqIA will also be developed once individual EqIAs are finalised for Council in February 2022. This will consider the collective impact of the Budget on people with protected characteristics.

5.5.5 As well as considering the impact on service delivery and equality, an EqIA concerning all strands of potential discrimination will be required by the Head of Paid Service on proposed redundancies and restructures per savings proposal and as a whole. It is proposed that this will be produced alongside the required restructure consultation documents as it is only at this stage that the actual impact on staff will start to be known. As the proposals will be delivered over a range of different timescales, the whole, i.e. combined EqIA, will be reviewed periodically with the Council's Strategic Leadership Team. All staff impacts are summarised at **Appendix E**.

5.5.6 The staff EQIA recognises that the options identified in Appendix A impact adversely on older staff members.

5.6 Risk Implications

- 5.6.1 There are risk implications to setting a prudent General Fund budget if the Financial Security options identified in Appendix A are not achieved and crucially if future options are not found to meet the targets outlined in the report.
- 5.6.2 There are a number of risks that have been identified and these are set out in the report.

5.7 Climate Change Implications

- 5.7.1 The Council declared a climate change emergency at the June 2019 Council meeting with a resolution to work towards a target of achieving net zero emissions by 2030. The Transformation programme and the digital on-line agenda will contribute to reducing the Councils carbon footprint. The report also recommends an option to strengthen leadership in this area to help drive development and delivery of the climate change strategy.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

BD1 General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy (2022/23-2026/27)

BD2 Making Your Money Count November Executive

BD3 Making Your Money Count (part 2) December Executive

APPENDICES

Appendix A General Fund and HRA Budget Options

Appendix B Fees & Charges GF (for note)

Appendix C Risk Assessment of Balances

Appendix D Equalities Impact Assessment

Appendix E Staff Equalities Impact Assessment

APPENDIX A

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

MAKING YOUR MONEY COUNT OPTIONS 2023/24

	General Fund full year savings	General Fund 2023/24	HRA full year savings	HRA £
For Approval				
Efficiency	£503,779	£503,779	-£46,962	-£46,962
Commercial	£170,340	£145,340	£4,860	£4,860
Fees and Charges	£334,440	£334,440		
New Income Stream	£35,900	£35,900		
Transformation	£30,900	£20,400	£14,100	£9,600
Reduction	£577,040	£334,140	0	0
Total	£1,652,399	£1,373,999	-£28,002	-£32,502

Ref No	Name of Service	Description of Savings Proposal	Implementati on costs	Budget 2022/23	Ongoing (Y/N)	Statutory Function (Y/N)	Impact of Saving Proposal on Public/ Customers/ Staff/ Members/Partnerships etc. (include any impact on key corporate programmes/performance indicator measures) .	Capital / Investment (Y/N)	Potential Timing (put the date you estimate it will be implemented, consider any consultation required)	£ General Fund Full year saving	General Fund pro-rata for 2023/24	HRA full year savings	£ HRA Year 1
2023/24 Efficiency Options													
S1	Policy and Performance	Efficiency savings	£0	£36,190	Y	N	Efficiency saving from unused budgets within cost centres	N	1st January 2023	36,190	36,190	0	0
S2	ICT Service Desk	Switching the current ICT Service Desk offer to a cloud-based solution moving away from prem	£0	£24,650	3 Years	N	There is further opportunity to share the costs with other service areas i.e. Facilities / Finance / HR which are being investigated.	N	1st April 2023	2,253	2,253	1,213	1,213
S3	Print Room and floor Printers	Due to the closing of the print room, there is a saving on equipment rental charges.	£0	£62,990	Y	N	Removal of 2 printers in the print room, along with other equipment - results in a saving on the annual rental costs and associated click charges for the 2 printers	N	1st April 2023	27,953	27,953	9,318	9,318
S4	Software	Decommission eBase software application	£0	£8,000	Y	N	eBase application has only a few remaining uses. Looking at other solutions and stop eBase.	N	1st April 2023	2,912	2,912	1,568	1,568
S5	Software	Ceasing AD Manager Software	£0	£8,300	Y	N	Consider the use of Powershell to manage our Active Directory and save the AD Manager license fee.	N	1st April 2023	728	728	392	392
S6	Software	Migrate Intranet to Office365	£0	£31,320	Y	N	Use Office 365 for the staff Intranet and save the 'Invotra' license.	N	1st April 2024	0	0	0	0
S7	Comms & Marketing	Reduce centralised advertising budget to current forecast spend of £35,000	£0	£59,150	Y	N	Reducing the centralised budget whilst still having enough money for adverts / marketing and outsourcing costs. Budget is needed for outsourcing video requests and additional graphics jobs that cannot be delivered by the current small team.	N	1st April 2023	19,803	19,803	4,347	4,347
S8	Revenues & Benefits	Delete two vacant housing benefit posts (43% of £61k)	£0	£61,000	Y	N	Within the Shared Revenue & Benefits service there are two vacant housing benefit posts that can be deleted following a review of the service	N	1st April 2023	26,230	26,230	0	0
S9	Corporate	Reversal of Social Care NI Levy of 1.25%, subject to legislation	£0	£151,000	Y	N	In April 2023, National Insurance (NI) contributions for both employees and employers increased by 1.25% to support the funding of Social Care. The government has announced this will be reversed from 6 November 2022. November 2022.	N	1st April 2023	120,800	120,800	30,200	30,200
S10	Human Resources	Review of decentralised departmental training budgets	£0	£132,000	Y	N	From a review of training budgets from previous years, there's a small proportion of budget that is not spent each year.	N	1st April 2023	10,000	10,000	0	0
S11		Review of income lines	£0	£0	Y	N	Review of allotment, fishing income budgets	N	1st April 2023	12,000	12,000	0	0
S32	Car Parks	Review of car park business rates	£0	£805,230	Y	N	A review of car park rates (based on costs and income on spaces) is estimated to be £82K lower with an assumption included of £167K, however this will not be know until the facility is rated.	N	1 April 2023	82,910	82,910	0	0
S34	Domestic Abuse Service	review of costs and use of service	£0	£185,500	Y	N	A review of SADA additional posts to be funded from external income and the HRA share on review is 4 out of 5 cases.	N	1 April 2023	162,000	162,000	-94,000	-94,000
TOTAL			£0	£1,565,330						£503,779	£503,779	-£46,962	-£46,962

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

MAKING YOUR MONEY COUNT OPTIONS 2023/24

For Approval	full year savings	General Fund 2023/24	HRA full year savings	HRA £
Efficiency	£503,779	£503,779	-£46,962	-£46,962
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Fees and Charges	£334,440	£334,440		
New Income Stream	£35,900	£35,900		
Transformation	£30,900	£20,400	£14,100	£9,600
Reduction	£577,040	£334,140	0	0
Total	£1,652,399	£1,373,999	-£28,002	-£32,502

Ref No	Name of Service	Description of Savings Proposal	Implementati on costs	Budget 2022/23	Ongoing (Y/N)	Statutory Function (Y/N)	Impact of Saving Proposal on Public/ Customers/ Staff/ Members/Partnerships etc. (include any impact on key corporate programmes/performance indicator measures) .	Capital / Investment (Y/N)	Potential Timing (put the date you estimate it will be implemented, consider any consultation required)	£ General Fund Full year saving	General Fund pro-rata for 2023/24	HRA full year savings	£ HRA Year 1
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2023/24 Commercial in-sourcing Strand

S12	Comms & Marketing	Advertising on digital boards	£0	£0	Y	N	To enter into agreement, to lease time for adverts to be shown on the two digital boards within the Town Centre	N	1st April 2023	4,100	4,100	900	900
S13	Comms & Marketing	Funding of Chronicle from advertising using up to 4 pages	£0	£0	Y	N	To rent out space within the Chronicle publication (on a quarterly basis) to fund the cost of the production of this. Estimate that four pages of advertising should cover this cost	N	1st April 2023	18,040	18,040	3,960	3,960
S14	Various	Fees and Charges increases approved at the November Executive.	£0	£0	Y	Y & N	The annual fees and charges exercise been carried out to establish that the Council is recovering its costs / are competitive against other councils or competitors and have no detrimental impact on the usage of the service. Appendix B	N	1st April 2023	270,940	270,940	0	0
S15	Various	New income streams as reviewed by Commercial and Investment Working Group	£23,000	£0	Y	N	This includes new cemetery charges (Appendix C November MYMC report), Skips (Appendix D November report), Charging for businesses using the Council's parks recommended for approval - £100 per outdoor fitness licence (per annum).	Y	1st April 2023	35,900	35,900	0	0
S15A	Indoor Market rents	Increase indoor market rents by 5%	£0	£386,000	Y	N	There has been an estimated increase in utilities of £180K and the December Executive recommended that a below inflation increase is implemented	Y	1st April 2023	19,000	19,000		
S16	Estates	To move Stevenage Direct Services out of Shephallbury depot and to relet commercially, assumed £40K of works to Hampson Park depot	£40,000		Y	N	This will require the grounds team moving some of their stored items to Hampson Park depot. A capital bid has been included in the Draft Capital Strategy).	Y	1 June 2023	100,000	75,000	0	0
S17	Corporate	Increase 2023/24 Council Tax by 2.99%	£0		Y	N	The increase if Members agree to increase council Tax to 2.99% as set out in the Autumn statement. This would add £6.74 per year to Band D bill for 2023/24	N	1st April 2023	63,500	63,500	0	0

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

MAKING YOUR MONEY COUNT OPTIONS 2023/24

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Efficiency	£503,779	£503,779	-£46,962	-£46,962
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Transformation	£30,900	£20,400	£14,100	£9,600
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S31	Insurance	To charge an admin fee to the commercial tenants and leaseholders for providing the insurance cover and to deal with any insurance claims	£0	£0	Y	N	It is not feasible to charge to leaseholders as they are already receiving high admin charges to cover these types of works. However, discussed with legal and estates and there is nothing to stop us from charging commercial tenants an admin fee for this service. Undertaken a brief exercise to work out the admin charge to be around £16 per tenant	N	Start from the current renewal process 1 October 2022	3,000	3,000	0	0
S35	Commercial	Filming income	£0	£0	Y	N	The Council has a filming policy which generates income, while this is difficult to predict , a base line budget of £10K is considered achievable	N	1 April 2023	10,000	10,000	0	0
S37	On street parking	Extend on street parking period from 6PM to 8PM	£4,700	£0	Y	N	A trial will implemented for an extension to on-street parking periods from 1 April 2023. It is not clear whether additional income will be generated and once the initial trial period has concluded any savings will be incorporated into the 2023/24 budget and contribute to the 2024/25 MYMC target	N	1 April 2023	0	0	0	0
S36	Commercial	Advertising income	£0	£0	3 years	N	New advertising income streams now secured.	N	1 April 2023	16,200	16,200	0	0
			£67,700	£386,000						£540,680	£515,680	£4,860	£4,860

2023/24 Transformation Options

S18	Payroll	Review payroll service delivery	£0	£84,750	Y	N	review levels of responsibilities, systemisation, and processes (reducing deductions from pay)	N	1st April 2023	9,900	9,900	5,100	5,100
S19	Human Resources	Cease contract for sickness reporting (goodshape service) and build in-house option	£0		Y	N	Development of the HR system is required, to deliver an in-house offer, the saving is 50% in 2023/24 to allow the improvements to take place.	N	1 October 2023	21,000	10,500	9,000	4,500
			£0	£84,750						£30,900	£20,400	£14,100	£9,600

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

MAKING YOUR MONEY COUNT OPTIONS 2023/24

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Commercial	£170,340	£145,340	£4,860	£4,860
Fees and Charges	£334,440	£334,440		
New Income Stream	£35,900	£35,900		
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2023/24 Discretionary (Reduce Options)													
S20	Leisure	Cease Grants to Support Parent and Toddler Groups	£0	£2,000	Y	N	This fund has not been accessed since before Covid. It has not been promoted since and the client group would tend to fit more with Children's Services and Family Centres at HCC.	N	1st April 2023	2,000	2,000	0	0
S21	Civic Events	Kadoma Link Grant	£0	£1,000	Y	N	Annual Grant to maintain Kadoma Link. Grant has been drawn in 2022/23. Early notice on future years will enable group to explore other forms of fundraising.	N	1st April 2023	1,000	1,000	0	0
S22	Civic Events	Town Twinning	£0	£22,800	Y	N	Cessation of town twinning programme. This may lead to some reputational/ political impacts.	N	1st April 2023	14,000	14,000	0	0
S23	Play Service	Cease permanent Play Service	£323,000	£427,550	Y	N	Due to the level of savings required and the level of subsidy per child (1,063 registered). The service has 12 employees- and there is an estimated one off cost of £323K. Post COVID the after school club attention has reduced and the summer play numbers have not been as high as pre the pandemic. The cost per child subsidy is £566 and not sustainable in the current financial climate.	Y	Likely to be summer 2023 (full year saving shown)	384,930	192,465	0	0
S38	Play Service	Close play centre buildings and commercially let or demolish dependent on stock condition surveys (building costs shown)		£59,000	Y	N	There are circa £50K of building costs that could be reduced and rental assumed of £30K based on a commercial let, these savings cannot be removed from the budget until the implementation of the new play offer. Savings may be higher but are not yet tested and the play equipment at the sites will need maintaining	N	1 October 2023	90,000	45,000	0	0
S24	Community Development	Cease commissioning fund for summer activities for young people.	£0	£6,500	Y	N	This is an upper tier function. This fund was historically a fund for commissioning youth provision over the summer holidays in conjunction with the Youth Council. It has not been accessed since before Covid.	N	1st April 2023	6,500	6,500	0	0
S26	Leisure	Subscription for Visit Herts - for the next three years, this can be funded through the UKSPF	£0	£5,110	N	N	Visit Herts Service Level Agreement to support Destination Management Organisation for Hertfordshire. To date limited focused benefit for Stevenage but impact may be felt reputationally and in any future destination management plans if was to cease permanently.	N	1st April 2023	5,000	5,000	0	0
S27	Leisure	Sports Stevenage Grant ceased	£0	£3,060	Y	N	Grant that supports Sports Stevenage and maintaining Hall of Fame website. There may be some reputational risk in terms of those advocating Stevenage's sporting heritage.	N	1st April 2023	3,000	3,000	0	0
S28	Leisure	Combine Museum Assistant and Cultural Manager post	£0	£20,000	Y	N	This proposal is based on deleting a museum assistant post and combining the Cultural Officer post assuming a more integrated museum/cultural officer function and maintaining some capacity to deliver on the cultural strategy.	Y	1st April 2023	20,000	20,000	0	0

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

MAKING YOUR MONEY COUNT OPTIONS 2023/24

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S29	Leisure	Delete Leisure and Health Officer post	£0	£32,610	Y	N	This would reduce capacity to deliver on the Healthy Stevenage Strategy and reduce sports development function to signposting only.	Y	1st June 2023	32,610	27175	0	0
S30	Leisure	Cease Fireworks event	£0	£29,570	Y	N	This would see the cessation of the annual fireworks event, which could be replaced by a silent fireworks event, however an assessment of what investment in capital equipment for lightshows/lasers would need to be made.	Y	1st April 2023	18,000	18,000	0	0
TOTAL			£323,000	£609,200						£577,040	£334,140	£0	£0

£390,700 £2,645,280

£1,652,399 £1,373,999 -£28,002 -£32,502

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Service		Fees and Charges for 2022/23	2021/22 FEE	2022/23 FEE	Increase £	% Increase	2023/24 Proposed Fee	Increase £	% Increase	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)
Car Parks										
New Town:		7am-7pm (6am-7pm at St Georges only) :								
		Mon-Saturday up to 30 Mins (St Georges & Westgate only)	£0.50	£0.50	£0.00	0.00%	£1.00	£0.50	100.00%	
		Mon-Saturday up to 1 hour	£1.80	£2.00	£0.20	11.11%	£2.00	£0.00	0.00%	
		Mon-Saturday up to 2 hours	£2.60	£3.00	£0.40	15.38%	£3.00	£0.00	0.00%	
	Short Stay (Westgate/Forum/St G)	Mon-Saturday up to 3 hours	£3.30	£3.50	£0.20	6.06%	£4.00	£0.50	14.29%	
		Mon-Saturday up to 5 Hours	£4.00	£4.50	£0.50	12.50%	£5.00	£0.50	11.11%	
		Mon-Saturday Over 5 Hours (St Georges)	£5.00	£5.50	£0.50	10.00%	£6.00	£0.50	9.09%	
		Mon-Saturday Over 5 Hours (Forum/Westgate)	£7.50	£8.50	£1.00	13.33%	£9.00	£0.50	5.88%	
		Sunday	£2.20	£2.50	£0.30	13.64%	£2.50	£0.00	0.00%	
		Night Parking 7pm to 7am (6am for St G)	£2.00	£2.00	£0.00	0.00%	£2.00	£0.00	0.00%	
										£33,890
Long stay										
		Mon-Fri entry before 8.30am to 7pm	£8.00	£8.50	£0.50	6.25%	£9.00	£0.50	5.88%	
		Mon-Fri entry after 8.30am to 7pm	£5.00	£5.50	£0.50	10.00%	£6.00	£0.50	9.09%	
		Mon-Sat 6am-7pm (Southgate Only)	£5.00	£5.50	£0.50	10.00%	£6.00	£0.50	9.09%	
	(Swingate/Daneshill/Southgate)	Saturday 6am - 6pm	£5.00	£5.50	£0.50	10.00%	£6.00	£0.50	9.09%	
		Sunday	£2.20	£2.50	£0.30	13.64%	£2.50	£0.00	0.00%	
		Night Parking (7pm to 6am or 6pm - 6am)	£2.00	£2.00	£0.00	0.00%	£2.00	£0.00	0.00%	
Total Long Stay										£21,000
Railways										
		Mon-Fri 4am to 4am	£9.00	£9.50	£0.50	5.56%	£10.00	£0.50	5.26%	
		Saturday	£7.20	£7.60	£0.40	5.56%	£8.00	£0.40	5.26%	
		Sunday	£6.80	£7.20	£0.40	5.88%	£7.50	£0.30	4.17%	
Total Railways										£30,500
Season Tickets										
		New Town (price per month)	£89.00	£91.00	£2.00	2.25%	£94.50	£3.50	3.85%	
		Blue Badge Holders (Season Ticket, price per Annum)	£44.00	£50.00	£6.00	13.64%	£52.50	£2.50	5.00%	
		Rail (price per month)	£160.00	£165.00	£5.00	3.13%	£169.00	£4.00	2.42%	
Season Tickets SubTotal										£11,660
New Town GRAND TOTAL										£97,050

		2021/22 Fees for reference							
Service	Fees and Charges for 2022/23	2021/22 FEE	2022/23 FEE	Increase £	% Increase	2023/24 Proposed Fee	Increase £	% Increase	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)
Old Town:									
Primett Rd North									
<u>Monday - Saturday 0600-1600 hours</u>									
	up to one hour	£1.10	£1.30	£0.20	18.18%	£1.30	£0.00	0.00%	
	up to two hours	£1.50	£1.80	£0.30	20.00%	£1.90	£0.10	5.56%	
	up to three hours	£1.90	£2.40	£0.50	26.32%	£2.60	£0.20	8.33%	
	Up to five hours	£5.00	£5.00	£0.00	0.00%	£5.40	£0.40	8.00%	
	More than five hours	£7.00	£7.50	£0.50	7.14%	£8.00	£0.50	6.67%	
	Evenings (Mon-Sat) (4pm to 6am)	£0.50	£0.50	£0.00	0.00%	£0.50	£0.00	0.00%	
	Sundays (6am-Mon 6am)	£0.50	£0.50	£0.00	0.00%	£0.50	£0.00	0.00%	
<u>Monday-Friday</u>									
	0600-1600hrs	£2.90	£3.00	£0.10	3.45%	£3.20	£0.20	6.67%	
	1600-0600hrs	£0.50	£0.50	£0.00	0.00%	£0.50	£0.00	0.00%	
<u>Saturday 0600-1600:</u>									
	up to one hour	£1.10	£1.30	£0.20	18.18%	£1.30	£0.00	0.00%	
	up to two hours	£1.50	£1.80	£0.30	20.00%	£1.90	£0.10	5.56%	
	up to three hours	£1.90	£2.40	£0.50	26.32%	£2.60	£0.20	8.33%	
	More than three hours	£2.70	£3.00	£0.30	11.11%	£3.20	£0.20	6.67%	
	<u>Saturday 4pm-Monday 6am</u>	£0.50	£0.50	£0.00	0.00%	£0.50	£0.00	0.00%	
<u>Mon-Sat 0600-1600hrs</u>									
	up to one hour	£1.10	£1.30	£0.20	18.18%	£1.30	£0.00	0.00%	
Church Lane North									

		2021/22 Fees for reference							
Service	Fees and Charges for 2022/23	2021/22 FEE	2022/23 FEE	Increase £	% Increase	2023/24 Proposed Fee	Increase £	% Increase	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)
Season Tickets	up to two hours	£1.50	£1.80	£0.30	20.00%	£1.90	£0.10	5.56%	
	up to three hours	£1.90	£2.40	£0.50	26.32%	£2.60	£0.20	8.33%	
	More than three hours	£2.70	£3.00	£0.30	11.11%	£3.20	£0.20	6.67%	
	<u>Saturday 4pm-Monday 6am</u>	Free	Free			Free	#VALUE!	#VALUE!	
	Old Town (price per month)	£46.00	£50.00	£4.00	8.70%	£53.00	£3.00	6.00%	
Old Town GRAND TOTAL									£9,000
Page 359 Car Parks:	Business Tokens/ Commercial Income	Various				various			£5,000
Loss of income due to price increase		8.50%							-£9,900
TOTAL "All Off Street Car Parks"									£101,150

Service		Fees and Charges for 2022/23	2021/22 FEE	2022/23 FEE	Increase £	% Increase	2023/24 Proposed Fee	Increase £	% Increase	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)
On Street Parking										
Town Centre	up to 30 mins		£0.60	£1.00	£0.40	66.67%	£1.00	£0.00	0.00%	
	Up to 1 Hour		£1.80	£2.00	£0.20	11.11%	£2.00	£0.00	0.00%	
	Up to 2 Hours		£2.70	£3.00	£0.30	11.11%	£3.00	£0.00	0.00%	
	Up to 3 Hours		£3.50	£4.00	£0.50	14.29%	£4.00	£0.00	0.00%	
	Up to 4 Hours		£4.50	£5.00	£0.50	11.11%	£5.00	£0.00	0.00%	
	Up to 5 Hours		£6.00	£11.00	£5.00	83.33%	£11.00	£0.00	0.00%	
	Over 5 hours		£10.00	£11.00	£1.00	10.00%	£11.00	£0.00	0.00%	£0
Corey's Mill Lane	up to 1 hr £1.50 up to 2 hrs £2.50 up to 3 hrs (max stay) £4.00 (correct for 22/23 Fin year)		£1.10/ £1.70 /£2.20	£1.50/ £2.50 /£4.00	Various		No change	£0.00	0.00%	£0
On Street Parking Total										£0
Street Naming/Numbering										
Various Options, some examples shown here	First Dwelling Numbering		£105.00	£109.00	£4.00	3.81%	£118.00	£9.00	8.26%	
	Next ten dwellings (per dwelling)		£56.00	£58.00	£2.00	3.57%	£63.00	£5.00	8.62%	
	Naming of new street		£212.00	£220.00	£8.00	3.77%	£240.00	£20.00	9.09%	
	Commercial numbering first unit		£278.00	£288.00	£10.00	3.60%	£312.00	£24.00	8.33%	
	Commercial numbering further units		£139.00	£145.00	£6.00	4.32%	£155.00	£10.00	6.90%	£500

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FEES AND CHARGES -RECOMMENDED FEE INCREASES FOR 2022/23 **APPENDIX B FEES AND CHARGES**

Service		2021/22 Fees for reference	2022/23 FEE			2023/24 Proposed Fee			Budget Increase (from fee proposals)
Fees and Charges for 2022/23		2021/22 FEE	2022/23 FEE	Increase £	% Increase	2023/24 Proposed Fee	Increase £	% Increase	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)
External Works (e.g. Other LAs)									
	Engineering Services Manager	£63.10	£66.25	£3.15	4.99%	£70.75	£4.50	6.79%	
	Principal Engineer	£58.30	£61.25	£2.95	5.06%	£65.50	£4.25	6.94%	
	Traffic & Parking Enforcement Manager	£55.00	£57.75	£2.75	5.00%	£61.50	£3.75	6.49%	
	Engineer	£43.50	£45.70	£2.20	5.06%	£48.50	£2.80	6.13%	
Examples of Hourly Charge out rate for staff time (VAT to be added)	Inspector	£41.20	£43.25	£2.05	4.98%	£46.00	£2.75	6.36%	£350
Town Centre Charges									
	Hoarding/Scaffold Licence (per week/100m run) (changing to per 50m from 22/23)	£48.00	£50.00	£2.00	4.17%	£50.00	£0.00	0.00%	
	Application Fee	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	£100.00	new	new	
	Crane Licence	£2,187.00	£2,187.00	£0.00	0.00%	£2,350.00	£163.00	7.45%	
Street Hoarding Licences	Skip Licence (per fortnight)	£41.00	£42.00	£1.00	2.44%	£44.00	£2.00	4.76%	£1,170
Licensing (Hoardings)									
	H Bar Marking Application fee	£30.00	£31.00	£1.00	3.33%	£33.00	£2.00	6.45%	£1,500
	H Bar Marking Fee	£85.00	£88.00	£3.00	3.53%	£95.00	£7.00	7.95%	
	Parking Bay Suspension (5 bays/wk)	£200.00	£210.00	£10.00	5.00%	n/a			
	Parking Bay Suspension (per additional bay)	£5.00	£6.00	£1.00	20.00%	n/a			

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FEES AND CHARGES -RECOMMENDED FEE INCREASES FOR 2022/23 **APPENDIX B FEES AND CHARGES**

		2021/22 Fees for reference							
Service	Fees and Charges for 2022/23	2021/22 FEE	2022/23 FEE	Increase £	% Increase	2023/24 Proposed Fee	Increase £	% Increase	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)
	First Permit	£56.00	£56.00	£0.00	0.00%	£56.00	£0.00	0.00%	
	Second Permit	£82.00	£82.00	£0.00	0.00%	£82.00	£0.00	0.00%	
	Third Permit	£108.00	£108.00	£0.00	0.00%	£108.00	£0.00	0.00%	
	Fourth Permit	£134.00	£134.00	£0.00	0.00%	£134.00	£0.00	0.00%	
Parking Permits (e.g. Burymead) (selected example charges shown)									
	20 visitor vouchers	£15.00	£15.00	£0.00	0.00%	£15.00	£0.00	0.00%	£0
Garages:	Standard Garage (Category A)	£12.05	£12.50	£0.45	3.73%	£13.25	£0.75	6.00%	
	Standard Garage (Category B)	£11.85	£12.25	£0.40	3.38%	£12.85	£0.60	4.90%	
	Standard Garage (Category C)	£11.45	£11.70	£0.25	2.18%	£12.00	£0.30	2.56%	
	Premium Sized Garages	£15.00	£15.60	£0.60	4.00%	£16.50	£0.90	5.77%	
	Road Facing Garages	£13.70	£14.25	£0.55	4.01%	£15.10	£0.85	5.96%	
<p>Prices shown are "NET" of VAT. Housing Tenants generally do not pay VAT but other customers do pay VAT, meaning the actual weekly increase for a Category A garage would be 60p. Around 2/3rd of all customers do pay VAT.</p>									
Garages Total									£135,000

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Service		2021/22 Fees for reference	2022/23 FEE			2023/24 Proposed Fee			Budget Increase (from fee proposals)
Fees and Charges for 2022/23		2021/22 FEE	2022/23 FEE	Increase £	% Increase	2023/24 Proposed Fee	Increase £	% Increase	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)
Markets:		various				5.00%		0.00%	£19,000
Markets Total									
Bulky Waste:									
Page 363	3 Items	£45.00	£48.00	£3.00	6.67%	£48.00	£0.00	0.00%	
	6 Items	£75.00	£78.00	£3.00	4.00%	£78.00	£0.00	0.00%	
	7 Items	n/a	£88.00	n/a	n/a	£88.00	£0.00	0.00%	
	8 Items	n/a	£97.00	n/a	n/a	£97.00	£0.00	0.00%	
	9 Items	n/a	£106.00	n/a	n/a	£106.00	£0.00	0.00%	
	10 Items	n/a	£115.00	n/a	n/a	£115.00	£0.00	0.00%	
	Cancellation Fee	£11.00	£11.00	£0.00	0.00%	£11.00	£0.00	0.00%	
	Bulky Waste Total								
Trade Refuse:	Increase in fees to cover additional increase in disposal costs (example of pricing shown, 1100 litre bin)	£22.25	£23.25	£1.00	4.49%	£23.25	£0.00	0.00%	£0
Skips:	Increase in fees to cover additional increase in disposal costs (example of pricing shown 6yard skip)	£294.00	£305.00	£11.00	3.74%	£325.00	£20.00	6.56%	£1,170
Increase disposal cost of waste for Trade, Clinical, Skips and Transfer Station:									-£18,000
Cemeteries:		various				various (see additional tab) : average 7%		7.00%	£12,000
Cemeteries New Chargeable services		n/a			n/a	Various (see additional tab) : new fees		new	£20,520
Cemeteries Total									

FEES AND CHARGES -RECOMMENDED FEE INCREASES FOR 2022/23										
APPENDIX B FEES AND CHARGES										
Service		Fees and Charges for 2022/23	2021/22 FEE	2022/23 FEE	Increase £	% Increase	2023/24 Proposed Fee	Increase £	% Increase	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)
Parks and Open Spaces:			various				various		6.00%	£5,000
NEW CHARGE FOR OUTDOOR FITNESS LICENCE (cost p.a)			n/a			n/a	£100.00	new	new	£1,400
Parks and Open Spaces Total										
Allotments:		Price per M ² per year	£0.60	£0.77	£0.17	28.33%	£0.82	£0.05	6.49%	
		100M ² per year	£60.00	£77.00	£17.00	28.33%	£82.00	£5.00	6.49%	
		250M ² per year	£150.00	£192.50	£42.50	28.33%	£205.00	£12.50	6.49%	
Allotments Total										£3,300

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APPENDIX B FEES AND CHARGES

		2021/22 Fees for reference							
Service	Fees and Charges for 2022/23	2021/22 FEE	2022/23 FEE	Increase £	% Increase	2023/24 Proposed Fee	Increase £	% Increase	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)
Fishing	Adult Day Ticket	£8.20	£8.50	£0.30	3.66%	£9.00	£0.50	5.88%	
	Junior Day Ticket	£6.15	£6.35	£0.20	3.25%	£7.00	£0.65	10.24%	
	Night Fishing	£18.40	£19.00	£0.60	3.26%	£22.00	£3.00	15.79%	
	2nd or 3rd Rod - cost per additional rod	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	£5.00	new	new	
Fishing Total									£470
Planning: Page 365	Major development								
	100+ residential units, 6000+sqm of commercial /change of use or where the site is 3ha+ PER 100 units /6000sqm/3ha or part of.	£3,800	£3,990	£190.00	5.00%	£4,230	£240.00	6.02%	
	Bespoke hourly service for 100+ residential units, 6000+sqm of commercial /change of use or where the site is 3ha+ PER 100 units /6000sqm/3ha or part of	n/a	£192	new	new	£204	£12.00	6.25%	
	25-99 residential units, 2001-5999sqm of commercial /change of use or where the site is 1ha-3ha.	£3,800	£3,990	£190.00	5.00%	£4,230	£240.00	6.02%	
	Bespoke hourly service for 25-99 residential units, 2001-5999sqm of commercial /change of use or where the site is 1ha-3ha.	n/a	£192	new	new	£204	£12.00	6.25%	
	Development requiring an EIA if not within the above categories	£3,700	£3,885	£185.00	5.00%	£4,118	£233.00	6.00%	
	Bespoke hourly service for Development requiring an EIA if not within the above categories	n/a	£185	new	new	£197	£12.00	6.49%	
	Other Major Developments								

Service	Fees and Charges for 2022/23	2021/22 Fees for reference							Budget Increase (from fee proposals)
		2021/22 FEE	2022/23 FEE	Increase £	% Increase	2023/24 Proposed Fee	Increase £	% Increase	
	Provision of 10-24 dwellings or where the site is between 0.5ha and 1ha.	£2,250	£2,360	£110.00	4.89%	£2,502	£142.00	6.02%	
	Bespoke hourly service for Provision of 10-24 dwellings, 1001sqm to 2000sqm, or where the site is between 0.5ha and 1ha	n/a	£113	new	new	£120	£7.00	6.19%	
	Change of use or provision of 1001sqm - 2000sqm of commercial floor space or on a site with an area exceeding 1ha.	£2,250	£2,360	£110.00	4.89%	£2,502	£142.00	6.02%	
Minor Development									
	Single dwelling/replacement dwelling	£225	£236	£11.00	4.89%	£250	£14.00	5.93%	
	Bespke hourly service for Single dwelling/replacement dwelling	n/a	£68	new	new	£73	£5.00	7.35%	
	2-5 dwellings	£445	£467	£22.00	4.94%	£495	£28.00	6.00%	
	Bespoke hourly service for 2-5 dwellings	n/a	£68	new	new	£73	£5.00	7.35%	
	6-9 dwellings	£1,150	£1,205	£55.00	4.78%	£1,278	£73.00	6.06%	
	Bespoke hourly service for 6-9 dwellings	n/a	£68	new	new	£73	£5.00	7.35%	
	Change of use of buildings/new commercial buildings with a floor space between 0-500sqm or on a site with an area up to 0.5ha.	£225	£236	£11.00	4.89%	£251	£15.00	6.36%	
	Bespoke hourly service for Change of use of buildings/new commercial buildings with a floor space between 0-500sqm or on a site with an area up to 0.5ha	n/a	£68	new	new	£73	£5.00	7.35%	
	Change of use of buildings/new commercial buildings with a floor space between 501sqm and 1000sqm or on a site with an area between 0.5ha and 1 ha	£740	£777	£37.00	5.00%	£824	£47.00	6.05%	
	Bespoke hourly service for Change of use of buildings/new commercial buildings with a floor space between 501sqm and 1000sqm or on a site with an area between 0.5ha and 1 ha	n/a	£68	new	new	£73	£5.00	7.35%	
Householder									
	Domestic extensions, conservatories etc. and alterations to residential properties. (WITH SITE VISITS)	£80	£225	£145.00	181.25%	£225.00	£0.00	0.00%	

		2021/22 Fees for reference							
Service	Fees and Charges for 2022/23	2021/22 FEE	2022/23 FEE	Increase £	% Increase	2023/24 Proposed Fee	Increase £	% Increase	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)
	Domestic extensions, conservatories etc. and alterations to residential properties. (WITHOUT SITE VISITS)	n/a	£175	new	new	£175.00	£0.00	0.00%	
	Specialist Advice								
	Works to listed buildings Developments affecting a conservation area	£159	£163	£4.00	2.52%	£173	£10.00	6.13%	
	Advertisements								
	Per Site	£80	£188	£108.00	135.00%	£200	£12.00	6.38%	
	Assistant Director								
	Costs per hour for the Assistant Director to attend meetings.	n/a	£271	new	new	£288	£17.00	6.27%	
	New Planning Fees from 2023/24								
	Direct Application Fee	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	£48.00	new	new	£2,000
	Enquiry Fee					£10.00	new	new	£4,000
	Deed Novation/Variation					£2000 + Legal fees (variable)	new	new	£8,000
	Planning Total								£16,700
	Hackney Carriages:	various	various			various	£0.00	0.00%	£0

FEES AND CHARGES -RECOMMENDED FEE INCREASES FOR 2022/23									
APPENDIX B FEES AND CHARGES									
		2021/22 Fees for reference							
Service	Fees and Charges for 2022/23	2021/22 FEE	2022/23 FEE	Increase £	% Increase	2023/24 Proposed Fee	Increase £	% Increase	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)
Env Health & Licensing:	Housing Act 2004								£500
	Licence for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)	£750	£775	£25.00	3.33%	£830	£55.00	7.10%	
	Service of Housing Act Notices	£395	£410	£15.00	3.80%	£430	£20.00	4.88%	
Env Health & Licensing:	Food Premises	various							£860
Page 368	Destruction Certificate	£136	£139	£3.00	2.21%	£150	£11.00	7.91%	
	Health Certificate	£111	£114	£3.00	2.70%	£120	£6.00	5.26%	
Env Health & Licensing:	Licensing including: Acupuncture, street trading etc.	various							£3,450
Local Land Charges	Residential Property (Con 29)	£65.40	£68.00	£2.60	3.98%	£73.40	£5.40	7.94%	
VAT is PAYABLE on these fees (fees shown is GROSS of VAT) Integra Code = RC110	Residential Property (LLC1) NO VAT	£17.50	£18.20	£0.70	4.00%	£19.65	£1.45	7.97%	
	Commercial Property and Areas of Land (Con 29)	£85.20	£88.60	£3.40	3.99%	£95.60	£7.00	7.90%	
	Commercial Property and Areas of Land (LLC1) NO VAT	£22.80	£23.70	£0.90	3.95%	£25.55	£1.85	7.81%	
	Con29O Enquiry Q4 and additional parcels of land	£12.00	£12.50	£0.50	4.17%	£13.50	£1.00	8.00%	
	Con29O Enquiry Q5-21 (each)	£6.00	£6.25	£0.25	4.17%	£6.75	£0.50	8.00%	
	Con29O Enquiry Q22	£24.00	£24.95	£0.95	3.96%	£26.90	£1.95	7.82%	
	Additional Enquiry	£13.08	£13.60	£0.52	3.98%	£14.65	£1.05	7.72%	£1,800
Housing General Fund:	Careline Alarm- private (Shortfall funded from General Fund)	various							

FEEs AND CHARGES -RECOMMENDED FEE INCREASES FOR 2022/23 **APPENDIX B FEES AND CHARGES**

		2021/22 Fees for reference							
Service	Fees and Charges for 2022/23	2021/22 FEE	2022/23 FEE	Increase £	% Increase	2023/24 Proposed Fee	Increase £	% Increase	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)
									£325,840

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APPENDIX C : RISK BASED ASSESSMENT OF THE LEVEL OF GENERAL FUND BALANCES 2023/24

Potential Risk Area	Comments including any mitigation factors		
Income from areas within the base budget where the Council raises "Fees and Charges"	Potential risk that the budgeted level of income from activities where the Council is charging for services will not be achieved. This is anticipated largely to be as a result of the downturn in economy and cost of living crisis, but could also be as a result of poor weather, new competition. All "fees and charges" income is reviewed as part of the monthly/quarterly budget monitoring process. All budgets are profiled over the year based upon previous experience.		
		Calculated Risk	
Specific Areas	Estimated Income	Likelihood Percentage	Balances Required
Parking Income* (on street/off-street)	£4,769,531	4.0%	£190,781
Development Control Income	£429,330	4.0%	£17,173
Recycling Income	£749,960	2.5%	£18,749
Garages	£3,641,290	1.0%	£36,413
Trade Refuse & Skips	£1,134,140	2.5%	£28,354
Indoor Market	£457,580	10.0%	£45,758
Commercial Property Income	£3,703,240	5.0%	£185,162
Cost of Living losses arising from a lower fees and charges in excess of budgeted for			£500,000
Total			£1,022,390

* The council has a parking account which identifies how parking fees are spent on parking and related costs

Potential Risk Area	Comments		
Demand Led Budgets	Potential risk that spending on parts of the budget where the Council has a legal duty to provide the service increases significantly (including as an impact of Covid-19). Individual budgets reviewed as part of the monthly budget monitoring process. All budgets are profiled over the year based upon previous experience and so any variances should show up during the year.		
		Calculated Risk	
Specific Areas	Estimated Exposure	Likelihood Percentage	Balances Required
Housing Benefit maximum risk based on not meeting threshold for Local Authority errors.	£180,000	40%	£72,000
Loss of Business Rates yield	£3,225,345	maximum loss (7.5%)	£241,901
Lower S31 Grants than anticipated which means the NNDR yield would be higher but would not be returned to the General Fund until 2023/24.	£815,229	5%	£40,761
Increase in bad debts as a economic changes impacting on charging for services	£152,000	100%	£152,000
There is an increased cost of Bed and Breakfast as a result of higher homelessness due to cost of living crisis	£330,000	20%	£66,000
risk of capital works requiring funding as a result of rephasing/deferring works in the Capital Strategy	£250,000	50%	£125,000
Housing Benefit overpayment net income reduces and results in a pressure on the General Fund	£492,480	10%	£49,248
Total			£746,910

Potential Risk Area	Comments including any mitigation factors		
Changes since budget was set	Potential risk that things change since the budget estimates were made and the estimates are then under budgeted for.		
		Calculated Risk	
Specific Areas	Estimated Exposure	Likelihood Percentage	Balances Required
Transitional Vacancy Rate 4.5%	£744,705	5.00%	£37,235
Less staff time charged to capital than budgeted	£686,490	10.00%	£68,649
REVISED: pay award is higher than budgeted for 1%	£21,277,040		£197,897
Contractual inflation 1% increase	£9,742,307	1.00%	£37,184
Utility and fuel inflation usage/costs increase	£1,780,149	10.00%	£178,015
Borrowing costs will be higher than estimated on new borrowing in Capital Strategy	£77,315	1% increase in borrowing costs for the garage programme	£22,037
Total			£541,018

Potential Risk Area	Comments including any mitigation factors		
Other Risks	Potential risk that savings options will not be realised as a result of delay or unforeseen circumstances.		
		Calculated Risk	
Specific Areas	Estimated Exposure	Likelihood Percentage	Balances Required
Savings Options	£1,310,500	13.50%	£176,917
Total			£176,917

Potential Risk Area	Comments including any mitigation factors		
Estimated balances required for any over spend or under -recovery of expenditure and income	This calculation replaces the calculation based on Net Expenditure		
		Calculated Risk	
Specific Areas	Estimated Exposure	Likelihood Percentage	Balances Required
Gross Income (excludes specific income listed above)	£33,581,875	1.50%	£503,728
Gross Expenditure (excludes specific expenditure listed above)	£28,585,985	1.50%	£428,790
Total			£932,518

Level of Balances Assumed in General Fund Based on risk

£3,419,753

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MAKING YOUR MONEY COUNT (MYMC) 2023/24 - Appendix D

Overall Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) of MYMC Savings Proposals

Equality at Stevenage Borough Council

1. Stevenage Borough Council is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion across its services, workforce and local community. To demonstrate its commitment to the identification and mitigation of discrimination and inequality, the Council will complete and publish Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA) when there is a new or revised policy, procedure, function, or where there is a withdrawal of service. For more information about the Council's commitment to advancing equalities please refer to the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy (2022-26).
2. We want to deliver services that are fair, accessible and open to everyone who needs them. Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) are an important part of the process in ensuring that our intention is translated into action. They help to ensure that decisions are made in a fair, transparent and accountable way, considering the needs and the rights of different people in the community.
3. Based on the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, the Equality Impact Assessment considers the impact on the following groups when making decisions, updating policies and starting new projects:
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marital status
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Race
 - Religion or belief
 - Sex
 - Sexual orientation.
4. Although non-statutory, the Council has chosen to adopt the Socio-Economic Duty. Council's elected members and officers are required to consider the impact of their decisions on people who are less fortunate because of their social/economic background.
5. EqIAs also help the Council to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). The Duty states that a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is unlawful under this Act
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
 - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

Making Your Money Savings Count Proposals 2023/24

6. Prior to their consideration at Executive in December 2022, all savings proposals were reviewed to determine any potential impact on Stevenage residents in terms of their protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. Some of these have no direct public impact and so have not been subject to any further EqIA.
7. Where a new change in policy, procedure, function, service or withdrawal of service is proposed, Assistant Directors and other appropriate managers have drafted Equality Impact Assessments.
8. This year there are four new proposals that may potentially have a positive, negative or disproportionate impact. These are:
 1. Closure of 3 Play schemes
 2. Removal of the Leisure & Health Development Officer post
 3. Raising off street parking fees
 4. Raising Garage fees
9. The potential impact of these proposals is summarised over the following pages and will inform the recommendations made at Executive in December 2022 and Council in January 2023. Action to further analyse or mitigate the impact on people with particular protected characteristics is identified where appropriate.
10. It should be noted that EqIA's are working documents and new equality impacts may be identified throughout the planning and implementation stages of the revised policy, procedure, function, service. To ensure that these changes are captured, EqIAs will be updated, and appropriate mitigations considered accordingly.
11. The following further activity will take place:
 - January 2023 - Consideration of all completed EqIAs at Council meeting, alongside the budget proposals
 - Ongoing review and update of EQIA's and impact as proposals are further developed and implemented throughout 2023/24, including consultation and engagement as appropriate.

Summary of potential impacts identified as a result of budget proposals

Protected characteristic	Local/National Information	Summary potential impact(s)	Mitigating action(s)	Responsible officer
Age	Stevenage has a slightly younger population when compared with Hertfordshire and England, with an increase in the 2021 census of 4.6% in people aged 15 to 64 years, and an increase of 7.7% in children aged less than 15 years, since 2011.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Children and young people are the main users of the Play Service and so removal of service is more likely to impact them. <li>2. The reduction in one post supporting sports development and health promotion work is more likely to impact support activities targeting children and younger people, such as support for the Young People’s Health Hub 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1A. To help mitigate the negative impact, the Council will continue to provide children activity sessions as part of its existing Museum offering. The council will continue to promote these sessions through its various social media channels and wider comms activities. There are also a number of independent providers in the area which provide children activity services for a small fee. The Council will develop a list of providers by which to signpost existing users of the Play service. <li>2. Young People’s Healthy Hub and direct support for Sport’s Clubs (including a significant number of Youth Sport’s Clubs across the town and recent Basketball activities) will not be serviced in the same way, but through different partnering arrangements such as with Herts Sports Partnership or through the new Active Communities Service. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1A. Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services Manager <li>2. Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services Manager

	<p>The 2021 census shows that there has been an increase of 15.4% in people aged 65 years and over</p> <p>ONS data confirms that under 30s and over 65s have lower than average incomes, with ages in between having higher than average incomes</p>	<p>3. Support for activities targeting older people, such as local walking festivals will be reduced in terms of direct officer support.</p> <p>4A. Under 30's and over 65's may be disproportionality impacted by the increase in off-street parking and may be more vulnerable to socio-economic impacts (see socio-economic section below).</p> <p>B. Under 30's and over 65's lower than average income combined with an increase in off-street parking charges may negatively impact access to businesses, shops and leisure services</p> <p>5. The garage price increase might impact the elderly who are on pension credit and could affect young people on low incomes.</p>	<p>3. A dedicated activities Co-Ordinator will remain across supported housing. The new Active Communities Service delivered by the leisure operator will include older inactive people with health conditions as part of its programme.</p> <p>4A. See socio-economic impacts section below.</p> <p>B. it is believed that many people accessing these businesses already use the bus rather than drive, so the potential impact will be minimal, however feedback on the application of the charges will be closely monitored in the lead up to and following implementation.</p> <p>5. See socio-economic impacts section below.</p>	<p>3. Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services Manager</p> <p>4A. See socio-economic impacts section below.</p> <p>B. Parking Management Officer</p> <p>5. See socio-economic impacts section below.</p>
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<p>Disability</p>	<p>In 2011, 7.5% of Stevenage residents who were 16-64 years of age had a disability which limited their day-to-day activities.</p> <p>The Office for National Statistics (ONS) show that disabled workers earn on average £1.93 per hour less than non-disabled employees (a gap of over £3,500 per year based on a 35-hour week). The</p>	<p>1. Children and young people with disabilities who are users of the Play Service are likely to be impacted through any reduction in service.</p> <p>2. The disability pay gap means that disabled people may be more vulnerable to socio-economic impacts and are more likely to be impacted by the increase in off-streets parking and garage charges (see socio-economic section below).</p> <p>3. The garage price increase might impact on people who are on disability allowance.</p>	<p>1A. To help mitigate any impact, the Council will continue to provide children activity sessions as part of its existing Museum offering. The council will continue to promote these sessions through its various social media channels and wider comms activities. There are also a number of independent providers in the area which provide children activity services for a small fee. The Council will develop a list of providers by which to signpost existing users of the Play service.</p> <p>2. See socio-economic impacts section below.</p> <p>3. With the launch of Digital Lettings, potential garage licensees can bid for garages. Garages will normally be</p>	<p>1A. Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services Manager</p> <p>2. See socio-economic impacts section below.</p> <p>3. Assistant Director – SDS and Garages Manager</p>
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	disability pay gap – the difference between median pay for disabled employees and non-disabled employees – was 13.8% in 2021.		allocated in date order from the waiting list; however the Council reserves the right to give priority to anyone who is registered disabled upon providing evidence of a blue badge. In exceptional circumstances a case will be reviewed and decided on its merits.	
Gender reassignment		No differential impacts directly related to people having this characteristic have been identified as a result of these proposals.		
Marital status		No differential impacts directly related to people having this characteristic have been identified as a result of these proposals.		
Pregnancy and maternity		No differential impacts directly related to people having this characteristic have been identified as a result of these proposals.		
Race	In 2019, Office of National Statistics (ONS) figures showed the ethnicity pay gap in England and Wales – the difference in pay between white British and minority ethnic employees – had narrowed to its smallest level since 2012 – 2.3%, down	1. People from ethnic minorities may be more vulnerable to socio-economic impacts and are more likely to be impacted by the increase in off-streets parking charges (see socio-economic section below).	1. See socio-economic impacts section below.	1. See socio-economic impacts section below.

	<p>from its recent high of 8.4% in 2014.</p> <p>Health inequalities data supplementing the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Equality & Diversity demonstrates the need for future consideration of race and ethnicity in regard to health and wellbeing.</p>	<p>2. Reduction of this post may negatively impact any future work planned to focus on this protected characteristic as part of community programming.</p>	<p>2. There is no current sports development/health promotion underway which targets this protected characteristic as part of the reduced role. The new Active Communities Service will consider targeting this protected characteristic as part of its approach to community programming.</p>	<p>2. Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services Manager</p>
Religion or belief		<p>No differential impacts directly related to people having this characteristic have been identified as a result of these proposals.</p>		
Sex	<p>In 2021, the UK's gender pay gap rose from 14.9% to 15.4% (Office for National Statistics, ONS, 2021). This means that, on average, women earn just over 15% less than men per hour.</p>	<p>1. Women may be more vulnerable to socio-economic impacts and are more likely to be impacted by the increase in off-streets parking charges (see socio-economic section below).</p>	<p>1. See socio-economic impacts section below.</p>	<p>1. See socio-economic impacts section below.</p>

	<p>The number of women who participate in any kind of sport or physical activity in England is slowly and steadily increasing in recent years. As of 2021, approximately 17.5 million women participate at least twice a month at any intensity or duration a slight decrease from 17.78 million women in 2020 (www.statista.com).</p>	<p>2. Through the Herts Sport Partnership, women in Stevenage are encouraged to participate in This Girl Can activities. The reduction of the post will impact the council's role in servicing and supporting activity and bidding to further funding rounds.</p>	<p>2. The new Active Communities Service will consider targeting this protected characteristic as part of its approach to community programming.</p>	<p>2. Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services Manager</p>
Sexual Orientation		<p>No differential impacts directly related to people having this characteristic have been identified as a result of these proposals.</p>		
Socio-economic	<p>According to the 2019 English Index of Multiple Deprivation, Stevenage continues to be the most deprived authority in</p>	<p>1. Reducing play services may negatively impact lower income families.</p>	<p>1. To help mitigate the negative impact, the Council will continue to provide children activity sessions as part of its existing Museum offering. The council will continue to promote these sessions through its various social media channels and wider comms activities. There are also a number of independent providers in the</p>	<p>1 & 2. Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services Manager</p>

	<p>Hertfordshire. Of this, Bedwell is the most deprived ward in Town.</p>	<p>2. The reduction in leisure and health post reduces the service available in terms of council-led delivery and facilitation of health and wellbeing initiatives and direct sports development support. This impact will be felt in neighbourhoods with highest health inequalities, which correlate with socio-economic conditions.</p> <p>3. Any increase in off-street parking fees is likely to impact most on those who are already at socio-economic disadvantage due to protected characteristic (for the purposes of this assessment - Disability, Race or Gender). This could mean that parking becomes unaffordable for some people if prices increase significantly.</p>	<p>area which provide children activity services for a small fee. The Council will develop a list of providers by which to signpost existing users of the Play service.</p> <p>2. The new Active Communities Service will be targeted in neighbourhoods experiencing the highest health inequalities and therefore new provision will be delivered as part of this contract.</p> <p>3A. The proposed price rise is very low with an increase of between 20 - 50p per hour, this represents an overall increase of less than 10% across current charges. Feedback on the application of the charges will be closely monitored in the lead up to and following implementation.</p> <p>B. At the same time, the town centre is well served by other modes of transport while fees in the vicinity of the hospital would remain significantly cheaper than those offered by the hospital car parks (and therefore clearly below the market</p>	<p>3A. Assistant Director Planning & Regulatory</p> <p>3B. Parking Management Officer</p>
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		<p>4. The garage price increase might impact the elderly who are on pension credit, young people on low incomes and disabled residents impacted by the disability pay gap.</p>	<p>rate). This potential impact may be lessened as more than half of households in the bottom income quartile do not have a car. It is often the case that protected characteristics correlate with lower rates of car ownership.</p> <p>4. Holding a garage license is a discretionary service and residents use them for parking their cars or for storage purposes. If the resident becomes unable to afford the current tier of garages, they will be able to bid on a lower tier, cheaper garage through Digital Lettings. Prices and locations will be clearly displayed and applicants will be measured against set criteria to award the garage, in a similar way to the management of the current manual waiting list.</p>	<p>4. Assistant Director - SDS</p>
<p>Other</p>	<p>Increased parking charges may promote modal shift away from using cars, leading to improved public health through reduced air pollution and increased physical activity.</p>			

Appendices

[Appendix A – Equality Impact Assessment \(EqIA\) Play Services](#)

[Appendix B – EqIA Leisure & Health Development Officer](#)

[Appendix C – EqIA Off Street Parking Price Changes](#)

[Appendix D – EqIA Garages Price Changes](#)

Appendix A – Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Play Service

What is being assessed?	Play Service	What are the key aims of it?	The permanent closure of 3 play schemes including term-time after School play offer and pop-up holiday play scheme offer during School holidays.		
Who may be affected by it?	Children, Young People and Families				
Date of full EqIA on service area (planned or completed)	October 2022				
Form completed by:	Geoff Caine	Start date	October 2022	End date	November 2022
		Review date	September 2023		

What data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	<p>2019/20 full year service attendance. (Incomplete view for 2020/21 and 21/22 due to Covid-19).</p> <p>2022 attendance figures to date</p> <p>Annual revenue budget</p> <p>Staffing resources and structure</p> <p>Child Poverty Statistics for Stevenage</p>	Have any information gaps been identified along the way? If so, please specify	
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<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-2014-to-2021>

Explain the **potential positive, negative or unequal impact** on the following characteristics and **how likely** this is:

<p>Age</p>	<p>Negative impact</p> <p>In 2011, 32.3% of households in Stevenage had a dependent child in the home and 13.3% had a dependent child between zero and four years old. The loss of service will impact children and young people overall.</p> <p>To help mitigate the negative impact, the Council will continue to provide children activity sessions as part of its existing Museum offering. The council will continue to promote these sessions through its various social media channels and wider comms activities.</p> <p>There are also a number of independent providers in the area which provide children activity services for a small fee. The Council will develop a list of providers by which to signpost existing users of the Play service.</p>	<p>Race</p>	<p>Neutral impact</p> <p>Stevenage has a growing Black And Minority Ethnic (BAME) population increasing from 16.9% in 2011 to 17.2% in 2021. Whilst it is anticipated that the impact the closure of the Play service on residents from minority national or ethnic backgrounds will be neutral, the Council will seek to mitigate any impact of the closure through the continued promotion of the activity sessions provided by the Museum, and work to signpost existing Play service users to independent providers.</p>
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	<p>Older People</p> <p>Not applicable</p>		
Disability	<p>Neutral Impact</p> <p>In 2011, 15.7% of Stevenage residents (all ages) had a disability which limited their day-to-day activities. Whilst it is anticipated that the impact the closure of the Play service on residents with disabilities will be neutral, the Council will seek to mitigate any impact of the closure through the continued promotion of the activity sessions provided by the Museum, and work to signpost existing Play service users to independent providers.</p>	Religion or belief	<p>Neutral Impact</p> <p>Not applicable</p>
Gender reassignment	<p>Neutral Impact</p> <p>Not applicable</p>	Sex	<p>Neutral Impact</p> <p>Not applicable</p>
Marriage or civil partnership	<p>Neutral Impact:</p> <p>Not applicable</p>	Sexual orientation	<p>Neutral Impact:</p> <p>Not applicable</p>

Pregnancy & maternity	<p>Negative Impact:</p> <p>The closure of the Play service may have a negative impact on pregnant women with young children. To help mitigate the impact the Council will continue to promote the activity sessions provided by the Museum, and work to signpost existing Play service users to independent providers.</p>	Socio-economic ¹	<p>Negative Impact:</p> <p>To help mitigate the negative impact the Council will continue to provide low-cost fee-paying children activity sessions as part of its existing Museum offering. The council will continue to promote these sessions through its various social media channels and wider comms activities.</p> <p>There are also a number of independent providers in the area which provide children activity services for a small fee. The Council will develop a list of providers by which to signpost existing users of the Play service.</p>
Other			

Where there is a likely positive impact , please explain how it will help to fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment		Promote equal opportunities		Encourage good relations	

¹Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.

What further work / activity is needed as a result of this assessment?

Action	Responsible officer	How will this be delivered and monitored?	Deadline
Develop and implement signposting to alternative providers	Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services Manager	Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services Service Plan	Summer 2023
Promote the Museum's children's sessions	Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services Manager	Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services Service Plan	Summer 2023
Restructure service area	Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services Manager	Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services Service Plan	Summer 2023

Approved by Assistant Director/ Strategic Director: Rob Gregory Date: 28/10/22

Appendix B – EqIA Leisure & Health Development Officer

What is being assessed?		What are the key aims of it?	The reduction in one post supporting sports development, and health promotion work across the town. One post would remain to lead Healthy Stevenage Partnership and key partnership work but direct delivery by the council would reduce. The new leisure contract will however include a new Active Communities programme, which will include direct delivery of activities in neighbourhoods.		
Who may be affected by it?	Children, Young People and Families				
Date of full EqIA on service area (planned or completed)	October 2022				
Form completed by:	Rob Gregory	Start date	October 2022	End date	November 2022
		Review date	September 2023		

What data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	<p>Healthy Stevenage Strategy 2018-22</p> <p>Current service work programme</p> <p>Joint Strategic Needs Assessment</p> <p>https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/jsna/hertfordshires-joint-strategic-needs-assessment.aspx</p>	Have any information gaps been identified along the way? If so, please specify	
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Explain the potential positive, negative or unequal impact on the following characteristics and how likely this is:			
Age	<p>General (Potential Neutral Impact)</p> <p>The reduction in service offer reduces the service available in terms of council-led delivery and facilitation of health and wellbeing initiatives and direct sports development support. This will impact all age groups. It is proposed the council maintains its membership contribution to Herts Sports Partnership to ensure some broader support to sports clubs. In addition the council's new leisure contract will deliver a new Active Communities Service- targeting physical activity and health promotion work in local communities. It is recommended that this is targeted in line with local health inequalities.</p> <p>Older People (Potential Neutral Impact)</p> <p>As above. Support for activities targeting older people, such as local walking festivals will be reduced in terms of direct officer support, however a dedicated activities Co-Ordinator will remain across supported housing. The new Active Communities Service delivered by the leisure operator will include</p>	Race	<p>Potential Neutral Impact</p> <p>The reduction in service offer reduces the service available in terms of council-led delivery and facilitation of health and wellbeing initiatives and direct sports development support. This will impact all sections of the community. There is not current delivery underway targeting this protected characteristic however, health inequalities data supplementing the JSNA demonstrates the need for future consideration of race and ethnicity in regards to health and wellbeing. It is envisaged that the new Active Communities Service will consider this as part of its approach to community programming.</p>

	<p>older inactive people with health conditions as part of its programme. This will be a new activity.</p> <p>Younger People (Potential Negative Impact)</p> <p>As above. Support for activities targeting children and young people, such as direct management support for the Young People’s Healthy Hub and direct support for Sport’s Clubs (including a significant number of Youth Sport’s Clubs across the town and recent Basketball activities) will not be serviced in the same way, but through different partnering arrangements such as with Herts Sports Partnership or through the new Active Communities Service.</p>		
Disability	<p>Potential Neutral Impact</p> <p>The reduction in service offer reduces the service available in terms of council-led delivery and facilitation of health and wellbeing initiatives and direct sports development support. This will impact all sections of the community. There is no delivery currently focussed on this protected characteristic.</p>	Religion or belief	<p>Potential Neutral Impact</p> <p>The reduction in service offer reduces the service available in terms of council-led delivery and facilitation of health and wellbeing initiatives and direct sports development support. This will impact all sections of the community. There is no delivery currently focussed on this protected characteristic.</p>
Gender reassignment	<p>Neutral Impact</p>	Sex	<p>Potential Negative Impact</p>

	The reduction in service offer reduces the service available in terms of council-led delivery and facilitation of health and wellbeing initiatives and direct sports development support. This will impact all sections of the community. There is no current delivery focussed on this protected characteristic.		The reduction in service offer reduces the service available in terms of council-led delivery and facilitation of health and wellbeing initiatives and direct sports development support. This will impact all sections of the community. Current activity in Stevenage delivered by partners under “This Girl Can” will continue although the council’s role in servicing and supporting activity and bidding to further funding rounds will be reduced.
Marriage or civil partnership	Neutral Impact: Not applicable	Sexual orientation	Neutral Impact: The reduction in service offer reduces the service available in terms of council-led delivery and facilitation of health and wellbeing initiatives and direct sports development support. This will impact all sections of the community. There is no current delivery focussed on this protected characteristic.
Pregnancy & maternity	Neutral Impact: Not applicable	Socio-economic ²	Potential Negative Impact: The reduction in service offer reduces the service available in terms of council-led delivery and facilitation of health and wellbeing initiatives and direct sports development support. This will impact all sections of the community. This impact will be felt in neighbourhoods with highest health inequalities, which correlate with socio-economic conditions. However, the new Active Communities Service will be targeted in neighbourhoods

²Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.

			experiencing the highest health inequalities and therefore new provision will be delivered as part of this contract.
Other			

Where there is a likely positive impact , please explain how it will help to fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment		Promote equal opportunities		Encourage good relations	

What further work / activity is needed as a result of this assessment?

Action	Responsible officer	How will this be delivered and monitored?	Deadline
Agreement on options	Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services Manager	Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services Service Plan	February 2023
Restructure service area	Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services Manager	Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services Service Plan	Summer 2023
Revisit EQIA based on new Active Communities Service	Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services Manager	Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services Service Plan	September 2023

Approved by Assistant Director/ Strategic Director: Rob Gregory Date: 13/11/22

Appendix C – EqIA Off Street Parking Price Changes

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What is being assessed?	Raising off street parking fees	What are the key aims of it?	To raise revenue for the council		
Who may be affected by it?	All car park users				
Date of full EqIA on service area (planned or completed)	7/11/2022				
Form completed by:	Andrew Gough	Start date	01/01//22	End date	01/01/23
		Review date	17/11/23		

What data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	Sectoral knowledge, feedback on existing charges, feedback from past consultations, ONS data.	Have any information gaps been identified along the way? If so, please specify	The public's views on the equalities impacts of this are unknown at this time. Response to the implementation of the new charges will be closely monitored.
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Explain the potential positive, negative or unequal impact on the following characteristics and how likely this is:			
Age	<p>Older people may be on lower/fixed incomes and therefore more vulnerable to socio-economic impacts.</p> <p>ONS data confirms that under 30s and over 65s have lower than average incomes, with ages in between having higher than average incomes, raising the possibility of price increases having a disproportionate effect on them.</p>	Race	<p>ONS data confirms the existence of an ethnicity pay gap in the UK. People from ethnic minorities may therefore be more vulnerable to socio-economic impacts.</p> <p>Refer to "Socio-economic" below.</p>
Disability	<p>Disabled people are more likely to earn less than able bodied people, and will be impacted by the higher cost of season tickets for blue badge holders. However the rate still represents a 46% discount on the full price, mitigating the impact somewhat.</p>	Religion or belief	No unequal impact identified

	ONS data confirms the existence of a disability pay gap in the UK. People with disabilities who do not have a Blue Badge allowing them to park for free may therefore be more vulnerable to socio-economic impacts.		
Gender reassignment	No unequal impact identified	Sex	ONS data confirms the existence of a gender pay gap in the UK. Women may therefore be more vulnerable to socio-economic impacts.
Marriage or civil partnership	No unequal impact identified	Sexual orientation	No unequal impact identified
Pregnancy & maternity	No unequal impact identified	Socio-economic ³	Any increase in fees is likely to impact most on those who are already at socio-economic disadvantage. This could mean that parking becomes unaffordable for some people. At the same time, the town centre is well served by other modes of transport while fees in the vicinity of the hospital would remain

³Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.

			<p>significantly cheaper than those offered by the hospital car parks (and therefore clearly below the market rate). This potential impact may be lessened as more than half of households in the bottom income quartile do not have a car. It is often the case that protected characteristics correlate with lower rates of car ownership.</p>
Other	<p>Increased parking charges may promote modal shift away from using cars, leading to improved public health through reduced air pollution and increased physical activity.</p>		

Where there is a likely positive impact , please explain how it will help to fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment		Promote equal opportunities		Encourage good relations	

What further work / activity is needed as a result of this assessment?

Action	Responsible officer	How will this be delivered and monitored?	Deadline
Close monitoring of the response to, and impact of, the new charges	Liviu	Monitoring plan to be developed, linked to customer feedback	Sept 2023

Approved by Head of Service / Strategic Director: Zayd Al-Jawad

Date: 07.11.22

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Garages

Full Equality Impact Assessment

For a policy, project, service or other decision that is new, changing or under review

What is being assessed?		The increase in Garage Fees & Charges for Financial Year 23-24	
Lead Assessor	Nadia Capuano		Assessment team
Start date	April 2023	End date	March 2024
When will the EqIA be reviewed?	September 2023		Nadia Capuano

Who may be affected by it?	Service users / residents
What are the key aims of it?	<p>1: To decrease the void rates of garages to ensure the maximum number of residents can benefit from garage services.</p> <p>2: To combat inflationary pressures and increased service costs by ensuring that garage prices rise. The fee increases for 2023/24 are all below the current rate of inflation.</p> <p>3: To ensure revenue generation from garages, assisting the Council with its financial security challenges.</p>

	<p>4: To apply a different percentage increase to different garage types (ranging from 2.56% to 6%) depending on the specification and demand to provide a wider range of options for residents.</p>
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What positive measures are in place (if any) to help fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment	With the launch of Digital Lettings in December 2022, residents will be able to bid on garages that best suit their needs based on factors such as price, affordability, location and distance.	Promote equal opportunities	Garage pricing is differentiated (i.e., low demand garages cost less than premium, larger garages). The proposed fees and charges increases allow for more differentiation and ensure that residents can choose a garage that suits their needs.	Encourage good relations	

What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	Garages databases containing information on the status of all SBC garages, resident requirements and the garages waiting list.
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<p>In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?</p>	<p>Garage Services are using a commercial model for standard sized garages where low void, high demand areas will see a bigger increase in fees as residents have a high demand product. Conversely, high void, low demand garages will see a smaller increase in fees to help decrease the void rate. Garage licensees with the lowest fee increase will need to pay an additional 30p per week / £15.60 per year. Garages licensees with the highest fee increase will pay an additional 90p weekly / £46.80 per year. It is anticipated that these fee increases will not adversely affect any garage current licensees or deter future licensees.</p> <p>If used for storage purposes only, there is also the option for residents to hold a license for 'half sized' garages; these smaller garages are charged at just £5 per week (price unchanged from 2022/23).</p> <p>Garage prices were benchmarked against other local offers as part of the fees and charges process. Looking at how the SBC proposals compare, the proposed pricing for standard garages ranges from £12.00 to £16.50 per week and these fees sit directly in the middle of the other benchmarked local authorities, Dacorum and St Albans Councils, who are likely to raise their prices further as part of their reviews of fees and charges for 23/24.</p>
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Evidence and impact assessment

Explain the potential impact and opportunities it could have for people in terms of the following characteristics, where applicable:

Age					
Positive impact		Negative impact	X	Unequal impact	X
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		The price increase might impact the elderly who are on pension credit and could affect young people on low incomes. Holding a garage license is a discretionary service and residents use them for parking their cars or for storage purposes. If the resident becomes unable to afford the current tier of garages, they will be able to bid on a lower tier, cheaper garage through Digital Lettings.			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	With launch of Digital Lettings, potential garage licensees can bid for garages online. Prices and locations will be clearly displayed and applicants will be measured against set criteria to award the garage, in a similar way to the management of the current manual waiting list.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Disability					
e.g. physical impairment, mental ill health, learning difficulties, long-standing illness					
Positive impact		Negative impact	X	Unequal impact	X

<p>Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment</p>	<p>The price increase might impact on people who are on disability allowance. Holding a garage license is a discretionary service and licensees use them for parking their cars or for storage purposes. If the resident becomes unable to afford the current tier of garages, they will be able to bid on a lower tier, cheaper garage through Digital Lettings.</p>		
<p>What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?</p>	<p>With launch of Digital Lettings, potential garage licensees can bid for garages.</p> <p>Garages will normally be allocated in date order from the waiting list; however the Council reserves the right to give priority to anyone who is registered disabled upon providing evidence of a blue badge. In exceptional circumstances a case will be reviewed and decided on its merits. The overall decision will be undertaken by the Garages Manager.</p>	<p>What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)</p>	

<p>Gender reassignment</p>					
<p>Positive impact</p>		<p>Negative impact</p>		<p>Unequal impact</p>	
<p>Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment</p>					

What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	
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Marriage or civil partnership					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Pregnancy & maternity					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	

Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Race					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Religion or belief					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	

Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Sex					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Sexual orientation					
e.g. straight, lesbian / gay, bisexual					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Socio-economic⁴					
e.g. low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users, social value in procurement					
Positive impact		Negative impact	X	Unequal impact	X
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		The price increase might impact residents with a socio-economic disadvantage who are in receipt of benefits. Holding a garage license is a discretionary service and licensees use them for parking their cars or for storage purposes. If the licensee becomes unable to afford the current tier of garages, they will be able to bid on a lower tier, lower cost garage through Digital Lettings.			

⁴Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.

<p>What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?</p>	<p>With launch of Digital Lettings, potential garage licensees can bid for garages. Prices and locations will be clearly displayed meaning that potential licensees are fully aware of all the options available.</p>	<p>What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)</p>	
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<p>Other please feel free to consider the potential impact on people in any other contexts</p>					
<p>Positive impact</p>		<p>Negative impact</p>		<p>Unequal impact</p>	
<p>Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment</p>					
<p>What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?</p>			<p>What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)</p>		

What are the findings of any consultation with:

<p>Staff?</p>	<p>Discussion with the Garages & Commercial team regarding garages void rates and inflationary pressures led to the implementation of applying different</p>	<p>Residents?</p>	<p>Not consulted with</p>
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	percentage increase to different garage types (ranging from 2.56% to 6%) depending on the specification and demand.		
Voluntary & community sector?	Not consulted with	Partners?	Not consulted with
Other stakeholders?	Not consulted with		

Overall conclusion & future activity:

Explain the overall findings of the assessment and reasons for outcome (please choose one) :		
1. No inequality, inclusion issues or opportunities to further improve have been identified		
Negative / unequal impact, barriers to inclusion or improvement opportunities identified	2a. Adjustments made	
	2b. Continue as planned	Some elderly, disabled & socio-economic disadvantaged residents might be negatively affected due to being charged an additional 30p to 90p per week for garages. Every effort will be made for them to be moved to a lower cost garage (if available).
	2c. Stop and remove	

Detail the actions that are needed as a result of this assessment and how they will help to remove discrimination & harassment, promote equal opportunities and / or encourage good relations :				
Action	Will this help to remove, promote and / or encourage?	Responsible officer	Deadline	How will this be embedded as business as usual?
The Garage Services team will continue to monitor termination levels, offer assistance to licensees looking for a cheaper garage and assist them with the Digital Lettings process	Digital Lettings will impartially assign garages to bidders based on waiting time whilst the Garages team will review exceptional cases, promoting equal opportunity. The Garages team will also offer assistance when needed to encourage good relations.	Rebecca Millett	April 2023	The Garage Services team already monitor termination levels and offer assistance to licensees looking for a cheaper garages.

Approved by Head of Service / Strategic Director:



Date: 28.11.22

Please send this EqIA to equalities@stevenage.gov.uk

Brief Equality Impact Assessment APPENDIX E For a minor operational change / review / simple analysis

What is being assessed?	Proposed Employee Related Savings for 2023/24	What are the key aims of it?	To consider the potential impact of the proposed employee related savings for 2023/24 on all staff and particularly those under the protected characteristics.		
Who may be affected by it?	Employees within the areas where savings have been identified				
Date of full EqIA on service area (planned or completed)	A full EqIA will be undertaken for each saving individually as part of the relevant employee consultation process				
Form completed by:	Kirsten Frew	Start date		End date	
		Review date			

What data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	Workforce Equalities Data as of October 2022	Have any information gaps been identified along the way? If so, please specify	Currently no workforce information is held on socio-economic status of the Stevenage Borough Council workforce and therefore this cannot be assessed.
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Explain the potential positive, negative or unequal impact on the following characteristics and how likely this is:			
Age	The age profile of those likely to be impacted by these savings is spread across the	Race	92% of those impacted by the proposed savings identify themselves as White British

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	age ranges of 20-29, 30-39, 50-59 and over 60s.		with 8% declaring they are from a mixed background.
Disability	4% of the employees likely to be impacted by these savings have identified themselves as having a disability.	Religion or belief	32% of the employees likely to be impacted by these savings have identified themselves as having Christian beliefs and 56% as having no religious beliefs. The remaining 12% of those impacted declined to provide their religion or belief.
Gender reassignment	Data for this protected characteristic is incomplete for the employees impacted by the proposed savings options.	Sex	The profile of the employees impacted by the proposed savings is 92% female and 8% male. The proposed savings are therefore likely to have disproportionate effect on more woman than men.
Marriage or civil partnership	28% of those likely to be impacted by the saving proposals have identified themselves as married, 4% as living with partner, 64% as single and 4% as legally separated.	Sexual orientation	91% of employees impacted by the savings proposals identify themselves as Heterosexual, with 9% preferring not to disclose their sexual orientation.
Pregnancy & maternity	No information is held on the pregnancy and maternity status of the employees	Socio-economic ¹	No information is held on the socio-economic status of the employees impacted by the proposed savings.

¹Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.

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	impacted by the proposed savings.		
Other			

Where there is a likely positive impact , please explain how it will help to fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment	Consider approach to address some of the unequal impacts	Promote equal opportunities	Offer all impacted employee a suite of support resources.	Encourage good relations	Consult with staff and trade unions on the proposed savings.

What further work / activity is needed as a result of this assessment?

Action	Responsible officer	How will this be delivered and monitored?	Deadline
A Full EqIA will be undertaken for each of the proposed savings that impacts upon employees as part of the wider consultation exercise on the proposed changes.	Individual ADs responsible for each proposed Saving	As part of the consultation process.	

Approved by Assistant Director / Strategic Director:

Date:

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