



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: Tuesday, 17 February 2026

Time: 6.00pm,

Location: Council Chamber

Contact: Gemma O'Donnell (01438) 242216

committees@stevenage.gov.uk

Members: Councillors: Jim Brown (Chair), Andy McGuinness (Vice-Chair), Sandra Barr, Phil Bibby, Stephen Booth, Robert Boyle, Leanne Brady, Kamal Choudhury, Peter Clark, Akin Elekolusi, Alistair Gordon, Lynda Guy, Ellie Plater and Ceara Roopchand

AGENDA

PART 1

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 20 January 2026.

5 – 12

3. PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET - FINAL GENERAL FUND AND COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2026/27

To consider the decision of the Cabinet on the Council's draft 2026/27 General Fund Budget, Council Tax Support Scheme and draft proposals for the 2025/26 Council Tax.

Notice of Decisions to follow in separate document.

13 – 84

4. PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET - FINAL CAPITAL STRATEGY 2025/26 TO 2029/30

To consider the decision of the Cabinet to approve revisions to the 2025/26 Capital Programme and Strategy and approve the 2026/27 Capital Programme.

Notice of Decisions to follow in separate document.

85 – 114

5. PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET - STEVENAGE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN PARTIAL UPDATE: MAIN MODIFICATIONS FOLLOWING EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC HEARINGS

To consider the decision of the Cabinet on the update of the progress of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan Partial Update now it has progressed to Examination in Public stage, and to seek approval to consult on proposed Main Modifications to the Local Plan Partial Update in order to make the Plan 'sound' and ready for formal adoption.

Notice of Decisions to follow in separate document.

115 – 426

6. PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET - ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY INCLUDING PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2026/27

To consider the decision of the Cabinet to approve the Treasury Management Strategy 2026/27, including its Annual Investment Strategy, Prudential Indicators and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy following considerations from Audit and Cabinet committees to recommend to Council.

Notice of Decisions to follow in separate document.

427 – 462

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

To consider any urgent Part I Decisions authorised by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

8. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

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

9. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

To consider the following motions:

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

10. PART II DECISION OF THE CABINET - WRITE OFFS OVER £10K

To consider the decision of the Cabinet in accordance with financial regulations, to write off Council Tax and Former Tenant Housing related debts deemed irrecoverable which is properly due to the Council.

Notice of Decisions to follow in separate document.
463 – 468

11. PART II DECISIONS OF THE CABINET - GRANT OF AN OPTION AGREEMENT FOR THE SALE OF LAND

To consider the decision of the Cabinet on the option agreement for the sale of land.

Notice of Decisions to follow in separate document.
469 - 482

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

To consider any urgent Part II Decisions authorised by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

13. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

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

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 20 January 2026

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Jim Brown (Chair), Andy McGuinness (Vice-Chair), Robert Boyle, Peter Clark, Alistair Gordon, Lynda Guy and Ceara Roopchand

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.32pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sandra Barr, Phil Bibby, Stephen Booth, Leanne Brady, Kamal Choudhury, Akin Elekolusi and Ellie Plater.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Part I Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 16 December 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL WORKFORCE PRESENTATION

The Committee received a presentation on the Council's workforce, which provided an overview of current workforce demographics at Stevenage Borough Council, key challenges, and future priorities.

Key information included:

- Local government workforce nationally had reduced by approximately 16% over the past decade.
- Stevenage Borough Council employed 702 staff (663 full time equivalent posts). It was noted that the Council also employed 29 agency staff.
- 51% of staff lived within SG1 or SG2 postcodes. Members noted that two thirds of staff used to live within Stevenage.
- Gender split of the workforce was 53% female and 47% male.
- The gender pay gap had improved to -0.98%.
- The Council confirmed its continued commitment to paying the Living Wage.
- Workforce diversity was increasing, with 18% of Stevenage Borough Council staff identifying as from an ethnic minority background.
- Disability data was reported as below the national average, with actions underway to improve reporting levels.

- Widespread recruitment challenges were noted across the sector.

It was noted that the Council had appointed a Talent Manager to support recruitment and to refresh the employer brand.

The Committee noted that the apprenticeship programme had been successful and supported long term workforce development.

The 2025 staff survey showed high levels of satisfaction, with approximately 80% of respondents indicating an intention to remain with the Council. It was noted that there was a small increase in reported harassment or bullying cases, and Officers advised that this was being addressed through training, awareness, and reporting mechanisms.

The presentation also outlined preparations for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), noting that workforce planning and staff engagement were key priorities locally and across Hertfordshire. Officers confirmed that work was underway to support staff through this change.

The Chair thanked Officers for their presentation and opened the discussion. Members questioned the Council's ability to attract younger staff in an ageing workforce and the presence of unemployed young adults locally. In response to questions, Officers outlined ongoing work to engage with schools and students through work experience and apprenticeship opportunities, and noted that recruitment competition for specialist roles was primarily from other local authorities rather than the private sector.

Members were advised that graduate and trainee routes were being used to address skills shortages, although retention remained a challenge.

Members sought clarification on workforce data, including the proportion of staff living in SG1 and SG2 at senior levels, disability reporting and sickness absence. Officers confirmed that further information on senior-level residency would be provided, explained that disability was under reported within the system, and that reasonable adjustments were supported through manager engagement and external occupational health advice. It was noted that sickness absence had improved to below target, with long term sickness defined as 21 days or more.

Discussions took place regarding a breakdown of the harassment data and why it did not currently distinguish between incidents involving staff on staff or members of the public on staff.

Members discussed recruitment practices, including anonymised recruitment and potential bias. Officers confirmed that educational institution names were not currently anonymised, noting this could be reviewed.

Members also commented on the 43% staff survey response rate, and Officers explained that steps had been taken to maximise participation, including simplifying the survey and providing in person completion opportunities.

Officers confirmed that school staff were not included in the total figures. In relation to LGR, Members raised questions about staff retention, pay harmonisation and organisational capacity. Officers advised that workforce planning was underway at a Hertfordshire-wide level, and that many staff were expected to transfer under Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (TUPE) arrangements.

Emergency planning arrangements were also discussed, with Officers confirming that hybrid working had improved resilience and that local staff would be relied upon in the event of a major incident.

4 PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET - HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT FINAL BUDGET AND RENT SETTING 2026/27

The Director of Finance introduced the 2026/27 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget and rent setting report, which confirmed a rent increase of 4.8% from April, in line with the government policy of CPI plus 1%. Service charges would also increase in line with inflation.

The final budget included assumptions for additional compliance and building safety costs, and removed the previously assumed rent convergence increase. This was due to a lack of government confirmation, resulting in a reduction of approximately £209,000 in projected income.

The HRA Business Plan supported a £240 million capital programme over five years and £457 million of investment in new homes over 30 years. Key risks were also identified in the report.

Members were advised that an under-provision of £385,000 for staffing and salary inflation identified when the report was presented to Cabinet had since been incorporated into the final budget submitted to Council.

5 PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET - DRAFT GENERAL FUND AND COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2026/27

The Strategic Director and S151 Officer introduced the second of three budget setting reports to the Committee relating to the General Fund.

The report highlighted changes arising from fair funding reforms, which had been beneficial to Stevenage.

It was noted that further detail would be included in the final report in February, including the use of approximately £600,000 of one-off additional growth funding, adjusted to reflect increased costs, and proposals for spending Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) funding.

The Cabinet also welcomed the additional funding, including support for the 80th anniversary.

In response to questions from the Committee, Officers advised that Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) funding had previously totalled £1.78 million, and that funding of £1.22 million had been received for the 2026/27 financial year. Officers explained that this funding was intended to support flat block recycling and waste freighters.

Officers explained that the settlement had been released and that Stevenage was in a stronger position compared to other authorities. It was noted that the provisional settlement would indicate an increase of 9% for Stevenage, compared to an average increase of approximately 0.6% for other district councils, noting that the figures included council tax increases.

The settlement remained provisional and subject to change following consultation, and the final settlement might only be confirmed close to the report deadline. It was also noted that the settlement covered a three-year period, with the final year aligning with LGR.

6 PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET - DRAFT GENERAL FUND CAPITAL STRATEGY 2025/26 TO 2029/30

The Director of Finance introduced the report on the draft capital strategy, with the final version due to be considered by Cabinet in February.

The draft strategy set out a £116 million capital programme over five years, including £46.6 million in 2026/27, to support regeneration, housing development, operational assets and climate priorities.

It was noted that, while the improved financial position allowed for increased investment, Officers explained the significant risks which remained. This included potential delays in capital receipts, construction cost volatility and the impact of deferred maintenance.

As part of the budget-setting process, a cross-party Members' consultation had taken place on 6 January, during which 27 capital bids for 2026/27 were presented and considered. All bids received cross-party support, with approval levels ranging from 57% to 100%.

Members also considered nine deferred or unfunded bids listed in Appendix C, which received lower levels of support (between 11% and 28%) and were therefore confirmed as non-priority and deferred.

A question was raised regarding the capital funding, with no budget being allocated for the Fairlands Valley lighting scheme. Officers advised that the scheme was dependent on further surveys, with costs ranging significantly, making it difficult to set a budget at this stage. It was noted that funding could be met from the Deferred Works Reserve and Capital Reserves if required.

7 PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET - 2025 RESIDENTS SURVEY FINDINGS

The Committee received a report on the Council's Residents' Survey, which was completed in June 2025. The survey consisted of 1,103 interviews and covered topics including residents' satisfaction with Stevenage as a place to live, views on the Council, feelings of safety, value for money and local priorities.

Members noted Cabinet's approval of the survey results being shared with all Members at the next Cooperative Neighbourhoods Strategic Board meeting.

Questions were raised regarding the fourth bullet point in the Notice of Decision from Cabinet on this item. Members highlighted that the report data referred to an age range of 18 – 44, and in response, Officers explained that additional age-related data had been shared with the Portfolio Holder and would be shared with Members.

Officers clarified that this did not indicate the 18 – 24 age group was larger than others reported, but that it was proportionally over-represented compared with the town's demographics.

Officers agreed to review the data and investigate the breakdowns for future reporting.

Discussions took place regarding the representation of ethnic minorities in the survey and the different language used for the categories. Officers confirmed that this consideration would inform future surveys and annual equalities reporting.

Members noted a mistake in the title of the table on page 23 of the report and noted that it should read 'South Ward Cluster Breakdown'. Officers acknowledged this and confirmed this would be updated.

Officers agreed to review the data and investigate the breakdowns for future reporting.

8 URGENT PART I DECISIONS OF THE CABINET - LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION AND LOCAL ELECTIONS 2026

Members were advised of updates relating to a new leukaemia therapy developed by Autolus, based in Stevenage, and the signing of a development agreement with English Cities Fund for the Stevenage Station Gateway project.

Members were informed that Cabinet had considered correspondence from Government regarding the Council's capacity to deliver elections alongside LGR capacity. Legal advice confirmed that decision-making responsibility rested with Cabinet.

It was reported to the Committee that Cabinet had agreed to request that the May elections to be postponed by one year, and had delegated authority to the Leader to submit a written response to the Minister by 15 January 2026, which had been

completed.

Members were advised that the decision rested with the Secretary of State and that until a determination, the Council continued to plan for elections to proceed in May 2026.

Officers explained that a judicial review was also underway to review the decision.

The Chair reported that given the limited timescales, they had waived the right to call-in the decision on the 2026 Council elections.

The Chair's observation about timing and some lack of clarity in the constitution was noted.

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

There was no Urgent Part I Decisions authorised by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

10 **URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part I Business.

11 **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.

12 **PART II MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 16 December 2025 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

13 **URGENT PART II DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF THE**

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no Urgent Part II Decisions authorised by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

14 URGENT PART II BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Part II Business.

CHAIR

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Part 1



Agenda item:

Meeting CABINET/COUNCIL

Portfolio Area RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE

Date 11 February 2026/25 February 2026



DRAFT GENERAL FUND AND COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2026/27

KEY DECISION

Author Clare Fletcher

Contributors Senior Leadership Team

Lead Officer Clare Fletcher

Contact Officer Clare Fletcher

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider the Council's draft 2026/27 General Fund Budget, Council Tax Support Scheme and draft proposals for the 2025/26 Council Tax.
- 1.2 To set out the Council's approach to financial resilience and the measures taken to date to ensure that the General Fund can withstand financial pressures such as higher inflation and historic lower government funding through its Balancing the Budget priority and associated activities as set out in Sections 4.5 and 4.10.
- 1.3 This report will also set out that the improved funding position enables the Council to set aside monies to cover Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Loan repayment costs, investment into capital projects otherwise not funded, new food waste service offer to residents, funding to support LGR transition as required by Government, and one-off initiatives set out in Section 4.6.
- 1.4 To consider changes to the projected 2025/26 General Fund Budget.

- 1.5 To consider the comments from Overview and Scrutiny as part of the Budget and Policy Framework.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

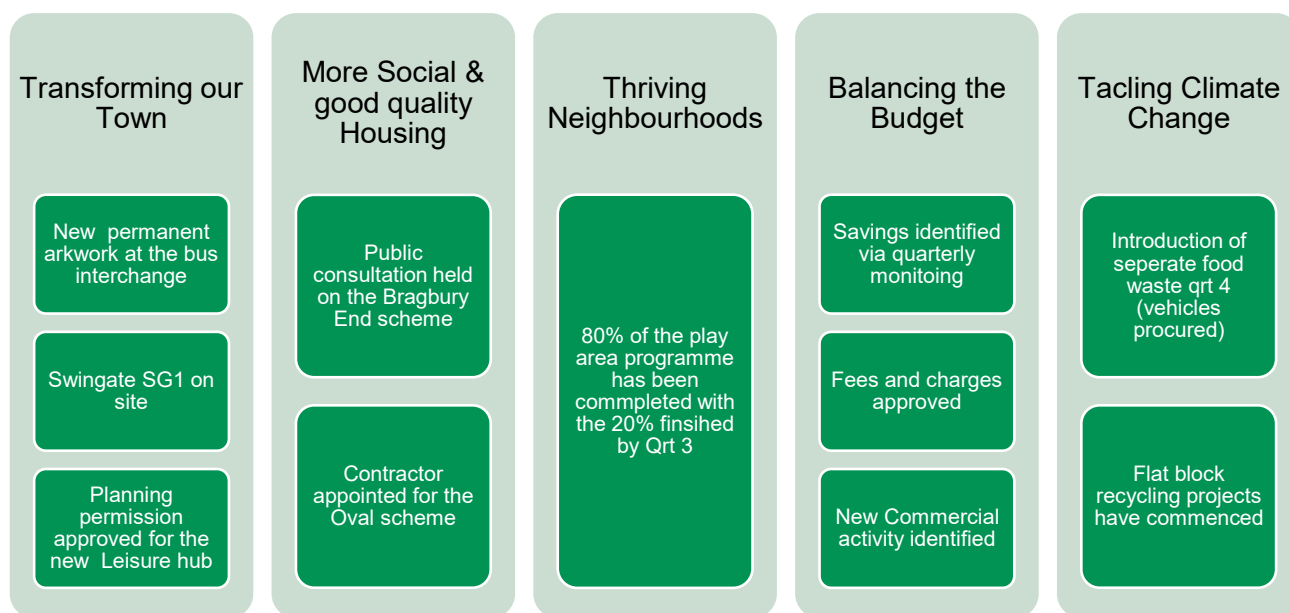
That the following proposals be recommended to Council on 25 February 2026:

- 2.1 The 2025/26 revised net expenditure on the General Fund of **£10,585,490** is approved as set out in paragraph 4.8.1.
- 2.2 That for 2025/26 the sum of £250,000 is transferred to the Capital earmarked reserve to support the Draft Capital Strategy as set out in paragraph 4.2.6 and included in the revised net expenditure of £10,585,490.
- 2.3 The draft General Fund Budget for 2026/27 of **£13,587,330** is proposed, with a contribution to balances of **£241** and a Band D Council Tax of **£253.78**, (assuming a 2.99% Council Tax increase).
- 2.4 The updated position on the General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as summarised in section 4.10 be noted.
- 2.5 The minimum level of General Fund reserves of **£3,648,355**, based on the 2026/27 risk assessment of balances, as shown at Appendix C to this report, is approved.
- 2.6 The contingency sum of **£500,000** within which the Cabinet can approve supplementary estimates (in addition to the General Fund net budget), be approved for 2026/27 (reflecting the level of balances available above the minimum amount). With a further **£500,000** approved specifically for additional Local Government Reorganisation transition costs if required.
- 2.7 The 2026/27 Balancing the Budget options as set out in section 4.5 and Appendix A, totalling **£84,640** for the General Fund, be included into the Council's budget setting processes.
- 2.8 That Members approve the one-off growth bids of **£589,000** as set out in paragraph 4.6.5-4.6.6 and detailed in Appendix G.
- 2.9 That the pressures identified in sections 4.2 and 4.7 to this report are noted.
- 2.10 That the 2026/27 Balancing the Budget growth options as set out in section 4.6 and Appendix B, totalling **£145,140 (and £95,140 from 2027/28)** for the General Fund, be included in the Council's budget.
- 2.11 That the sum set aside of Local Enterprise Board (LEP) loans of **£500,000** is approved for 2026/27 and for future years the amounts set out in paragraph 4.2.2.
- 2.12 That for 2026/27 the sum of **£1,200,000** is approved to support the Draft Capital Strategy as set out in paragraphs 4.2.5-4.2.7.
- 2.13 That for 2026/27 Members approve the use of **£500,000** Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) funding for the purchase of two new freighters as set out in paragraph 4.1.14 and also approve the use of EPR grant funded recycling initiatives of **£751,160** as set out in Appendix F and paragraph 4.1.15.

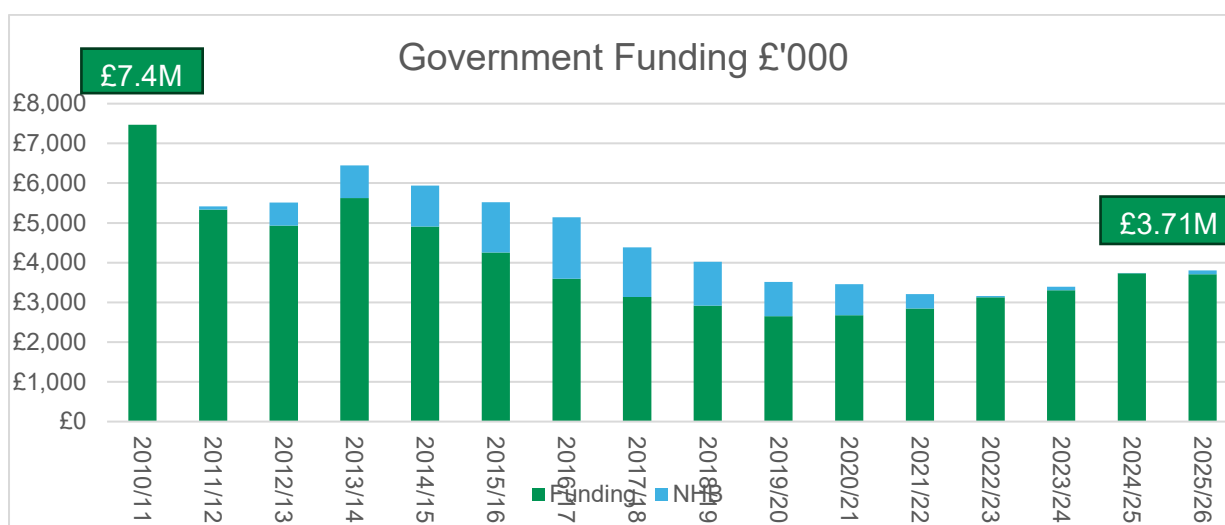
- 2.14 That the sums included in the 2026/27 Budget for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) transition budgets of **£560,000** are approved and for future years as set out in paragraph 4.2.4.
- 2.15 That Members approve the ringfencing of **£2,000,000** of Business Rates gain reserves for the repayment of LEP loans as set out in paragraph 4.10.6.
- 2.16 That Members approve the Council Tax Support scheme for 2026/27 as set out in paragraphs 4.3.6-4.3.10.
- 2.17 That the Section 25 Statement on Robustness of Estimates and Adequacy of Reserve as set out in Appendix D is approved.
- 2.18 That the Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) for the 2026/27 General Fund budget is noted, (Appendix E)
- 2.19 That Members note the feedback on the budget from Overview and Scrutiny as set out in Para.4.13.1 and public consultation in section 4.14.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 This report sets out the 2026/27 draft General Fund Budget including Balancing the Budget (BTB) 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 The Council approved an ambitious new Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan in February 2024. It is essential that the Council employs a robust budget review and setting process in order to ensure that both front line services and Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan priorities can be achieved, even during the Local government Reform agenda. As such the budgets both revenue and capital provide the means through which delivery of core service and Corporate Plan objectives can be achieved.
- 3.3 A summary of some of the service and MSEB priority activities which have been delivered as a result of the budget setting activity for 2025/26 is set out below:

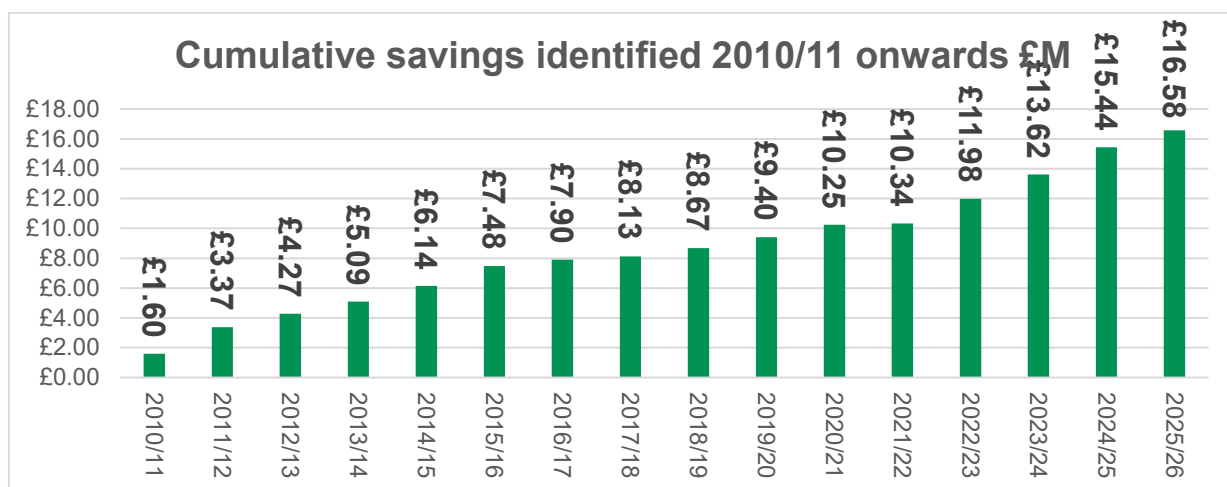


- 3.4 Funding for Council services reduced significantly between 2010/11-2019/20 during the period of austerity and lower government spending on the public sector and for Stevenage Brough Council this has meant a reduction in government support of £3.75Million up to and including 2025/26, excluding any annually achieved business rate gains which cannot be guaranteed.

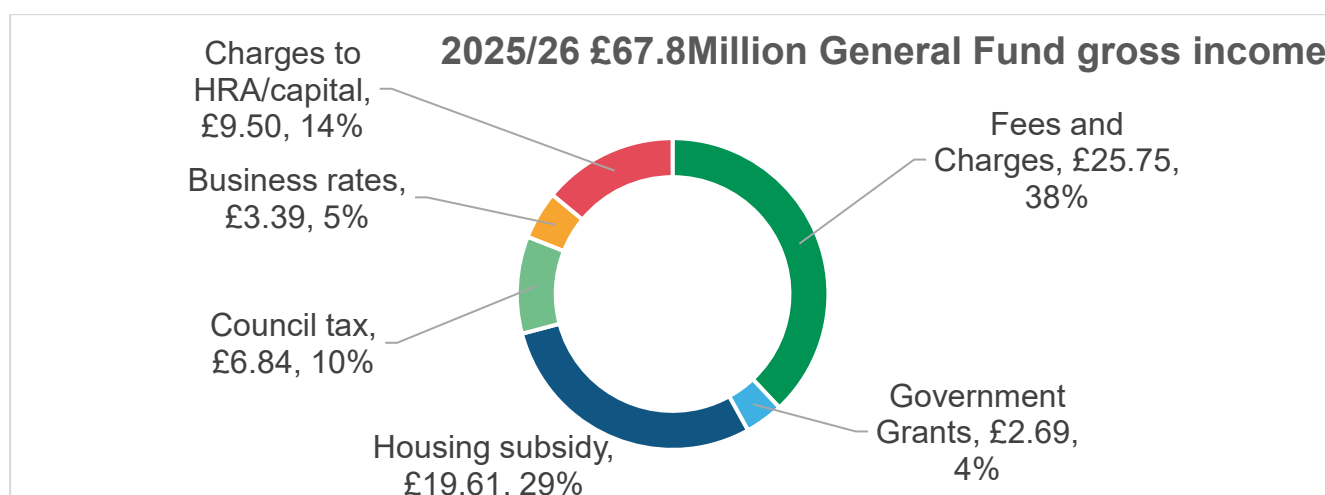


- 3.5 The reduction in funding has historically meant the need to find annual savings while population size and unfunded pressures have grown. The Council has had a major focus on addressing the resulting financial funding gap through its 'Balancing the Budget' priority and this report summarises the options for approved or recommended for approval for 2026/27. The Cabinet and Senior Leadership Team have recognised the need to plan on the basis of a three-year savings horizon to both balance the budget and ensure that there are options identified which can be delivered within the timescales required. Taking such an approach should minimise the need for reactive service cuts. The cumulative

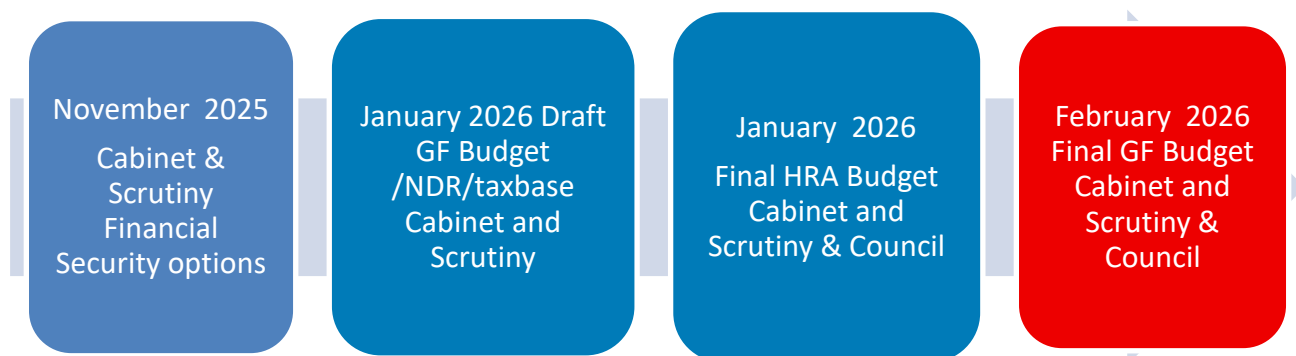
savings identified to date since 2010/11 are circa £16Million as shown in the chart below.



- 3.6 The 'Balancing the Budget' (BTB) funding gap identified in the September Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) was £2.4Million prior to any known positive impact of Fair Funding for the period 2026/27-2028/29. This was updated in the November 2025 BTB report when the Fair Funding position for Stevenage was becoming clearer (see also section 4.1) with the outstanding savings gap of £1.15Million for the period 2027/28-2029/30 being met from annual fees and charges increases with no further savings required.
- 3.7 Since the November 2025 BTB report was approved the government published the individual Council provisional Finance Settlements for the period 2026/27-2028/29 and the Final settlement is due to be released on the 9 February 2026 after the publication date of this report. A summary of what the Provisional Finance Settlement means for the Council was set in the January report and also set out in section 4.1 of this report. The Cabinet will be updated verbally at the meeting of the 11 February of any changes as a result of the Final Settlement.
- 3.8 The level of expenditure and income incurred/received by the General Fund is summarised below using the original 2025/26 SBC General Fund budget of £67.8Million and after taking into account fees and charges, government grants, services to the HRA/Capital and housing subsidy this was a net budget of £10.7Million and is funded as set out below.



- 3.9 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.



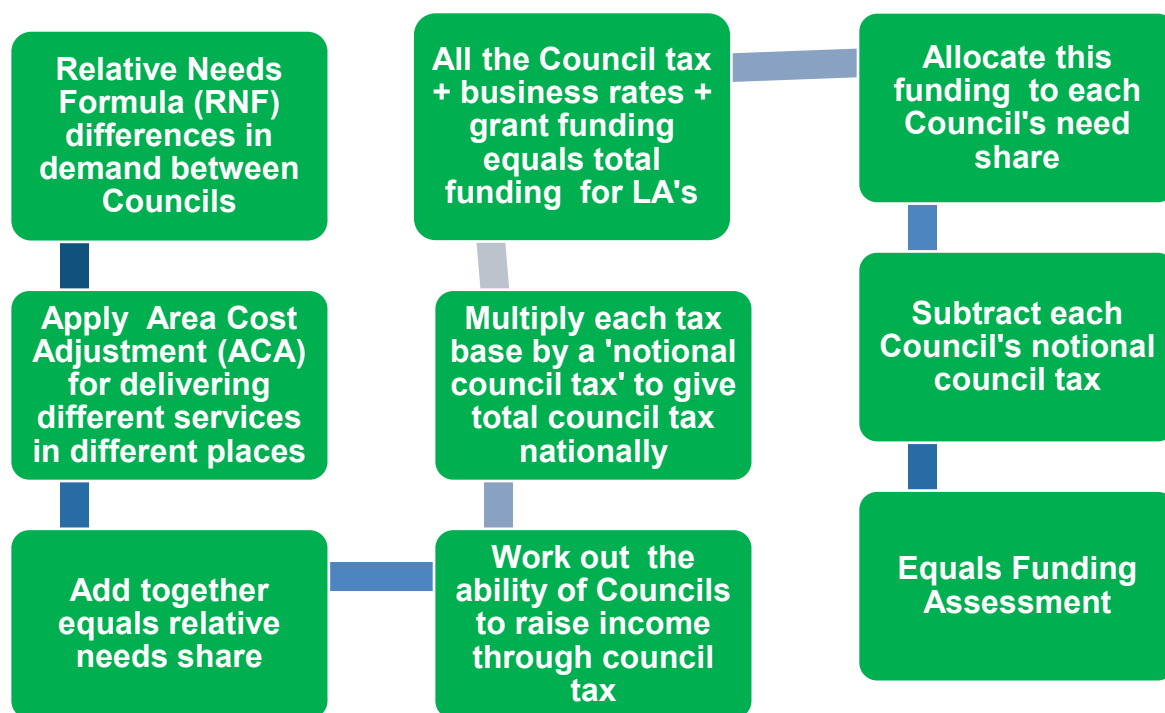
4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1 Stevenage Borough Finance Settlement 2026/27-2028/29

- 4.1.1 The Government set out its plans to reform local government funding on the 20 June 2025 via a consultation document 'The Fair Funding review 2.0'. The system of Local Government funding had remained unchanged since localisation of business rates in 2013 and the plan was to revise how money is allocated to Councils in England. The reforms aim was to account for the different needs and costs faced by communities across the country, including adjusting for the costs of remoteness faced by rural communities, and the ability of individual local authorities to raise Council Tax, while also resetting business rates income. This means an update to the formulae used to calculate funding allocations, which are a decade out of date. The aim was to make the system fairer and more current, so Councils get funding that better reflects their local needs based on a number of factors. So, from 2026/27, this revised system for allocating funding between Councils, will take account of those revisited factors of Councils' spending needs and their relative abilities to raise revenues themselves via council tax. The elements of the formula are listed below.

Fair Funding Factors	What It Means
Relative Needs	How much support a local area requires (e.g. for social care, housing, deprivation etc.)
Area Costs	How expensive it is to run services in that area (e.g. wages, property costs)
Resource Adjustment	How much money the council can raise itself (mainly through council tax)
	Core Spending Power 2026/27-2028/29

4.1.2 The formulas are then applied based on the graphic below summarised below.



- 4.1.3 The criteria includes a 'Foundation Formula' for general services and then specific formulas for services like adult social care and temporary accommodation with adjustments for labour, property, and travel costs.
- 4.1.4 The UK government consulted on the proposed reforms between 20 June 2025 and 15 August 2025. To dampen any large swings in funding, the proposed changes will be phased in over three years to ease the transition for Authorities, with funding floors in place to limit losses for those receiving less funding under the new system than currently. However, unlike the previous system there is no ceiling on the amount of increase gaining Councils will receive. The three year provisional settlement still contains £568Million of protection in place in 2028/29.
- 4.1.5 The argument for reform is that no reassessment has been made for current demographic and deprivation factors and is based on no change to a government funding system since the introduction of 50% business rates retention in 2013/14, not to mention additional pressures faced by Councils today. However, the difficulty with a long overdue reset means any new scheme could and appears to lead to a significant redistribution of funding around the country.
- 4.1.6 Included in the funding consultation was the proposals for a full reset of the Business Rates Retention System for 2026/27. The aim is to ensure funding is targeted where it is needed most and restore the balance between aligning funding with need and rewarding business rates growth. The local share (the percentage share of locally collected business rates that will be retained by local government) will continue to be subject to redistribution across local government via 'top-ups' and 'tariffs'. Stevenage is a tariff authority and retains more business rate than the historic needs assessment and for 2025/26 the estimated gains are £1.2Million. The re-set would see those gains reduce through a higher 'tariff' paid to the government with the reset now clarified to

be based on the 2025/26 NNDR 1 submission and not 2024/25 actuals realised.

- 4.1.7 Alongside changes to government funding allocations the consultation document also proposes simplifying grant funding pots. In recent years, central Government has increasingly relied on ringfenced micro-grants in an attempt to ensure the continued delivery of specific departmental priorities. In 2025/26, over 300 grants were awarded to local government from across Whitehall. Research published by the LGA in 2020 found that there were nearly 250 different grants provided to local government, around a third of which were awarded on a competitive basis. The LGA research estimated that the average cost to Councils in pursuing each competitive grant was in the region of £30,000 costing each local authority roughly £2.25Million a year chasing down various pots of money across Whitehall (see also paragraph 4.1.12).
- 4.1.8 The Consultation response was published on 21 November 2025 and the following changes were made. This does not contain changes from the Final Settlement as this was not published at the time of writing the report.

Change	Impact on SBC
Baseline for Funding (2025/26)	
Pooling gains included in the calculation for business rates means Authorities which have been assigned levy savings will benefit from a more generous funding floor or, at a minimum, a three-year transition on this saving unwinding.	None not in a pool 2025/26
The recovery grant has been excluded £600Million (not all Councils received this in 2025/26).	SBC received £238K in 2025/26 and excluded from funding envelope
A portion of the £414 million children and families grant has been included.	
The temporary accommodation funding pot within FFR has been increased	SBC projected to receive more than previous estimate
Change to Relative Needs Assessment	
Changed a number of the formula and relative weighting specifically around adult and children social care indices.	Has had an impact on Districts overall (see chart below)
Change to Relative Resources Adjustment	
The main change is the confirmation of the notional council tax levels starting at £2,060 and growing to £2,160 and £2,265 over the three year period	improves funding position for SBC
For London Boroughs specifically, it may be that MHCLG might exclude 2.3% of the London taxbase from FFR altogether in recognition of non-fire GLA functions which sit outside of FFR	reduce overall funding
The Government confirmed the treatment of around 50% of the £3.4 billion extra grant funding. This figure is cumulative and of £3.4 billion, around £1.75 billion	reduce overall funding

Change	Impact on SBC
will be allocated to adult and children's social care using the new formulae	
As previously, the Business rates income is assumed to go up by inflation (this can be changed), and RSG has its own indexation assumption but also is top sliced to create the local authority better care grant for relevant authorities	increases/reduces funding

4.1.9 On 17 December 2025, the Secretary of State for the Ministry for Housing and Communities Local Government (MHCLG) released a written statement to Parliament on the provisional local government finance settlement 2026/27-2028/29. Over the three-year settlement period, Core Spending Power for all English councils (in aggregate) is expected to rise by 15.09% in cash terms. This compares to an estimated 3.3% cash increase for district councils, but for Stevenage there is bigger increase. The increase does include assumptions about increases in council tax, which accounts for an actual increase of 21% nationally*. Any changes as a result of the final settlement due 9 February will be updated in the Council report (25 February 2026) and any significant changes Members will be advised verbally at the 11 February Cabinet.

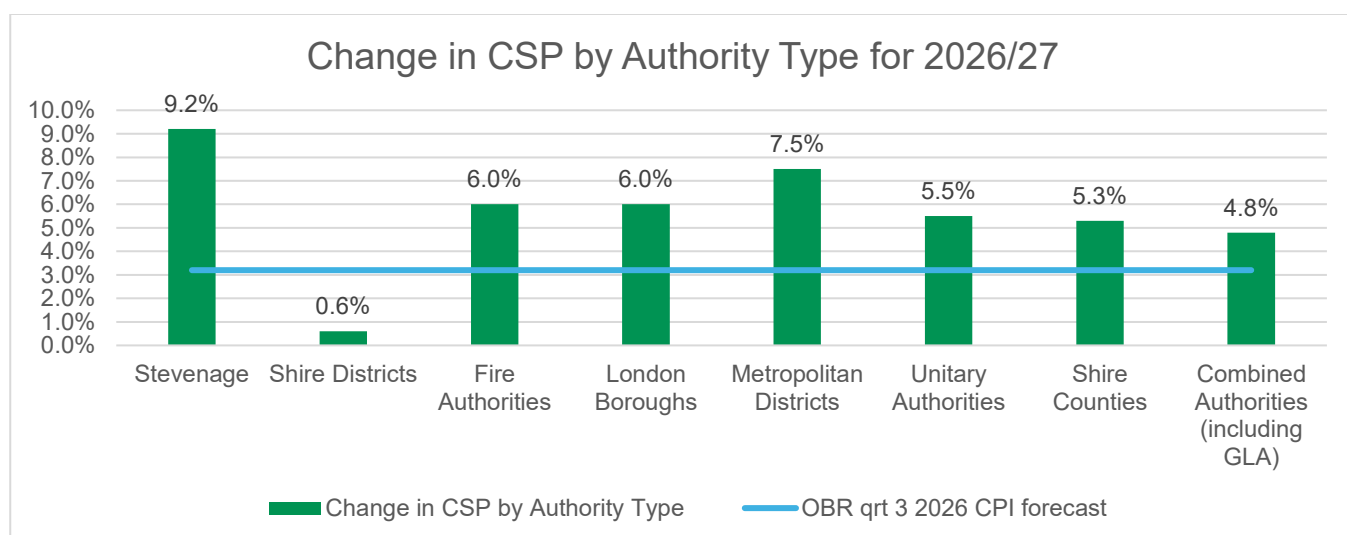
	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Funding Settlement	£Billion	£Billion	£Billion	£Billion
Baseline Funding Level (NNDR)		£16,240	£16,613	£16,948
Legacy Business rates Retention funding	£18,770			
Revenue Support Grant		£15,048	£17,788	£17,948
Legacy grant funding	£11,033			
Grants rolled in	£543			
Improved Better Care Fund (included in RSG from 2027/28)	£2,640	£2,640		
Families First Partnership (within Children, Families and Youth Grant)	£523	£853	£853	£729
Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse	£725	£794	£816	£835
Recovery grant	£600	£749	£713	£699
Mayoral Capacity Funding	£34	£33	£33	£33
Protection		£147	£353	£568
Council Tax Requirement exc. parish precepts	£38,656	£41,208	£44,012	£47,000
Core Spending Power	£73,522	£77,712	£81,181	£84,759

*A number of Councils have permission for higher increases where they are deemed to have lower than average council tax including Westminster, Wandsworth, Windsor & Maidenhead

4.1.10 The Stevenage provisional settlement versus the previous modelling (which had no social care grants included in the overall funding pot) is summarised below.

Funding:	2025/26	2026/27		2027/28		2028/29	
	£'000	BTB £'000	settlement (£'000)	BTB £'000	settlement (£'000)	BTB £'000	settlement (£'000)
RSG	£149.0	£5,390.4	£2,849.5	£5,713.1	£3,493.6	£6,100.9	£4,130.0
NNDR	£3,379.6		£3,609.3		£3,692.1		£3,766.6
Recovery grant	£283.8	£283.8	£283.8	£283.8	£283.8	£283.8	£283.8
NIC/NHB	£297.8						
NNDR Gains	£1,239.0	£0.0		£0.0		£0.0	
Food waste new burdens		£554.8	in RSG	£554.8	in RSG	£554.8	in RSG
Temporary accommodation grant	£556.8		in RSG		in RSG		in RSG
Total	£5,906.1	£6,229.0	£6,742.6	£838.6	£283.8	£6,939.6	£8,180.4
Reduction for FF2 consultation changes		(£500)	£0	(£500)		(£500)	
Reduction for NNDR losses		(£160)	£0	(£160)	(£106)	£0	(£160)
Total excluding grants	£5,906.1	£5,569.0	£6,742.6	£178.6	£177.8	£6,439.6	£8,020.4
Increase from BTB report			£1,173.7		-£0.8		£1,580.9

4.1.11 Clarification from MHCLG has confirmed that the finance settlement also includes the funding relating to the legislated introduction of new separate food waste collection which SBC estimates will cost £554,790 (as set out in paragraph 4.2.1). However, any Government funding amount for this has not been identified separately. Notwithstanding, 2026/27 funding for Stevenage has increased in excess of the cost of food waste compared to 2025/26 amounts. However, overall the finance settlement for Stevenage was significantly better than for Districts as a whole which is illustrated in the chart below (source LG Futures).



- 4.1.12 The settlement also now includes bigger, combined grants that replace several smaller ones, helping them focus more on delivering services than on managing payments. These grants will have their own rules for how money is shared, and some will use old methods while others will use new, single formulas, the grants now included are summarised below. The reduction in homeless grant between 2025/26 and 2026/27 relates to the transfer of the temporary accommodation element into Revenue Support Grant (RSG) as shown in paragraph 4.1.10 and is from 2026/27, part of the Council's general government funding.

Settlement Funding:	2025/26	Grants		
	£'000	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
DHP/Crisis resilience fund	£141,830	£163,433	£163,433	0
Homeless grant	£1,623,414	£1,057,303	£1,088,177	£1,125,762
Domestic abuse grant	£37,663	£37,663	£37,663	£37,663
Total announced with settlement	£1,802,907	£1,258,399	£1,289,273	£1,163,425
EPR funding annouced:	£'000	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Extended Producer Responsibility	£1,078,000	£1,226,580	TBC	TBC
Total grants	£2,880,907	£2,484,979	£1,289,273	£1,163,425

- 4.1.13 Included above is the 2026/27 allocation for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) which increased from 2025/26 and is ringfenced for improving recycling and waste collection.
- 4.1.14 The January draft General Fund report identified that £500,000 of the 2026/27 EPR allocation was recommended to purchase two new freighters out of the three required in 2026/27 to help fund the capital growth need for next year (in addition to that set out in paragraph 4.2.5) and was included in the Draft Capital Strategy.
- 4.1.15 The remaining recommended proposals for the 2026/27 EPR grant funding of £726,580 and £24,580 of the EPR reserve are set out in Appendix F and are funding further recycling initiatives.
- 4.1.16 The new grant funding in the Fair Funding Settlement, sits alongside an assumption of a 3% core council tax referendum principle and a 2% adult social care precept, which will result in an average overall real terms increase in local authority core spending power of 2.6% per year between 2025/26 and 2028/29.
- 4.1.17 The business rates safety net for 2026/27 is 100% rather than Council's funding the first 7.5% of losses as in previous years, this is detailed further in paragraph 4.4.3.

4.2 Pressures Projected in the General Fund 2026/27-2028/29

- 4.2.1 The General Fund budget assumptions for 2026/27 now include net growth pressures of £3.66Million as set out below which are included in section 4.7 of this report, (draft report £3.648Million).

Pressures	2025/26 MTFS	2026/27	+/-	Comments
AMENDED Inflation	£1,045,492	£1,535,037	£489,545	Inflation has increased and includes (1) Pay costs have been increased by £209K as the pay award assumptions have been increased from 2.75% to 3.25% based on current higher inflation. (2) Utility costs have increased by £60K as a result of higher standing charges. (3) higher costs from third parties and shared services (£55K amended from £149K). An additional £26.3K has been included since the draft budget including for £27K for utility and £10.7K for salary costs and lower shared service costs.
Employer pension contributions	£100,000	(£1,327,540)	(£1,427,540)	The Council was notified in November 2025 that the employers rate would reduce from 19.3% to 16.5% and in addition the fixed payment of £1.5Million across both the HRA and General Fund. The Fund is 112% funded hence the significant decrease in costs. This has also lead to a reduction in shared service costs provided to other LA's.
Housing Benefit net costs	£10,000	£75,954	£65,954	With the transfer to Universal Credit the level of bad debt provision has increased for housing benefit overpayments as well as the assumed reduction in housing admin subsidy.
LEP loans repayment reserve	£0	£500,000	£500,000	see paragraph 4.2.2-4.2.3.
Local Government Reform (LGR)	£150,000	£560,000	£410,000	see paragraph 4.2.4.
Revenue Contribution to Capital	£700,000	£1,200,000	£500,000	see paragraph 4.2.5-4.2.7

Pressures	2025/26 MTFS	2026/27	+/-	Comments
Queensway LLP	£250,000	£250,000	£0	The Council set up the LLP to act as a catalyst for regeneration in the town centre. In order to ensure that funding to invest in the asset and/or support the LLP over the 37 year lease, the CFO recommended increased contributions be set aside as set out in the BTB November 2025 report.
Apprentice Scheme	£150,000	£150,000	£0	Members approved as part of the September MTFS to fund the apprentice programme previously assumed to be met from year end underspends
External support for the new Forster Country park	£20,000	£20,000	£0	Members approved as part of the September MTFS a contribution to support the implementation of the Forster Country Park
Maintenance (including lifts)	£0	£50,000	£50,000	The Council has incurred additional costs relating to in particular the Railway MSCP and Railway lift during 2024-2025. The increase in budget will ensure works are completed in a timely manner.
On-going costs related to PCI compliance (Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS))	£0	£54,000	£54,000	The Council is implementing a system to support compliance for payments made to the Council, the current projections for annual fees is recommended to be included in the budget
Separate Food Waste	£0	£554,790	£554,790	The MTFS had assumed this would be funded from a allocation within the funding settlement, however it has not identified separately (see para.4.1.12
NEW :Reduction in skip income	£0	£39,000	£39,000	The income budget for Ro-Ro skips is not achieving the budgeted levels and this budget has been reduced for 2026/27 in line with 2025/26 actual income.
Total Identified	£2,425,492	£3,661,241	£ 1,235,749	

- 4.2.2 The 2026/27 identified pressures of £3.66Million include a £500K recommended transfer to an earmarked reserve for repayment of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) in 2029/30 of £6.5Million. The loans were granted for acquisition of assets to facilitate the Council's SG1 regeneration programme and a scheduled set aside of monies to repay the LEP loans are summarised in the table below and are included in the revised MTFS projections in section 4.10. A significant part of the remainder of the LEP loan balance has been recommended to be ringfenced in the NNDR earmarked reserve as set out in paragraphs 4.10.4-4.10.5, leaving £400K to be identified in the period 2026/27-2029/30.

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	Total
LEP loan set aside	£500,000	£1,000,000	£1,300,000	£1,300,000	£4,100,000
Still to be identified					£2,400,000
Total Loans to be repaid 2029/30					£6,500,000

- 4.2.3 The alternative option to the LEP loan reserve would have been to ringfence more business rate gains however, with the changes to business rates as set out in section 4.4, the likelihood is these will be significantly lower than experienced in previous years and 2026/27 projections are currently showing zero gains.
- 4.2.4 Also included in the 2026/27 £6.3Million pressures is an additional cost of £560,000 for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) transition expenditure which the government anticipates Councils will meet from reserves and LGR savings. The CFO recommends setting aside the following amounts which will be reviewed following any future announcements on the LGR timetable. District Councils in Hertfordshire have suggested a minimum amount of circa £1Million.

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total
LGR funding	£560,000	£500,000	£400,000	£1,460,000

- 4.2.5 The November 2025 Balancing the Budget report recommended that the identified 2026/27 in year surplus of £706K should be utilised to support the General Fund Capital Strategy as the investment in the Council's assets has been severely restricted to fix on fail due to a shortage of capital resources. The Draft Capital Strategy to this Cabinet meeting includes a larger increase due to the improvement in the General Fund financial position and the contributions to capital recommended are summarised below.

Capital Funding (Revenue)	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	Total
Additional funding for capital	£1,200,000	£1,200,000	£1,200,000	£1,000,000	£4,600,000
Growth Bids not funded	£175,000	£621,700	£140,500	£669,400	£1,606,600

- 4.2.6 In addition to the use of revenue for capital investment in 2026/27 an amount of £250,000 is recommended to be transferred in 2025/26 to the capital earmarked reserve (based on the in-year surplus set out in section 4.8) to given additional financial resilience to the Capital Strategy in the event that

projected receipts are delayed. This measure would be in addition to the deferred works reserve of £400,000.

- 4.2.7 However, Members should note that even with the additional resources set out above there are still a number of capital bids not funded and the stock condition survey included in the proposed 2026/27 programme may identify further works required to the Council's community, operational and leisure buildings once completed.

4.3 Council Tax and Council Tax Support

- 4.3.1 The December 2025 Cabinet Council Tax base report showed a 2026/27 increase in the tax base of 1.09 % compared to 2025/26, (2025/26 -0.3%). The growth in the taxbase assumed by the government was slightly lower in the Core Spending Power (CSP) with the government assuming £24,688 less council tax income than Stevenage is projecting for 2026/27. In terms of the increase in Band D property the finance settlement assumes a 2.99% increase for Districts plus a further 2% for social care for unitary and upper tier Councils with £15 increase on a Band D for the PCC.
- 4.3.2 The November 2025 Cabinet BTB report recommended a 2.99% increase in council tax and the CFO recommends increasing council tax by 2.99%, a below inflation increase with SBC element of the bill forming only 10.8% of the overall council tax bill for Stevenage residents.
- 4.3.3 Members will recall that SBC retains the lowest share of the overall Council Tax raised each 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.

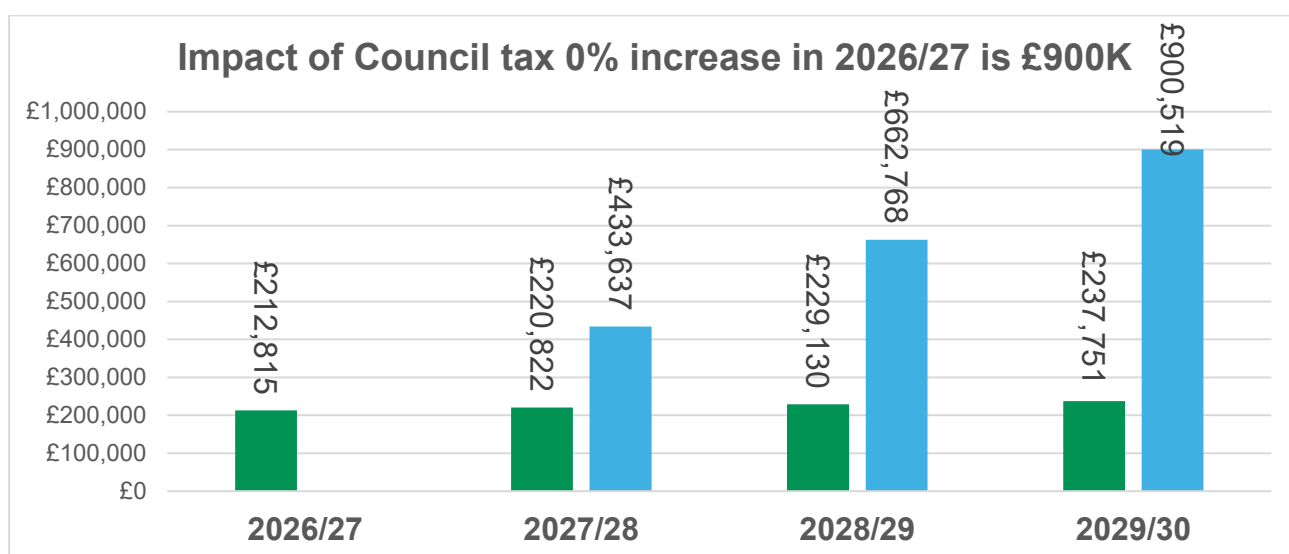
Authority	2024/25	2025/26	Cost per week	Increase	Share
Hertfordshire County Council	£1,498.45	£1,573.22	£30.25	4.99%	77.58%
Stevenage Borough Council	£212.68	£219.03	£4.21	2.99%	10.80%
Police Crime Commissioner	£223.11	£235.56	£4.53	5.58%	11.62%
Total	£1,934.24	£2,027.81	£39.00	4.84%	100.00%

- 4.3.4 An estimate of the 2.99% increase in council tax for Stevenage Borough Council is summarised in the table below.

Council tax band	2025/26 SBC	2.99% incr.	2026/27	Incr. per week
A	£ 164.27	£4.91	£169.18	£0.09
B	£ 191.65	£5.73	£197.38	£0.11
C	£ 219.03	£6.55	£225.58	£0.13

Council tax band	2025/26 SBC	2.99% incr.	2026/27	Incr. per week
D	£ 246.41	£7.37	£253.78	£0.14
E	£ 301.17	£9.01	£310.18	£0.17
F	£ 355.93	£10.64	£366.57	£0.20
G	£ 410.68	£12.29	£422.97	£0.24
H	£ 492.82	£14.74	£507.56	£0.28

- 4.3.5 The impact of a council tax increase versus no 2026/27 increase during the General Fund medium Term is set out in the chart below and shows that over the period 2026/27-2029/30 this equates to an estimated loss of resources of £900,519.



Council Tax Support

- 4.3.6 A local CTS scheme cannot be revised for at least one financial year. Billing Authorities (such as SBC) must consider whether to revise or replace their scheme with another on an annual basis.
- 4.3.7 Any revision to a scheme must be made by the Council by the 11 March, immediately preceding the financial year in which it is to take effect and will require consultation with those affected. Additionally, consideration should be given to providing transitional protection where the support is to be reduced or removed.
- 4.3.8 The Council must, in the following order, consult with major precepting authorities, (i.e. Hertfordshire County Council and Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Hertfordshire), publish a draft scheme in such manner as it thinks fit, and consult such other persons as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme. The CFO wrote to both precepting authorities regarding the proposal for 2026/27.

- 4.3.9 The current **working age** scheme requires those on maximum benefits only to pay 8.5% of their council tax bill for the year. This equated to £172.36 for a Band C council home in 2025/26 on the total bill (with an additional 25% discount for a single person) or £3.31 per week.
- 4.3.10 In November 2025 Members approved the retention of the existing scheme for next year (uprated to reflect benefit changes for 2026/27) and agreed that officers should look at a banded scheme for proposal to include engagement / consultation with residents subject to the Local government Reform timetable for Hertfordshire.

4.4 Business Rates Income

- 4.4.1 The MTFs and draft General Fund budget only includes an assumption of the 2026/27 baseline funding for business rates, or the amount the government has assessed the Council needs under its funding formula. In previous years there has been an additional £200K gains in the General Fund (with the rest transferred to the NNDR gains earmark reserve), however with the complete reset of business rates for 2026/27 and a projected reduction in gains against the 2025/26 estimate (see paragraph 4.4.7) no gains are currently included for the period 2026/27-2029/30.
- 4.4.2 Alongside the reset a number of other changes are being made to business rates, there will be the introduction of up to three new multipliers, which could cause volatility in the projected rates councils collect. This coincides with a new revaluation coming into effect on 1 April 2026, using market values determined as of 1 April 2024. As announced at Autumn Budget 2024, in April 2026, the government will replace retail, hospitality and leisure relief with two lower business rates multipliers for properties with rateable values below £500,000. In addition, a new larger property multiplier will be introduced for properties with a rateable value over £500,000, which is intended to help fund the reduction in the RHL multipliers.

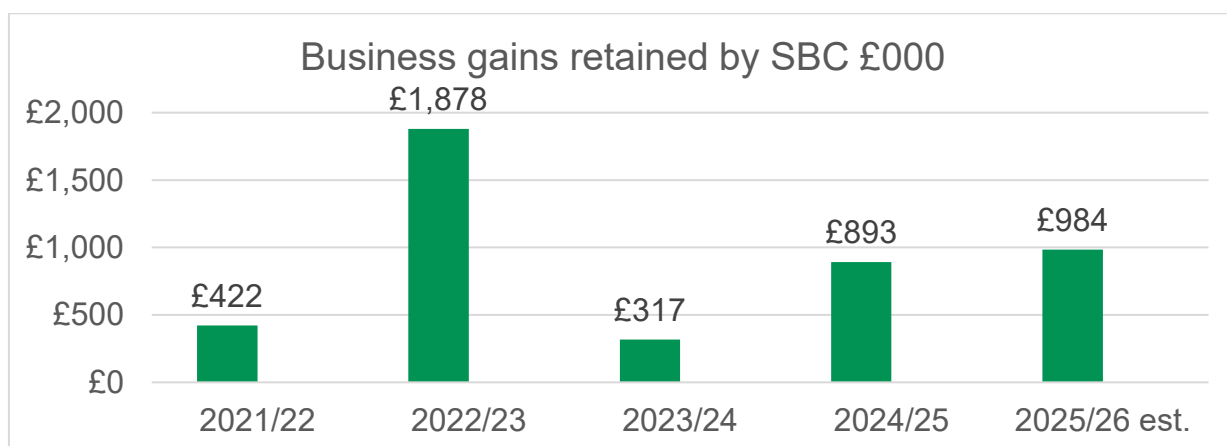
Multipliers	2025/26	2026/27	Scope
Small Business RHL* Multiplier		38.2p	RHL hereditaments with RVs under £51,000
Standard RHL* Multiplier		43p	RHL hereditaments with RVs between £51,000 and £499,999
National Small Business Multiplier	49.9p	43.2p	Non-RHL hereditaments with RVs under £51,000
National Standard Multiplier	55.5p	48p	Non-RHL hereditaments with RVs between £51,000 and £499,999
High-value Multiplier		50.8p	All hereditaments with RVs of £500,000 or above

**Retail hospitality and Leisure*

- 4.4.3 The government has recommended changes to the safety net and transitional arrangements which are intended to help councils manage the financial impact

of all the impacts summarised above. In previous years the first 7.5% of losses were funded by Councils before the safety net applied. For 2026/27, 2027/28 and 2028/29 the safety net starts at 100%, 97% and 92.5% for the respective years.

- 4.4.4 Historically business rate gains above the £200K assumed in the budget have been used transferred to the NNDR reserve to fund time limited growth and regeneration objectives due to the uncertainty over the level to be achieved. 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.



Note: A Pilot operated in Hertfordshire in 2022/23 where 75% of gains were retained in Hertfordshire

- 4.4.5 The actual level of business rates that the Council keeps each year is determined once the NDR1 form issued by the government is completed which must be done by the 31 January 2026. This calculates business rates collectable, level of reliefs to be given in 2026/27 and S31 grants due.
- 4.4.6 The 2026/27 Business Rates retained by SBC have now been estimated and are at the baseline level with no gains projected for next year.

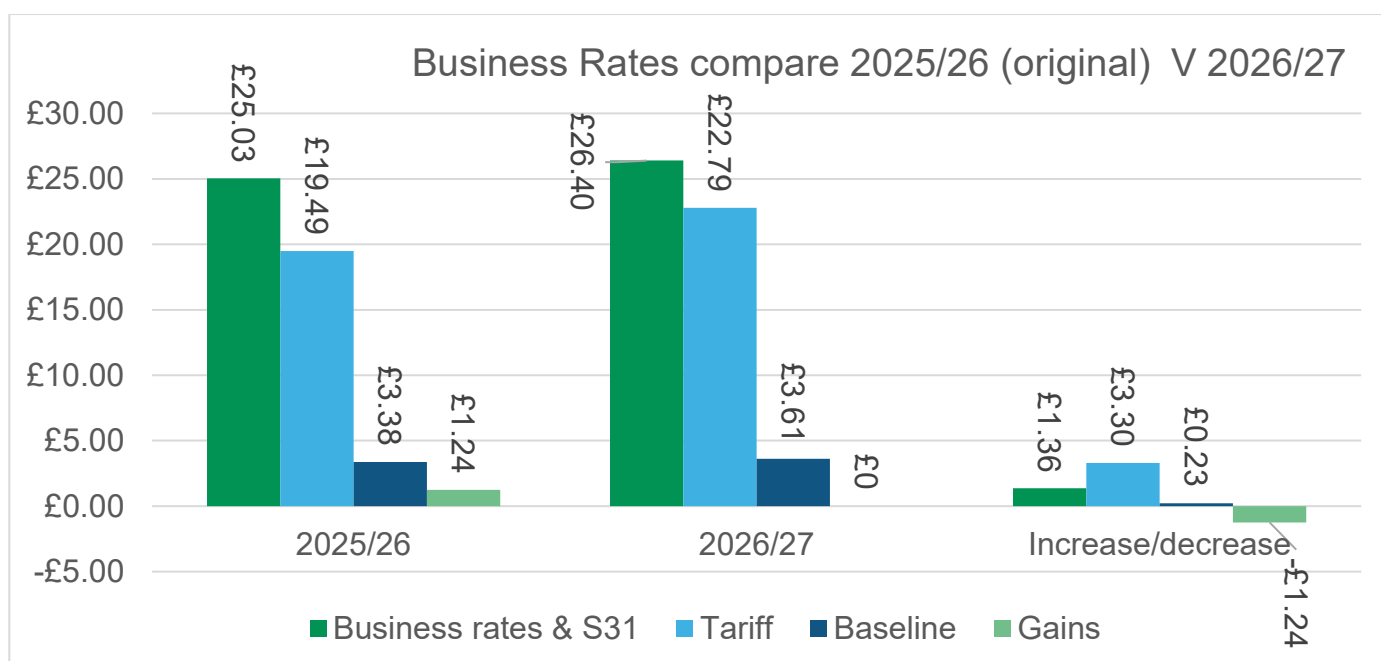
Stevenage's Business rates retained for 2026/27 versus the Government baseline calculation	Government 2026/27 baseline calculation	SBC 2026/27 Calculation	Variance
Gross Rates	£69,107,886	£69,391,246	£283,360
Mandatory reliefs granted funded from S31 grant		(£7,816,696)	(£7,816,696)
S31 Grant		£7,816,696	£7,816,696
Higher multiplier income in excess of smaller RHL rate not funded through grant		(£154,177)	(£154,177)
Discretionary Relief		(£168,535)	(£168,535)
Appeals provision set aside	(£2,591,546)	(£2,801,898)	(£210,352)
Bad debt provision set aside	(£414,647)	(£165,000)	£249,647
Cost of Collection allowance for administration by SBC	(£110,164)	(£110,164)	£0

Stevenage's Business rates retained for 2026/27 versus the Government baseline calculation	Government 2026/27 baseline calculation	SBC 2026/27 Calculation	Variance
Energy reliefs	(£1,518)	(£1,462)	£56
Total Business rates for distribution	£65,990,011	£65,990,010	(£0)
40% of Business Rates retained by SBC	£26,396,004	£26,396,004	(£0)
Tariff	(£22,786,682)	(£22,786,682)	£0
Retained Business Rates	£3,609,322	£3,609,322	(£0)

4.4.7 The 2025/26 business rates have also been reviewed as part of the NNDR1 process and remain unchanged from the draft budget report and are summarised below and included in the 2025/26 and 2026/27 budgets.

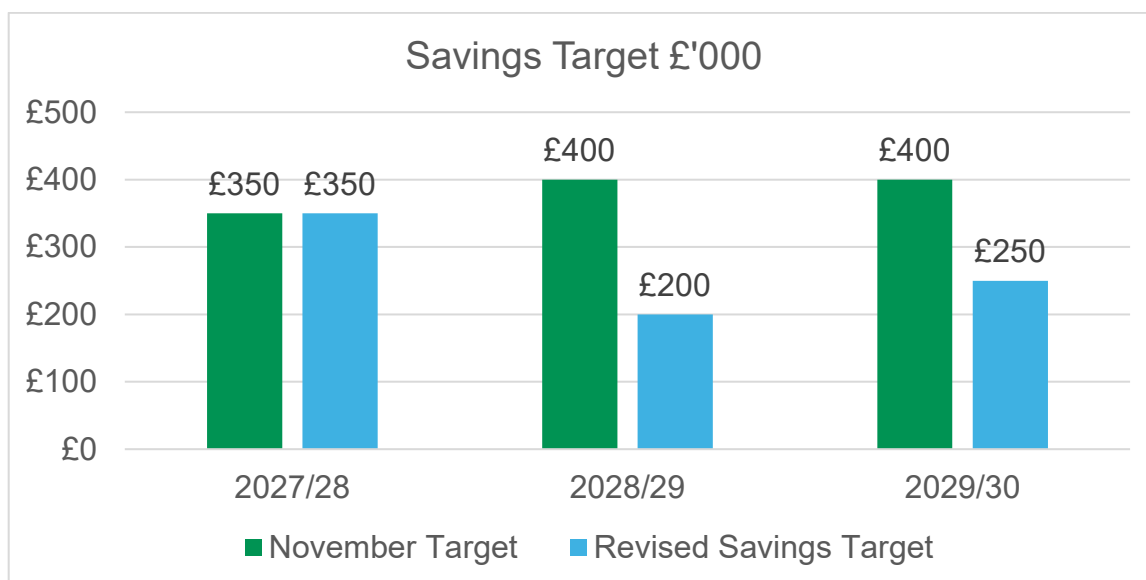
	Original NNDR	Revised NNDR	2025/26 impact	2026/27 impact
Business Rates	(£22,824,068)	(£22,287,351)		£536,717
Tariff	£19,488,317	£19,488,317		
S31 Grants	(£2,210,373)	(£2,185,159)	£25,214	
Levy	£927,339	£651,082	(£276,256)	
Retained Business Rates	(£4,618,785)	(£4,333,110)	(£251,042)	£536,717
Reduction in Business Rates				£285,675

4.4.8 No gains are currently projected as the increase in the 2026/27 NNDR tariff payment to the government has been increased from £19.49Million in 2025/26 to £22.79Million as part of the business rate reset and Fair Funding.



4.5 The Balancing the Budget Savings Target

- 4.5.1 As set out in paragraph 3.7 the 2027/28-2029/30 savings shortfall of £1.15Million could now be addressed through annual fees and charges increases if costs and income remain in line with the updated MTFS projections. The target has been updated based on the financial information included in this report and is now projected to be £800K as summarised below.



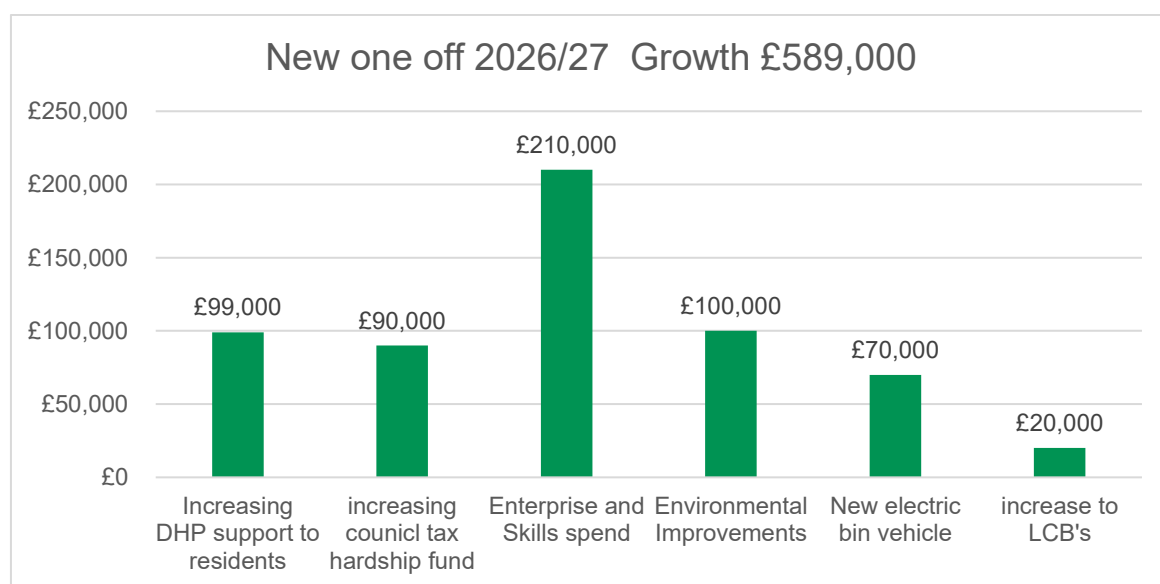
- 4.5.2 The BTB report to the November 2025 Cabinet report included the recommended/approved budget reductions/income increases, which are summarised and did not contain any service cuts.

Balancing the Budget Savings Summary	Approved	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
MTFS efficiency savings	September 2025 Cabinet	£766,606	£839,616	£843,364
Fees & charges	October 2025 Cabinet	£309,000	£314,000	£314,000
Taxi Licences	October 2025 Cabinet	£33,000	£60,000	£60,000
Commercial Option Primett Road	October 2025 Cabinet	(£22,500)	£100,000	£100,000
Star Chamber Options (App A)	November 2025 Cabinet	£84,640	£105,970	£132,370
Changes to Leisure Contract	December 2025 Cabinet	£110,000	£110,000	£110,000
Total		£1,280,746	£1,529,586	£1,559,734

4.6 Growth Options

- 4.6.1 The September 2025 MTFS assumed growth of £75K for 2026/27 there are a small number of proposed growth bids which include a one off bid of £50K for the Towns 80th Anniversary programme in 2026/27 and on-going growth bids of £95,140 and are summarised in Appendix B.

- 4.6.2 Included in the growth bids is monies for events. Members should note that initially event island had a proportion of Towns Fund revenue monies to fund events, if the programme as outlined in Appendix B is to continue a growth bid is required.
- 4.6.3 The growth bids are in excess of the £75K growth target, however savings identified are higher than in the September MTFs and General Fund balances are significantly above the minimum level required and they are all therefore recommended.
- 4.6.4 The November 2025 BTB report further recommended that once the Finance settlement was published there could be further scope to include growth in the 2026/27 General Fund budget and in particular reporting the significant shortfall in capital resources and as set out in paragraph 4.2.5-4.2.6.
- 4.6.5 The January Draft Budget identified that consideration of any further additional growth should take into account the medium-term financial position and the inflation and pressures identified within this report and an amount of £600,000 was identified along the following themes.
- **Supporting our residents** through additional Discretionary housing payments and S13a Council tax support exceptional circumstances to keep residents in their homes
 - **Supporting residents into work** through training interventions including for those of working age
 - **Improving our town** by complementing the proposed draft capital programme with additional spend to complete hedge 'hair cuts' -
 - **Increasing the financial support Councillors can give** through increasing the Local Community Budget that Members can award to groups and charities in their ward and in particular during the 80th Anniversary of the town.
- 4.6.6 Since then, additional inflationary pressures have been identified (see paragraph 4.2.1) reducing the 2026/27 in year surplus slightly. However, there are additional one-off growth bids proposed of £589,000 and summarised below (see also Appendix G) and recommended for approval.



- 4.6.7 Should the Final Funding settlement announced on the 9 February 2026 be slightly lower the growth can still be recommended as the growth in paragraph 4.6.6 is one off in nature and the General Fund balances are projected to be above minimum balances recommended.

4.7 Changes to the 2026/27 General Fund budget versus the 2025/26 Balancing the Budget

- 4.7.1 The General Fund budget is now projected to be £13,587,330 (with a contribution to balances of £241), versus the November BTB report projection of £11,589,874 (and a draw on balances of £706,396) which didn't include the any contribution to capital (recommended in the report). General Fund net expenditure is higher versus the BTB report (which now includes a contribution to capital) and as set out in paragraph 4.7.3 core resources have also increased to support the additional budgeted spend. The changes between the BTB report and the proposed General Fund budget are set out below.

BTB report to Draft General Fund Budget	£	Comments
Balancing the Budget	£11,589,870	
Impacts from 2025/26 :		
Slippage of revenue contribution to capital from 2025/26	£163,500	see para. 4.8.1
Total 2025/26 Changes	£163,500	
Inflation :		
Inflation 2026/27	£489,545	see para 4.2.1
Employer pension contributions	(£1,427,540)	see para 4.2.1
Pressures:		
Housing Benefit net costs	£80,580	With the transfer to Universal Credit the level of bad debt provision has increased for housing benefit overpayments as well as the assumed reduction in housing admin subsidy.
Maintenance (including lifts)	£50,000	see para 4.2.1
On-going costs related to PCI compliance (Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS))	£54,000	see para 4.2.1
Reduction in skip income	£39,000	see para 4.2.1
Government Reforms:		
Local Government Reform (LGR)	£410,000	The BTB & MTFS report included £150K for LGR transition costs, however discussions within Hertfordshire LA's a figure of

BTB report to Draft General Fund Budget	£	Comments
		£1Million which has been profiles over 2026/27-2027/28 for SBC.
Separate Food Waste Costs	£554,790	The cost of new separate food waste was anticipated to be funded through new burdens see also para. 4.1.11.
Extended Producer Responsibility grant	(£1,226,580)	The second year of the funding for EPR announced in November 2025 (see also para. 4.1.13-4.15)
Recycling & waste related spend (EPR)	£726,580	see para. 4.1.13-4.15
New Revenue Contribution to Capital (EPR)	£500,000	see para 4.1.13-4.15
New use of EPR Reserve	£24,580	see para. 4.1.13-4.15
Funding Capital and repaying debt:		
New Revenue Contribution to Capital	£1,200,000	The BTB report recommended the use of surpluses to fund capital which has been restricted for a number of years (see also para. 4.2.5-4.2.6)
LEP loans repayment reserve	£500,000	see paragraph 4.2.2-4.2.3.
Investment Income		
Investment income	(£184,410)	The General Fund balances are projected to be higher for 2026/27, however there is an increase in internal borrowing estimated for 2027/28 which reduces the projected investment interest due.
Savings Changes:		
Savings recommended	£8,060	This includes a £5K reduction of parking income in the Old Town while the Active Travel highways improvements are underway approved by Members in the November 2025 Cabinet meeting.
Growth Changes		
New one off growth	£589,000	See paras. 4.6.5-4.6.6
Changes to reserves		
Transfer from reserves NNDR	(£536,710)	The 2025/26 projected losses need to be repaid to the Collection Fund in 2026/27 and the equivalent amount has been transferred from the NNDR reserve
Transfer from EPR reserve	(£24,580)	see para.4.1.15
Minor changes:		

BTB report to Draft General Fund Budget	£	Comments
Minor movements	£7,644	There has been a reclassification between inflation and minor movements
Total Identified	£1,833,960	
Draft General Fund budget 2026/27	£13,587,330	

4.7.2 The Proposed 2026/27 General Fund budget still includes a sum of £155,000 for running the May 2026 district elections. The Council's Cabinet meeting on the 14 January 2026 voted to approve postponing those elections, however this is a decision for the Secretary of State and the Council has not yet received a decision by the government.

4.7.3 General Fund core resources are summarised in the table below.

Core resources	BTB Assumptions	Draft Budget	BTB V Provisional Variance
Business Rates	(£3,470,303)	(£3,609,322)	(£139,018)
Revenue Support Grant	(£1,420,051)	(£2,849,486)	(£1,429,434)
Recovery grant	(£283,819)	(£283,819)	£0
Business rate losses	£160,000	£0	(£160,000)
Total	(£5,014,174)	(£6,742,626)	(£1,728,452)
Council Tax	(£7,305,404)	(£7,330,308)	(£24,905)
Transfers to Collection Fund NNDR	£183,637	£720,354	£536,717
Transfers from Collection Fund Ctax	(£160,330)	(£234,991)	(£74,660)
Total Collection Fund changes	(£7,282,096)	(£6,844,945)	£437,152
Total Funding	(£12,296,270)	(£13,587,571)	(£1,291,300)
Use of Balances	(£706,396)	(£241)	£706,155

4.8 2025/26 Budget changes

4.8.1 The 2025/26 General Fund budget is projected to decrease by £140,980. A summary of the changes is detailed below.

Changes to the 2025/26 Budget			
General Fund quarter 2 budget		£10,726,470	
Higher costs:			
Salary costs	£15,000		Revised salary costs are projected to be slightly higher than the working budget.

Changes to the 2025/26 Budget			
Supporting the Valour Hub	£30,000	£45,000	The Community Development Armed Forces Covenant & Valour Programme Officer will coordinate, develop, and deliver SBC's Armed Forces Covenant activities, and lead the development, submission, and start-up delivery of the Valour Hub Programme. Key responsibilities include supporting the Armed Forces Covenant Officer Group and Forum, managing delivery against outcomes, milestones, preparing briefings and reports. This focused capacity is essential to develop the Valour bid to a high standard and ensure the successful implementation of the Stevenage Valour Hub model.
Lower costs:			
Business rates	(£454,690)		The Council has submitted a number of business rates appeals as a result of the 2023 rating list. This is backdated to 2023 and relates to St Georges MSCP.
Housing Benefit costs	(£69,010)	(£523,700)	
Slippage:			
Revenue Contribution to Capital	(£163,500)	(£163,500)	The Draft Capital Strategy identifies slippage including for the garages programme
Changes in Reserves:			
Transfer to NNDR Reserve	£251,220		Core resources have reduced as a result of lower business rate gains from a lower levy on business gains (£366K) off set by lower S31 grants (£188K). All gains above £200K are transferred to the NNDR reserve.
Transfer to Capital Reserve	£250,000	£501,220	Paragraph 4.26-4.27
Total Changes		(£140,980)	
Revised General Fund budget		£10,585,490	

4.9 Level of Balances required for General Fund and projected balances

- 4.9.1 The September 2025 MTFS assumed that the minimum level of balances required would be £3.57Million. A full assessment has been carried out which is detailed in Appendix C and, accordingly, the minimum level of balances now totals £3,648,355. The projected General Fund balances even with one off growth are higher than the revised amount for 2026/27.
- 4.9.2 The projected General Fund balances and council tax requirement are set out below and the level of projected General Fund balances are as set out in paragraph 4.10.1.

General Fund Budget	2025/26 Estimate	2025/26 Projected	2026/27 Estimate
Net Expenditure	£10,753,540	£10,585,490	£13,587,330
Use of/ (Contribution) to Balances	(£6,053)	(£485,370)	(£241)
Budget Requirement	£10,747,487	£10,100,120	£13,587,089
Revenue Support Grant	(£149,048)	(£149,048)	(£2,849,486)
Recovery grant	(£283,819)	(£283,819)	(£283,819)
New Homes Bonus	(£97,000)	(£97,000)	£0
Backstop grant (Audit)	£0	(£60,044)	£0
Total grant support	(£529,867)	(£589,911)	(£3,133,305)
Business Rates net of tariff and levy	(£2,408,412)	(£2,684,669)	(£3,609,322)
S31 grants NNDR	(£2,210,192)	(£2,185,159)	
Total in year business rates	(£4,618,604)	(£4,869,828)	(£3,609,322)
(Return) /Contribution to Collection Fund (NDR) re 2023/43 & 2024/25 & 2025/26	£1,232,757	£1,232,757	£720,354
Collection Fund Surplus (ctax)	£196,632	£196,632	(£234,991)
Council Tax Requirement	(£7,040,510)	(£7,040,510)	(£7,330,308)
Council Tax Base	£28,572	£28,572	£28,885
Council Tax Band D	£246.41	£246.41	£253.78
Council Tax Band C	£219.04	£219.04	£225.58

4.10 Medium Term Financial Strategy General Fund Summary

4.10.1 The MTFs modelling has been updated to reflect the contents of this report, there are small deficits in 2027/28 and 2029/30 which if increase may require an adjustment to the savings targets as set out in paragraph 4.5.1 may be required.

General Fund Balances	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
In year surplus	£485,370	£241	(£64,004)	£94,311	(£36,434)
Year end balances	£6,990,974	£6,991,215	£6,927,211	£7,021,522	£6,985,088

**Members should note that the opening balance for 2025/26 was incorrectly stated in the draft report and increased the General Fund balance by £555K*

4.10.2 Adding the additional one-off £589K growth bids (Appendix G) means the General Fund now has a small projected 2026/27 surplus of £241. Although the funding position is much better for SBC than in recent years, there are still risks to setting a balanced budget going forward which are:

- Business rates do not recover to the base level assumed by the Government and there is an on-going loss of business rates before the safety levy is payable increase net costs to the General Fund a 7.5% loss of retained business rates (before the safety net) would equate to a cost of £282.5K (£160K in the MTFs for 2028/29) and there are no losses assumed in the MTFs after 2028/29.
- LGR transition costs are higher than estimated and there is an expectation that Councils will fund this themselves and all of the

proposed Unitary models required savings to be realised. Furthermore, the relatively short timescale could lead to costs for say new ICT needing to be purchased ahead of 2028/29.

- The General Fund Capital Strategy has a future funding shortfalls despite the £1.2Million funding recommended in the Capital Strategy and further capital requirements may be identified as a result of the stock condition survey commissioned for 2026/27 (growth bid).
- Inflation increases which results in the need for higher BTB savings targets to be set.
- The overall government funding envelope reduces beyond 2026/27 requiring a revision to the three year settlement.

4.10.3 The draft 2026/27 budget has includes one off growth (see also paragraph 4.6.6 and Appendix F) and revenue contributions to capital expenditure (RCCO), as a strategy to utilise the additional core funding set out in paragraph 4.1.10. However, if that one off growth was recommended for future years then the General Fund budget would have significant deficits in future years requiring higher savings if not addressed.

General Fund Balances	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
In year surplus	£485,370	£241	(£653,004)	(£494,689)	(£625,434)
Year end balances	£6,990,974	£6,991,215	£6,338,211	£5,843,522	£5,218,088

4.10.4 In addition to the risk assessment of balances to support the General Fund's financial resilience, there are currently two further allocated reserves available which are summarised below. The CFO recommends they are retained at the projected levels in case they are needed to support the General Fund in year, subject to the recommendation in paragraph 4.6.6.

Reserves £'000	Closing 2024/25	(Use)/to	Closing 2025/26	(Use)/to	Closing 2026/27	(Use)/to	Closing 2027/28
Gains (NNDR)	£4,580	(£1,022)	£3,558	(£1,077)	£2,481	£1,442	£3,923
Income equalisation Reserve	£758	(£200)	£558	£0	£558	£0	£558
Total Available to support the GF	£5,338	(£1,222)	£4,116	(£1,077)	£3,039	£1,442	£4,481

4.10.5 The closing balance for the NNDR reserve as at 31 March 2028 is £3.9Million and that includes assumptions about realised and unrealised NNDR and net interest rate earned on the Council's joint venture with Mace at Claxton House. This is summarised below.

NNDR Reserve	£	£
Opening Balance 2025/26		(£4,580,127)
Gains not realised	£1,667,434	£0
Graduate scheme spend	£757,940	£2,425,374
Net Gains still to be achieved	£	
Remaining gains to be realised 2025/26	(£753,903)	£0

NNDR Reserve	£	£
Claxton House	(£1,014,434)	(£1,768,338)
Closing Balance 2027/28		(£3,923,092)

4.10.6 The CFO recommends that the £2Million of the reserve's balances are used to contribute to the remaining outstanding LEP loans as set out in paragraph 4.2.2. This would leave a balance of £1.9Million by 31 March 2028 to be utilised if the 2025/26 NNDR gains are achieved and the returns from Caxton House. If this doesn't happen there would be a shortfall on the reserve of £573K to be funded from the General Fund.

NNDR Reserve £'000	Closing 2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Gains Realised	(£4,580,127)	(£2,580,127)	(£1,557,990)	(£481,399)
Caxton House		£626,201	£101,729	(£1,742,365)
Graduate scheme spend	£0	£202,760	£254,507	£300,673
NNDR Gains projected not realised		£947,080	£720,354	
2025/26 Gains still to be realised		(£753,903)		
LEP loans	£2,000,000			
Total Available to support the GF	(£2,580,127)	(£1,557,990)	(£481,399)	(£1,923,092)

4.10.7 The General Fund reserves allocated for specific purposes are summarised below.

Reserves £'000	Closing 2024/25	Use	Closing 2025/26	Use	Closing 2026/27	Closing 2027/28
NHB reserve <i>note 1</i>	£10	£0	£10	£0	£10	£10
Business Change & Digital Reserve <i>note 2</i>	£773	£314	£1,087	£0	£1,087	£1,087
Homeless reserve <i>note 3</i>	£420	£109	£529	(£96)	£434	£434
Planning Delivery <i>note 4</i>	£198	(£95)	£103	£0	£103	£103
Queensway monies <i>note 5</i>	£215	£193	£408	£293	£701	£1,094
Regeneration Reserve <i>note 7</i>	£245	(£107)	£139	£0	£139	£139
Town Centre Reserve	£0	£56	£56	£0	£56	£56
Town square reserve <i>note 6</i>	£1,711	£55	£1,766	(£35)	£1,731	£1,546
Insurance reserve <i>note 8</i>	£62	£0	£62	£0	£62	£62
ICT reserve <i>note 9</i>	£142	£0	£142	£0	£142	£142
New Leisure <i>note 15</i>	£219	(£219)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Stevenage works <i>note 11</i>	£20	(£20)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Asylum seekers reserve <i>note 12</i>	£1,018	(£227)	£790	(£518)	£272	£272
Future Councils reserve <i>note 10</i>	£198	(£198)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Commercial Property repair reserve <i>note 13</i>	£41	£0	£41	£0	£41	£41
Domestic abuse reserve	£196	£0	£196	£0	£196	£196

Reserves £'000	Closing 2024/25	Use	Closing 2025/26	Use	Closing 2026/27	Closing 2027/28
Extended Producer Pays grant	£0	£218	£218	(£25)	£193	£193
Elections Reserve	£0	£50	£50	(£50)	£0	£0
LEP Loan Reserve	£0	£0	£0	£500	£500	£1,500
Apprentice Reserve	£150	£150	£300	£150	£450	£600
Total Allocated for use	£5,617	£280	£5,896	£219	£6,115	£7,473

4.10.8 There is a planned transfer to balances of £280K and £219K in 2025/26 and 2026/27 respectively. The established reserves are as follows:

1. NHB reserve was created to hold NHB allocations so that the General Fund did not become reliant on the funding. This reserve has reduced from its peak of £1.6Million to £10K in 2025/26.
2. Business Change & Digital Reserve is used to hold the monies set out for the Council's Business Change programme including improving the Council's digital offer and streamlining processes to give better outcomes and improved service delivery for residents. When business cases are established monies will be drawn down from the reserve.
3. These are ringfenced government Homeless grants which are used to support the Council's homeless function including additional staff resources. The 2026/27 allocation has been assumed to be spent in year.
4. Planning Delivery is required to support the surveys for the Local Plan and is used over and above any General Fund allocation.
5. Queensway Car Park Monies - this is the income from the Queensway Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) for parking income and the allowance for future costs for the LLP as agreed in the September 2024 and 2025 MTFS. This money has been ringfenced to support the fit out of future commercial tenancies on Queensway North.
6. Town Square Reserve - the monies are held to support the running costs of assets acquired for regeneration purposes.
7. The Regeneration reserve is used to fund one off additional costs incurred by the Regeneration Team to support the teams projects including professional and legal advice.
8. The Insurance reserve is used to support adhoc preventative works to reduce potential future claims where no core budget is in place.
9. The ICT reserve is ICT Reserve - this was used to absorb pressures in year.
10. The Future Councils Reserve is used to ringfence the £750K grant funding received by the government, which is predicted to be spent by 31 March 2026.
11. Stevenage Works is the flagship job and training hub / partnership which comprises SBC, North Herts College and Job Centre Plus. The funding in the reserve has yet to be forecast and an update will be included in the February report.
12. These are ringfenced Asylum grants which are used to support the Council's homeless function including the provision of additional staff resources.

13. The Commercial Property Reserve is a reactive pot which can be used to support works to the commercial estate if expenditure is above the in-year budget allocation.
14. The Extended Producer Pays reserve see para. 4.1.13-4.1.15.

4.11 Chief Finance Officer's Commentary

- 4.11.1 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, (see also Appendix D).
- 4.11.2 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 'Balancing the Budget' priority of 'Stevenage Even Better' Corporate Plan.
- 4.11.3 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. Work is ongoing throughout the year to seek to bridge the BTB funding gap.
- 4.11.4 The Council has taken significant steps over recent years to balance its budget and the 2026/27-2028/29 Fair Funding Settlement has improved the financial position of the Council and given certainty about the next three years funding from Government. The 2027/28-2029/30 BTB savings target has significantly reduced from historic levels and totals £800K and should be funded through annual fees and charges increases. This is of course dependent on the realisation of projected inflationary pressures as set out in the MTFS.
- 4.11.5 Events such as COVID and the Cost of Living crises have increased financial risks to Councils which has seen spikes in inflation which have become baselined within the budget. The Council has however taken a number of financial resilience measures which seek to increase the resilience of the Council's position including:
 - A risk assessment of balances to ensure general reserves held take the increased risk from recessionary pressures into account.
 - Establishment of the income equalisation reserve (£558K by 31 March 2026) which can be returned to the General Fund if fees and charges are lower than projected.
 - Identification of a sufficient level of on-going BTB options to ensure the General Fund is above or at the minimum level of balances.
 - Introduction of a Business Change and Digital programme to deliver savings for both the General Fund and HRA and get the Council ready for LGR.

- Implementation of a Commercial and Insourcing Strategy which looks for opportunities to increase the Council's net income from new commercial options, ensuring fees and charges are set based on the cost of services and any insourcing opportunities.
- Setting aside monies in the Queensway reserve to ensure there is sufficient monies available to Queensway LLP for future investment and support.
- Setting aside monies to repay the LEP loans due to be repaid in 2029/30
- Increasing funding for Discretionary Housing Payments and Hardship funding in 2026/27.

4.11.6 The current projections of balances, the new Fair Funding and the measures the Council has taken to date as set in this report mean that the level of balances projected are above the minimum level and sufficient to set the 2026/27 budget. However, a structural deficit could soon open up (as demonstrated in paragraph 4.10.4) if growth is on-going rather than one off in nature.

4.11.7 Further commentary can be found in Appendix D to this report (Section 25 Statement including Robustness of Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves) which Members are asked to approve.

4.12 Contingency Sums

4.12.1 Cabinet Members 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 Cabinet can approve supplementary estimates, rather than forming part of the Council's Budget Requirement for the year. A sum of £500,000 is proposed for 2026/27 for general spend and remains unchanged from 2025/26.

4.12.2 In addition a further allowance of £500,000 is recommended specifically for Local Government reorganisation if funding required is needed in advance of the 2027/28 allowance or costs are higher than expected. This means the General Fund would still project cash balances above the minimum levels set out in the report.

4.13 Member Consultation

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4.13.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee discussed the Draft Budget report at their meeting of the 20 January 2026 and the Strategic Director (S151) advised them that the fair funding settlement had been relatively beneficial to Stevenage compared to the average increase in Core Spending power (CSP) for District Councils.

4.13.2 A question was asked about the settlement to which the Strategic Director replied that the final settlement had not yet been received and there could be

some changes as a result of this and it was likely to be published end of January beginning of February. The Strategic Director also advised the committee the settlement was for three years but each year's funding would need to be laid before parliament.

- 4.13.3 A Member also asked about the level of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) funding the Council will receive/received and the Strategic Director told the Committee that SBC was granted £1.078Million in 2025/26 and a further £1.22Million in 2026/27 that was required to fund recycling initiatives. The Committee were further informed that a breakdown of the recommended spend for 2026/27 was included in the report to the February Cabinet in addition to the funding of the two freighters (£500K) already recommended for approval in the January Draft Cabinet report.

4.14 Public Consultation

Resident Survey (2025)

- 4.14.1 The 2025/26 Residents survey (on this Cabinet agenda) shows that resident's preferences with regards to achieving budget savings are firstly to reduce costs through the provision of more online services. This was ranked the highest (out of five options in 2025, 2021 and 2017) with 46%. This first-rate ranking has increased from 2021 and supports the Digital Strategy (approved at the December Cabinet) 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	2025 rank	2021 rank	1st
Reduce time and money spent on paperwork by interacting with more residents and customers online/modernising services	1	1	46%
Make money by selling more of our services to residents and customers	2	4	9%
Increase income from fees and chargeable services, to keep the council's element of Council Tax as low as possible	3	2	24%
Spend less by reducing or cutting the services that you tell us are not a priority	4	3	10%
Increase our element of Council Tax (for example from 51p per day to 55p per day)	5	5	7%

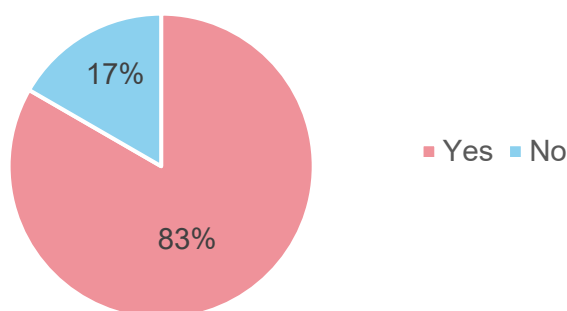
- 4.14.2 The 2025 residents' survey asked residents whether the council tax represented value for money. While strongly disagree has decreased (from 15% to 12%), overall 44% (was 52% in 2021) of residents agree it represents value for money, with an increase in the number neither agreeing or disagreeing. It should be noted that Stevenage's performance remains above the LGA benchmark (2024) of 36%. Stevenage Borough Council is also the billing authority but only

accounts for 10.8% of the overall council tax. The 2025 data and prior year comparators are shown in the chart below.

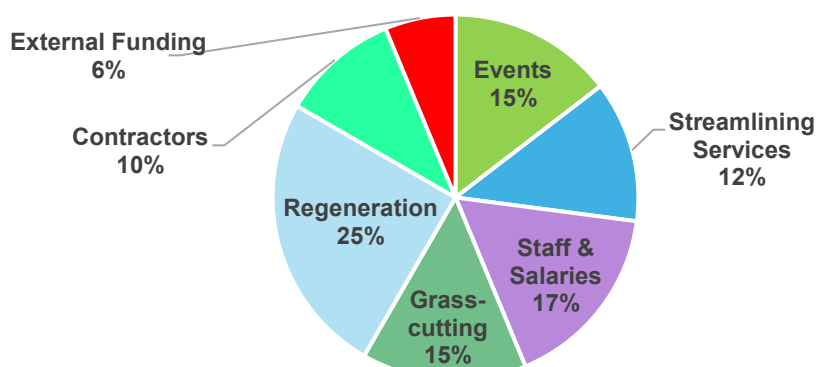
	Responses	2025	2021	2017	2015	2011
To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Council Tax paid to Stevenage Borough Council provides good value for money?	Strongly agree	5%	16%	10%	7%	6%
	Tend to agree	39%	36%	36%	39%	40%
	Neither	28%	18%	30%	30%	33%
	Tend to disagree	13%	10%	17%	18%	16%
	Strongly disagree	12%	15%	7%	6%	5%
	Don't know (DNRO)	4%	4%			
	Summary: Agree	44%	52%	46%	46%	46%
	Summary: Disagree	12%	26%	24%	24%	21%

4.14.3 Development of the Councils 2024/25 Corporate Plan included a period of public and stakeholder engagement and consultation to include ascertaining if respondents:

- Agree that Balancing the Budget should be a priority so that the Council can remain financially resilient and continue to deliver key services as set out in the Corporate Plan?
- If no, is the alternative is to reduce services and provide less?
- If yes, what should the Council stop doing to generate £1.23Million savings?
- 83% of respondents to the consultation agreed that Balancing the Budget should be a priority:



4.14.4 All survey respondents were asked for financial savings suggestions. The responses can be categorised into seven themes:



- The Transforming Our Town programme will attract new businesses to the area which would increase business rate revenue and car parking income (25%). – *The Council has opened a new Multi Storey car park and is working with partners to bring new business into the town, also improving the business rates collected and retained by the Council.*
- Reduce Staff and Councillor salaries (17%). – *The Council's Member allowances are reviewed and agreed by an Independent Remuneration Panel and staff pay is governed by the collective pay agreements as agreed with the unions.*
- The Council should consider selective grass-cutting allowing green spaces to grow wilder (within safe reasons) and reduce maintenance costs for grass cutting etc. (15%) – *The Council has already implemented this as a measure with an associated cost reduction.*
- Streamlining services (12%) – *The Council has a transformation programme which is targeted at streamlining processes and reducing costs.*
- Reduce use of Contractors (10%) – *The Council has a Commercial and Insourcing Strategy which includes reviewing contracts to see if they can be brought back in-house where deemed viable to do so at the point of re-tendering.*
- Reducing or cancelling events such as the November Fireworks Display, or those held on the Event Island and the Stevenage Museum. (15%) – *the Council has been looking at how it manages and delivers future event activity with a view to driving out efficiencies where possible.*
- Seeking external funding to plug the financial gap (6%). *The Council has actively sought external funding and has received circa £80Million of revenue and capital funding over the last few years.*

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 this report. Fees and charges require a report to the Cabinet and were considered by the Cabinet in October 2025.

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.

5.3 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 There is one savings option relating to the Customer Service Centre which reduces staff costs but the saving relates to posts that do not have permanent staff in.

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 2026.

- 5.5.3 To inform the decisions about the Budget 2026/27 officers have produced an overarching EQIA for the budget to inform the decision taken by Council in February 2026 (Appendix E). The measures contained within the budget are shown to have a positive impact as many of the savings are efficiency and do not involve service cuts together with the proposed additional growth recommended.

5.6 Risk Implications

- 5.6.1 Risk implications have reduced since the last budget report in terms of funding as a result of the Fair Funding settlement and the reduction in employer pension contributions. But risks to setting a prudent General Fund budget still remain in the short and medium term particularly which includes the delivery of all the Balancing the Budget options identified in Appendix A and within the report
- 5.6.2 There are a number of risks that have been identified and these are set out in the report. The risks to the General Fund are summarised below.

Expenditure and Income	Impacted by	Risk (to increase cost)
Inflation	Although price increases around utilities and fuel have fallen, there is still huge volatility in the market with the continual war in Ukraine.	medium
	The MTFS assumes a 3.25% pay award for 2026/27, however previous years deals have been higher and the need for the pay grades to have due regard to inflation and the minimum wage may drive much higher pay negotiation outcomes. The 2027/28 pay award has been increased to 2.75% reflecting current higher levels of inflation from 2.5%.	medium
	The MTFS assumes a reduction in CPI inflation during the MTFS which has to be delivered to keep costs in line with projections.	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	medium
Local Government Reorganisation	There is a risk that the Council will incur costs associated with LGR following the submission for Hertfordshire in November 2025. Hertfordshire Councils have included an amount in their budget's but this may not be sufficient.	high
Fees and Charges	The impact of the current economic climate may impact the Council's fees and charges income which is required to support the funding of services.	medium
Core funding	Future years funding set out in the Fair Funding settlement may not be realised if the pressure to reduce public sector costs increases.	high

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 Digital Strategy will contribute to reducing the Council's carbon footprint. In 2023/24 the Council approved an additional officer post to support its efforts meet its climate change goals. Included in the 2024/25 options was a growth bid to convert the Council's fleet from diesel to use hydrogenated vegetable oil (HVO) in order to reduce the Council's carbon emissions, the full year impact was included in the 2025/26 General Fund budget.

5.8 Local Government reform Implications

- 5.8.1 As part of the timetable for LGR, the Secretary of State's will issue a Direction under section 24 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (the Section 24 Direction) and this will place restrictions on different types of expenditure by the Hertfordshire Councils without consent in the period up to vesting day.
- 5.8.2 Section 24 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 allows the Secretary of State to direct that from a certain date the authorities to be dissolved under a Structural Change Order may not, without the written consent of those specified in the direction:
- Dispose of land for more than £100,000 (note: disposals include granting or disposing of any interest in land; entering into a contract to dispose of land or grant or dispose of any such interest; and granting an option to acquire any land or any such interest)
 - Enter into contracts that exceed the following limits Capital £1,000,000+
 - Non-capital £100,000+
Note: all of the financial limits set out above would be cumulative from the date enacted.
- 5.8.3 This means all disposals of land and, for contracts, repeat contracts with the same third party or for a similar description of matter as a previous contract are caught.
- 5.8.4 The purpose of a section 24 direction is to ensure that a new authority has oversight of and a degree of control over the decisions of its predecessor councils which could have implications for the finances and plans of that new authority.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

BD1 General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy (2025/26-2029/30) September 2025 Cabinet

BD2 Balancing the Budget November 2025 Cabinet

BD3 Fees and Charges October 2025 Cabinet

APPENDICES

Appendix A General Fund Budget Options

Appendix B General Fund Growth Options

Appendix C Risk Assessment of Balances

Appendix D Section 25 Statement including Robustness of Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves

Appendix E EQIA Overarching General Fund budget and Council Tax increase

Appendix F EPR grant use 2026/27

Appendix G Additional one off Growth Proposals

Appendix H Council tax resolution

Appendix I General Fund Budget

Ref No	Name of Service	Description of Savings Proposal	Budget 2025/26	Impact of Saving Proposal on Public/ Customers/ Staff/ Members/Partnerships etc. (include any impact on key corporate programmes/performance indicator measures) .	GF Year 1 (2026/27)	HRA Year 1 (2026/27)	GF Year 2 (2027/28)	HRA Year 2 (2027/28)
2026/S1	Development Management	Introduction of FastTrack applications (Approved in October fees and Charges report but income not yet calculated)	£0	Customers who use this service will be able to secure a faster planning decision. A typical FastTrack application fee charge will be £194 additional and for FastTrack certificate will be £97 additional. More information can be found in the 2026/27 Fees and Charges report to the October Cabinet Appendix D.	£2,910	£0	£2,910	£0
2026/S2	Development Management	Uplift in pre-application fees across a range of application types. (Approved in October fees and Charges report but income not yet calculated)	£57,110	Customers who use the pre-application service will be affected by fee increases. More information can be found in the 2026/27 Fees and Charges report to the October Cabinet Appendix A concerning the fees and charges	£8,000	£0	£8,000	£0
2026/S3	Regeneration	Partners projects advice budget reduction.	£22,110	The saving relates to consultancy budgets for non-priority projects. Key programmes remain unaffected.	£5,000	£0	£5,000	£0
2026/S4	Regeneration	Delete vacant Regeneration post.	£70,430	Changes within the team staffing structure and completion of projects will minimise the impacts of removing this vacant post.	£46,780	£0	£46,780	£0
2026/S5	ICT	Depending on the outcome of a proof of the concepts over the next nine months, replacing the virtual desktop solution with M365 will result in further savings of £40k in 2028/29.	£1,628,850	While not directly affecting external service users, improved staff productivity and system reliability may enhance the quality and responsiveness of public-facing services	£0	£0	£0	£0
2026/S6	Web Team	Banner adverts from blue chip companies on intranet then (website to generate additional income subject to Member approval)	£0	None, as residents can reject cookies and will not see national advertising. Further information on this option is provided in Appendix C	£4,000	£0	£4,000	£0
2026/S7	Customer Services	A management saving is proposed within the Customer Service Centre through the deletion of one management role. No redundancies are expected, as temporary arrangements are currently in place.	£45,000	No significant impact anticipated, the change will be managed within existing processes	£12,150	£21,600	£16,200	£28,800
2026/S8	Web Team	To maximise the use of Microsoft 365, plan is to move the Intranet platform from the current supplier to M365.	£15,300	None	£0	£0	£9,180	£6,120
2026/S9	Refuse and Recycling	Charging new developments for waste and recycling receptacles (new income stream) Officers have undertaken a comprehensive review of all associated costs involved in the process, from the initial request through to site inspection and final delivery. As a result, a revised pricing model has been developed to ensure full cost recovery.	£0	This will help to recover the costs of new bins provided and replaced for new developments. Although the projected additional income from bin deliveries will not materialise until 2027/28 onwards, approval is sought at this stage to enable officers to begin issuing charging packs to external developers from this financial year (2025/26). Early approval ensures timely implementation of the revised cost recovery model and allows the service to operate transparently and consistently with developers	£0	£0	£8,100	£0
2026/S10	Third party tipping	New charges resulting in additional income/covering cost including Gate fee, Missed appointment and Cancelled appointment	£0	These charges will help to optimise the service by reducing the number / frequency of lost booking income.	£5,800	£0	£5,800	£0
Total Savings			£1,838,800		£84,640	£21,600	£105,970	£34,920

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
BALANCING THE BUDGET 2026-27 GROWTH PROPOSALS

APPENDIX B: GF Growth Options

Ref No	Name of Service	Description of Growth Proposal	Budget 2025/26	Impact of Growth Proposal on Public/ Customers/ Staff/ Members/Partnerships etc. (include any impact on key corporate programmes/performance indicator measures) .	GF Year 1 (2026/27)	HRA Year 1 (2026/27)	GF Year 2 (2027/28)	HRA Year 2 (2027/28)
2026/G1	Engineering & Parking	Additional Parking Management Officer Post	£436,930	Staff - creation of an additional post to provide additional resources within the Engineering and Parking Section in order to manage the increase in parking restrictions / permit zones being rolled out across the town. 2028/29 costs are reduced by £10K income for parking permits	£46,000	£0	£46,000	£0
2026/G2	Town Centre	The proposal requests funding of £47,400 per year to continue delivering free, inclusive events and maintain key infrastructure at Event Island.	£0	Continued funding will enhance public access to free, inclusive events and strengthen community partnerships through grants and shared delivery. It supports key corporate aims around town centre vibrancy, cultural engagement, and social inclusion.	£47,400	£0	£47,400	£0
2026/G3	Procurement	Staffing restructure required to deliver Procurement Act 2023, which has recently come into force (net growth after other budgets re-alignments)	£65,000	The service has 3 staff which support a shared service across East Herts, Hertsmere and SBC. The additional staff resource is supported by the Senior Leadership Team and will ensure that new regulations as a result of the new Procurement Act 2023 are delivered effectively. The remainder of the posts costs have been identified from changes in the finance team.	£1,740	£7,260	£1,740	£7,260
2026/G4	Leisure	80th Celebration of Stevenage (one-off)	£0	Stevenage is celebrating its 80th anniversary in 2026. Like previous anniversary celebrations, there will be a range of events and activities across service areas led by the portfolio holder. The £50,000 one-off growth budget will enhance this programme.	£50,000	£0	£0	£0
Total Growth			£501,930		£145,140	£7,260	£95,140	£7,260

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APPENDIX C: RISK BASED ASSESSMENT OF THE LEVEL OF GENERAL FUND BALANCES 2026/27

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)	£5,700,010	3.0%	£171,000
Development Control Income	£572,130	4.0%	£22,885
Recycling Income	£1,976,540	5.0%	£98,827
Garages	£4,510,630	3.0%	£135,319
Trade Refuse & Skips	£1,257,840	10.0%	£125,784
Indoor Market	£287,870	10.0%	£28,787
Commercial Property Income	£4,298,940	3.0%	£128,968
Lower fees and charges in excess of budgeted from continual post of Cost of Living			£125,000
Total			£836,571

* 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. 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.	£70,216	40%	£28,086
Loss of Business Rates yield	£3,609,322	maximum loss (0%)	£0
Increase in bad debts as a economic changes impacting on charging for services	£228,780	100%	£228,780
Bed and Breakfast budget been reduced based on current trends. However, there's a risk that demand could increase.	£80,000	75%	£59,400
Risk of capital works requiring funding as a result of rephasing/deferring works in the Capital Strategy	£250,000	50%	£125,000
Impact of Local Government Reorganisation costs are higher than budgeted for	£500,000	75%	£375,000
Housing Benefit overpayment net income reduces and results in a pressure on the General Fund	£346,840	10%	£34,684
Cost of new food waste service is higher than estimated	£554,790	10%	£55,479
Total			£906,429

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%	£876,830	20.00%	£175,366
Less staff time charged to capital than budgeted	£490,510	10.00%	£49,051
REVISED: pay award is higher than budgeted for 1%	£24,588,471		£241,563
Contractual inflation 1% increase	£12,611,343	1.00%	£48,135
Utility and fuel inflation usage/costs increase	£1,214,060	10.00%	£121,406
Borrowing costs will be higher than estimated on new borrowing in Capital Strategy	£1,756,000	1% increase in borrowing costs for the garage programme	£17,560
Total			£653,081

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	£1,280,746	5.00%	£64,037
Total			£64,037

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)	£63,001,940	1.00%	£630,019
Gross Expenditure (excludes specific expenditure listed above)	£55,821,770	1.00%	£558,218
Total			£1,188,237

Level of Balances Assumed in General Fund Based on risk £3,648,355

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**Statement of the Chief finance Officer Section 25 Statement including
Robustness of Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves**

1 ROBUSTNESS OF ESTIMATES

The Council process for producing the budget estimates involves responsible budget holders and finance officers reviewing and projecting the Base Budget. The Working Budget Estimates are determined against a background of ongoing quarterly budget monitoring for the current financial year and an evaluation of the outturn position and Budgets carried forward from the previous financial year. The 2026/27 Estimates are determined by evaluating and costing all known changes, including pay and price levels, legislative changes, demands for services and policy developments. Projecting inflation has become much more difficult with fluctuating utility costs and pay inflation. The Council has sufficient reserves in order to set a balanced budget for 2026/27 and the current Budget Process has rigorously reviewed current budgets. As part of the 2026/27 Budget process the Council has included the positive impact of Fair Funding which has partly reversed historic Government Grant reductions. The overall budget process is co-ordinated by the Accountancy Section in liaison with the various Business Units and the Council's Strategic Leadership Team. The Budget is recommended by the Cabinet, for approval by Council after it has been through the Scrutiny process required by the Council's Constitution. The process includes consideration of risks and uncertainties associated with projections of future pay, prices, interest rates and projected levels and timing of other potential liabilities. The challenge to the budget process is provided by the Scrutiny and Overview Committee.

Financial monitoring arrangements provide the Cabinet with a quarterly update on the performance of the budget, with action plans where any significant adverse variances have resulted. The MTFS is under constant review to ensure that a clear financial position for the Council can be demonstrated for the next five years aided by the Council's BTB priority. This is necessary as the Councils in Hertfordshire transition into new unitary authorities and all of the model submissions (two, three and four Unitary) require savings to be delivered. The 2026/27 funding settlement was higher than the MTFS projected, however this included the funding for new separate food waste that the Council had assumed would be in addition to the projected funding. The multi-year settlements beyond 2026/27 improve projecting the level of annual savings required. The CFO has identified that further new BTB savings options are required for 2027/28-2029/30 of just £800K to ensure a balanced General Fund budget which could be met from annual fees and charges increases. There is a small annual allowance for growth and a 2.99% increase in council tax beyond 2026/27.

The Council's Financial Regulations require responsible budget holders to ensure that net expenditure does not exceed the total of their Service budgets. Where, despite the assessment of risks that forms part of the budget process, a budget comes under pressure during the course of the financial year, the Council's budgetary framework and Financial Regulations lay down appropriate procedures. Where budget variations cannot be contained overall by the use of virements, these have been reported to Members as part of the quarterly budget monitoring process. In addition, requests for supplementary estimates have to be submitted to the

Executive or Full Council, as appropriate. Supplementary estimates are met from available balances and reserves, subject to the required level of minimum General Fund balances.

The Strategic Director (S151) considers that the Estimates and the processes used to produce them are sound and robust. A further update on the 2025/26 General Fund and HRA budgets will be presented to the March and July Cabinets, together with any on-going impacts.

2 ADEQUACY OF RESERVES

The Council's annual budgetary process and the assessment of the adequacy of Reserves are undertaken in the context of robust medium term financial forecasting. The Council currently has levels of Reserves above the minimum risk assessed level, the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (with the delivery of £800K of savings and inflation and pressures in line with MTFS projections. This is based on the assumption that future year's funding settlement is in line with the provisional settlement published on the 17 December 2025, if the Final Settlement differs published on the 9 February the report to Full Council will be updated.

The Council has risk assessed the level of General Fund balances required, based on information from service managers the level of reserves required for 2026/27 is £3,648,355, (see also Appendix C to the main report).

Total available General Fund balances as at 1st April 2026 are estimated to be £6,990,974 (after 2025/26 contribution to balances of £485,370). Total General Fund balances as at 1st April 2027 are estimated to be £6,991,215 (after 2026/27 contribution to balances of £241). These levels of balances meet the minimum level of risk assessed balances that are needed to meet unforeseen expenditure arising in the year and expenses arising before income is received and ensure the Council is financially resilient going into LGR.

Total available HRA balances as at 1st April 2026 are estimated to be £10.338Million (after 2025/26 contribution from balances of £588K). Total HRA balances as at 1st April 2027 are estimated to be £10.095Million (after 2026/27 contribution from balances of £243K). These levels of balances meet the minimum level of risk assessed balances that are needed to meet unforeseen expenditure arising in the year and expenses arising before income is received.

The HRA also has an earmarked reserve for the repayment of debt which is estimated to be £16.7Million as at 1st April 2026 and £8.7Million as at 1 April 2027.

It is estimated that the Council will have General Fund £32,518 capital receipts and £2.453Million regeneration ring fenced receipts and £250,000 capital reserves as at 1st April 2027 and the Council has a need to borrow in 2026/27 £45.11Million including for the HRA £35.61Million for capital plus £7.789Million for conversion of internal debt to borrowing and £9.5Million for the General Fund of which £5.9Million is short term borrowing).

In assessing the adequacy of the council's reserves, the robustness of its Budgetary Process and Systems of Internal Control, the assumptions and uncertainties

discussed in the Budget report, and the levels of special provision have been considered.

In coming to a view on the adequacy of reserves, risks in the area of litigation, business continuity, civil emergency, failure of information systems, budgetary control and interest rate calculations have been considered in terms of the possible maximum financial impact and their probability of occurrence. Ongoing assessment of the financial risks to the council, its budget and MTFS, are embedded as part of the Council's overall Corporate Risk Management processes. On this basis, the Strategic Director (S151) considers the level of general balances to be adequate for the 2026/27 financial year.

3 SPECIFIC RESERVES

As part of the budget preparation process, the current and projected levels of the Council's ringfenced reserves have been considered. Following this review, the Strategic Director (S151) confirms these reserves are £10,012,482 for the General Fund as at 1 April 2026 and £9,154,683 as at 1 April 2027 (excluding reserves held for capital) and continue to be required, (see also paragraph 4.10.4-4.10.8 of the main report for the individual reserve balances and need).

4. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

At the time of publishing this report the Council's last set of published and audited accounts were for the financial year 2023/24 and officers are finalising with the council's auditors Azets the 2024/25 accounts.

Supported by the Financial Reporting Council, The Ministry for Housing Communities and local government (MHCLG) set a backstop date of 27 February 2026 for Local Authorities to publish their 2024/25 audited financial accounts. This approach with the earlier backstop deadlines is anticipated to enable Local Authorities and auditors to focus on the most recent year of accounts as quickly as possible and the Council complied with this. This is particularly important as the Councils transition into LGR.

5. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

The timetable for LGR is within the MTFS period with a Shadow Authority anticipated from the 1 April 2027 and vesting day to be the 1 April 2028 based on the current government timetable. The Council has set aside £560K and £500K for 2026/27 and 2027/28 respectively with a additional contingency amount recommended for the Cabinet of £500K in next year. There will be significant costs leading up to the new unitary authority (yet to decided by the government) and it is key that has sufficient reserves leading into LGR.

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BALANCING THE BUDGET (BTB) 2026/27 APPENDIX E

Overall Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) of BTB 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 and Care Experience. 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

Balancing the Budget Proposals 2026/27

6. Prior to their consideration at Cabinet in October 2025, 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, Directors and other appropriate managers have drafted EqIAs.
8. This year there are six new proposals that may potentially have a positive, negative or disproportionate impact. These are:
 - 1) Increasing Discretionary housing payments (DHP)
 - 2) Increasing the Council tax hardship fund
 - 3) Maintaining the allocation of dedicated Enterprise and Skills funding
 - 4) Increasing the financial support Councillors can give through increasing the Local Community Budget
 - 5) Planned improvements to the Gordon Craig Theatre, including new carpets and LED lighting
 - 6) Uplift in pre-application fees across a range of application types
9. The potential impact of these proposals is summarised over the following pages and will inform the recommendations made at Cabinet on 11th February 2026. 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:
 - 11th February 2026 - Consideration of this document at Cabinet meeting, alongside the budget proposals
 - Ongoing review and update of EQIA's and impact as proposals are further developed and implemented throughout 2026/27, including consultation and engagement as appropriate.

Summary of Potential Impacts Identified as a Result of Budget Proposals

Key (Summary Potential Impacts Column)

#	Element	Responsible Officer
1	Increasing Discretionary housing payments (DHP)	Director - Housing & Neighbourhoods (KC)
2	Increasing the Council tax hardship fund	Director - Finance (AI)
3	Maintaining the allocation of dedicated Enterprise and Skills funding	Director - Housing & Neighbourhoods (KC)
4	Increasing the financial support Councillors can give through increasing the Local Community Budget	Director Housing & Neighbourhoods (KC)
5	Planned improvements to the Gordon Craig Theatre, including carpets and LED lighting	Director – Environment & Leisure (SD)
6	Uplift in pre-application fees across a range of application types	Director – Planning & Regulation (AR)

Protected characteristic	Local/National Information	Summary potential impact(s)	Mitigating action(s)
Age	15.5% of Stevenage residents were over 65, compared to significantly higher rates in Hertfordshire (17.4%) and England (18.7%). Stevenage also hosts a slightly younger working population than Hertfordshire and England, with residents aged 16 to 64 years making up 64% of Stevenage's population, compared to 63.6% and 62.9%, respectively. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) report that those in their 40s receive the highest median full-time weekly pay and lowest for younger works aged 16-17 and 18-21. Further, those aged 60+ earn less than the average for all employees. Average earnings by age and region - House of Commons Library	1., 2., 4., & 6. ONS report reduced average earnings for younger and older residents across the UK, any increase in fees and charges may have a negative impact on those who are between ages 16-21 and over 60 years old and earn less as a result. However, the increase in the offer available through support schemes such as the Council Tax Hardship Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments will positively impact those who qualify and help enable residents to afford the proposed changes. Further detail on the above is provided in the Socio-Economic Status section. 3. The Enterprise and Skills allocation will augment the existing activity in Stevenage, which has largely focused on supporting young people into opportunity, particularly through our work on STEM pathways and construction-related progression. The 2026/27 allocation sustains core delivery capacity and commissions targeted interventions that both deepen that youth-focused offer, through an extension of the partnership with Mission 44, and broaden it by expanding support for adults who are out of work or looking to change careers. Alongside this, it strengthens the Stevenage Works approach by funding additional targeted support for 16 to 18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training.	1., 2., 4., & 6. See socio-economic impacts section below. 3. The Enterprise and Skills allocation will have a positive impact of the younger resident population of Stevenage. The Council will offer targeted intervention to increase the opportunities available to young people, as well as expand the support to adults not in employment. Therefore, increasing the support provided through the allocation of this dedicated budget.

Protected characteristic	Local/National Information	Summary potential impact(s)	Mitigating action(s)
		5. The proposed budget has allocated significant funds to provide improvements to the Gordan Craig Theatre, including the installation of new carpets and LED lighting. These will help the theatre to continue to provide vital engagement for all ages.	5. The proposed improvements to the theatre will follow the existing commitments made to accessibility to all with dedicated wheelchair accessible viewing areas, blue badge parking, and accommodations available for visitors who are hearing or visually impaired. These considerations will continue as improvements are made and access will be ensured for all ages.
Disability	According to the 2021 Census, 17.3% of Stevenage residents had a disability covered under the Equality Act that limited their day-to-day activities, compared to 14.4% in Hertfordshire and 17.3% in England. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) show that in the UK in 2023, the pay gap between disabled and non-disabled employees was 12.7%, with a median hourly pay of £15.69 for non-disabled employees and £13.69 for disabled employees;	1., 2., 4., & 6. Due to the prevalence of a national disability pay gap, any increase in fees and charges may have a negative impact on those who have a disability and earn less as a result. However, the increase in the offer available through support schemes such as the Council Tax Hardship Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments will positively impact those who qualify and help enable residents to afford the proposed changes. Further detail on the above is provided in the Socio-Economic Status section. 5. The proposed budget has allocated significant funds to provide improvements to the Gordan Craig	1., 2., 4., & 6. See socio-economic impacts section below. 5. The proposed improvements to the theatre will follow the existing

Protected characteristic	Local/National Information	Summary potential impact(s)	Mitigating action(s)
	this pay gap has remained relatively stable since 2014. In April 2025, there were 5,385 Personal Independent Payment (PIP) claimants in Stevenage, which is a 13.58% increase from 4,741 in April 2024.	Theatre, including the installation of new carpets and LED lighting. Accessibility requirements will be considered during the carpet fitting process and upon their unveiling. Further, individuals with neurodiverse needs often have heightened sensitivity to light and the installation of new LED lighting may cause a negative impact on those attending the theatre. However, soft LEDS are often offered as preferred solutions for neurodiverse needs and therefore this has been considered as part of these improvements.	commitments made to accessibility to all with dedicated wheelchair accessible viewing areas, blue badge parking, and accommodations available for visitors who are hearing or visually impaired. These considerations will continue as improvements are made and access will be ensured for all disabled visitors. Alternate requirements for neurodiverse needs will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis but this has been considered as part of these improvements.
Gender reassignment	0.4% of residents have a different gender identity to the sex registered at birth, compared to 0.41% in Hertfordshire and 0.44% in England	No differential impacts directly related to people having this characteristic have been identified as a result of these proposals.	
Marital status	The majority of Stevenage residents (43.9%) were married or in a registered civil partnership. In comparison, 48.4% of residents are married or in a registered civil partnership in Hertfordshire and 44.7% in England.	No differential impacts directly related to people having this characteristic have been identified as a result of these proposals.	

Protected characteristic	Local/National Information	Summary potential impact(s)	Mitigating action(s)
Pregnancy and maternity	The birth rate in Stevenage in 2024 sat at 12.2 live births per 1,000 people, which is higher than 10.9 in Hertfordshire and 10.5 in England.	No differential impacts directly related to people having this characteristic have been identified as a result of these proposals.	
Race	24.7% of Stevenage residents were from an ethnic minority (non-White British) in 2021, compared to 16.9% in the 2011 Census. In comparison, 28.2% of residents in Hertfordshire and 26.5% in England overall are from an ethnic minority group. In 2022, Office of National Statistics (ONS) figures showed that in the UK in 2022 Black, African, Caribbean or Black British employees earned less (£13.53) median gross hourly pay than White employees (£14.35), which has been consistent since 2012.	1., 2., 4., & 6. Due to the prevalence of a national ethnicity pay gap, any increase in fees and charges may have a negative impact on those from an ethnic minority and earn less as a result. However, the increase in the offer available through support schemes such as the Council Tax Hardship Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments will positively impact those who qualify and help enable residents to afford the proposed changes. Further detail on the above is provided in the Socio-Economic Status section.	1., 2., 4., & 6. See socio-economic impacts section below.
Religion or belief	44.9% of Stevenage residents identify with no specified religion, which is significantly higher than	No differential impacts directly related to people having this characteristic have been identified as a result of these proposals.	

Protected characteristic	Local/National Information	Summary potential impact(s)	Mitigating action(s)
	Hertfordshire and England levels (36.6% and 33.7%).		
Sex	50.6% of Stevenage residents were female and 49.4% were male in mid-2023 ONS estimates. In April 2025, the UK's gender pay gap stood at 6.9%, down from 7.1% in April 2024. 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.	1., 2., 4., & 6. Due to the prevalence of a national gender pay gap, any increase in fees and charges may have a negative impact on those who are female and earn less as a result. However, the increase in the offer available through support schemes such as the Council Tax Hardship Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments will positively impact those who qualify and help enable residents to afford the proposed changes. Further detail on the above is provided in the Socio-Economic Status section.	1., 2., 4., & 6. See socio-economic impacts section below.
Sexual Orientation	2.7% of residents identify with LGBTQ+ sexual orientations, which is higher than Hertfordshire's average of 2.3% but lower than the national average of 3.17% in England.	No differential impacts directly related to people having this characteristic have been identified as a result of these proposals.	
Socio-economic	According to the 2025 English Index of Multiple Deprivation, Stevenage continues to be the	1. The Council uses Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) to support residents short term to stay in their homes, with awards in 2024/25 reflecting pressure on	Fee increases and charges are reviewed annually by the Council to

Protected characteristic	Local/National Information	Summary potential impact(s)	Mitigating action(s)
	most deprived authority in Hertfordshire. Of this, Bedwell is the most deprived ward in Town. In May 2025, 8,982 households were in receipt of Universal Credit in Stevenage, a 17.18% increase from 7,665 households in May 2024. This significant increase is a result of the migration from benefits such as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Housing Benefit. In April 2025, there were 5,385 Personal Independent Payment (PIP) claimants in Stevenage, which is a 13.58% increase from 4,741 in April 2024. In July 2025, the number of Council Tax Support recipients of working age (non-pensioners) was 3,284, which is a 1.92% increase from 3,222 in July	households affected by the spare room subsidy restriction, and those in receipt of universal credit. There are always more requests than funding and an additional £99K is recommended for 2026/27 to help support this demand. 2. The Exceptional Hardship Relief scheme offered by the Council has seen an uptake since the pandemic and during the ongoing difficult economic climate. There is an application process requiring financial information and supporting evidence and each case is reviewed independently and against the Exceptional Hardship Relief policy. Any award will be used to reduce council tax liabilities for those found to be in exceptional hardship and to help them improve their financial situation. SBC has a residual amount of circa £170K remaining and it is recommended that this is increased by £90K to provide greater levels of support for those with lower socio-economic status. This has also been considered in light of the previously announced uplift in council tax for 2026/27, further information mitigating the impact of the proposed increases can be seen in the dedicated EqIA for Council Tax Increase. 4. The increase in Local Community Budget (LCB) also enables the financial support Councillors can give to increase and therefore support residents even more in the next financial year.	ensure that the cost of providing the service is met. To help mitigate the increase in Planning Fees, the Council does offer a free enquiry service to ensure a person is provided the advice they need prior to making an application. To help mitigate any negative impacts on residents the Council is able to offer concessions to those who are eligible. Eligibility is dependent on the service but typically will include residents in receipt of a means tested benefit. Please see the Council's Concessionary Policy for further information on the Council's approach to setting concessions. To help mitigate any negative impacts on residents the Council will continue to offer financial assistance through multiple support schemes and activities, including

Protected characteristic	Local/National Information	Summary potential impact(s)	Mitigating action(s)
	2024.	6. The budget proposed uplifting pre-application fees across a range of application types. Customers who use the pre-application service will be affected by fee increases, especially those who have a lower socio-economic status. More information can be found in the 2026/27 Fees and Charges report to the October Cabinet Appendix A concerning the fees and charges.	both DHP and the Council tax hardship fund.

Additional EqlAs

A series of additional, more specific EqlAs have been referenced throughout this overarching Budget EqlA, these are available upon request.

1. Council Tax Increase EqlA
2. Fees & Charges (General Fund) EqlA
3. Fees & Charges (HRA) EqlA

APPENDIX F EPR PROPOSED SPEND

		Cost
Title	Initiative Detail	2026/27
Flat Block Improvements	Continuation of the work completed through the two flat block trials, plus the extended efforts to introduce recycling facilities in blocks that currently lack them. This will include ensuring all bin stores are fit for purpose, with the correct type, number, and size of bins, appropriate capacity, and clear, consistent signage. The programme will be delivered as a phased, rolling initiative over several years.	£460,000
180lt Bin Replacement	The Household Waste Policy was updated in 2019, introducing a standard 180-litre bin for general household waste. A replacement programme was established to provide new bins upon resident request. Evidence shows that reducing general waste capacity increases recycling participation. Therefore, the proposal is to replace all existing 240-litre bins with 180-litre bins within a 3 year programme.	£175,000
Public Recycling Bins	Capital funding has already been requested to upgrade general waste bins within the town centre. With additional EPR funding, it is recommended to install public recycling bins that align with kerbside collection system, providing improved recycling options for public use	£50,000
Establishment Resource	Use EPR money to support waste projects. The roles of Project Manager - Waste and Environmental Policy, Strategy and Projects Officer to be funded.	£66,160
	Total recommended	£751,160
New Freighters	see paragraph 4.1.14	£500,000
	Total	£1,251,160
	Funding	£
	2026/27 EPR Funding	£1,226,580

	Use of EPR reserve	£24,580
	Total Funding	£1,251,160

£726,580

APPENDIX G ADDITIONAL GROWTH PROPOSALS

Pressures	2026/27	Comments
Theme : supporting our residents:		
Increasing Discretionary housing payments (DHP) (see also para 4.1.12)	£99,000	The Council uses DHP to support residents short term to stay in their homes, with awards in 2024/25 reflecting pressure on households affected by the spare room subsidy restriction, and those in receipt of universal credit. There are always more requests than funding and an additional £100K is recommended for 2026/27. The funding for 2025/26 has already been exhausted and the service is experiencing increasing levels requests for support.
Increasing the Council tax hardship fund	£90,000	An Exceptional Hardship Relief scheme is offered by SBC (Section 13(A) 1 discretionary relief for council tax). There has been an uptake in this since the pandemic and during the ongoing difficult economic climate. There is an application process requiring financial information and supporting evidence and each case is reviewed independently and against the Exceptional Hardship Relief policy. Any award will be used to reduce council tax liabilities for those found to be in exceptional hardship and to help them improve their financial situation. SBC has a residual amount of circa £170K remaining and it is recommended that this is increased by £100K
Theme : supporting residents into work:		
The Enterprise and Skills allocation will augment the existing activity in Stevenage, which has largely focused on supporting young people into opportunity, particularly through our work on STEM pathways and construction-related progression. The 2026/27 allocation sustains core delivery capacity and commissions targeted interventions that both deepen that youth-focused offer, through an extension of the partnership with Mission 44, and broaden it by expanding support for adults who are out of work or looking to change careers. Alongside this, it strengthens the Stevenage Works approach by funding additional targeted support for 16 to 18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training.	£210,000	Enterprise and Skills Partnership Officer (12-month extension) to coordinate delivery, partnerships, bid development and impact reporting.
		Pioneering Young STEM Futures delivery package to extend our partnership with Mission 44 , supporting youth voice and progression activity (including the Youth Advisory Board and progression pilots).
		Adult learning and career change pilot to expand support for adults who are out of work or looking to change career, focused on employability and progression into training and work.
		Stevenage Works: training for 16 to 18 NEETs providing targeted support for young people not in education, employment or training, aligned to the wider Stevenage Works “front door” approach to skills and employment support.
Theme : Improving the Town for residents:		
Increasing the budget to allow for increased hedge trimming throughout the Town	£100,000	The current level of resources do not allow for a full summer prune of hedgerows. This growth bid will check vigorous growth and prevent stems becoming woody and too thick for hedge cutters.
Electric Addex bin vehicle	£70,000	The Council currently has one electric bin collection vehicle in the town centre, purchasing a further vehicle will provide service resilience and allow for wider use across the town and improve productivity.
Theme : Increasing the financial support Councillors can give through increasing the Local Community Budget		
LCB's increase per Member	£20,000	This proposal is to increase the LCB allowance by £500 per Member and Youth Mayor in the 80th Anniversary year of the Town
Total	£589,000	

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Wednesday 11 February 2026

COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTION

SETTING THE AMOUNT OF COUNCIL TAX FOR THE COUNCIL'S AREA

1. That the following be approved:
 - a. the revised working revenue estimates for the year 2025/26 amounting to £10,585,480 and the revenue estimates for 2026/27 amounting to £13,587,330;
 - b. the contribution to balances totalling £6,053 in 2025/26;
 - c. the contribution to balances totalling £241 in 2026/27.
2. That it be noted that at its meeting on 10 December 2025 the Cabinet calculated the amount of 28,884.5 Band D equivalent properties as its council tax base for the year 2026/27 in accordance with Regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 made under Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by Section 74 of the Localism Act 2011.
3. That the following amounts be calculated by the Council for the year 2026/27 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by Section 74 of the Localism Act 2011:
 - a. £91,132,985 Being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2)(a) to (f) of the Act, less the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3)(a) to (d)
 - b. £83,802,677 Being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3)(a) to (d) of the Act.
 - c. £7,330,308 Being the amount by which the aggregate at 3a above exceeds the aggregate at 3b above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year.
 - d. £253.78 Being the amount at 3c divided by the amount at 2 above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B (1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year
 - e. Valuation Bands
 - A £ 169.18
 - B £ 197.38

C	£ 225.58
D	£ 253.78
E	£ 310.18
F	£ 366.57
G	£ 422.97
H	£ 507.56

Being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at 3d. above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.

4. a. That it be noted that for the year 2026/27 Hertfordshire County Council have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of the dwellings shown below:

Valuation Bands

	Basic Amount of Council Tax	Adult Social Care Charge	2025/26 Council Tax
A	£	£	£
B	£	£	£
C	£	£	£
D	£	£	£
E	£	£	£
F	£	£	£
G	£	£	£
H	£	£	£

- b. That it be noted that for the year 2026/27 Hertfordshire Police Authority have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and amended by Section 27 of the Police and Magistrates' Court Act 1994, for each of the categories of the dwellings shown below:

Valuation Bands

A	£
B	£
C	£
D	£
E	£
F	£
G	£
H	£

5. That, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 3e. and 4a. and b. above, the Council in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the following amounts as the amounts for council tax for the year 2026/27 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

Valuation Bands

A	£
B	£
C	£
D	£
E	£
F	£
G	£
H	£

6. To determine in accordance with Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992 that the Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2025/26 is not excessive in accordance with principles approved by the Secretary of State under Section 52ZC having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 3e.

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General Fund Summary APPENDIX I

Notes: *Gross expenditure includes internal recharges/gross income includes recharge income	Actual 2024/25 £	Original Budget 2025/26 £	Working Budget 2025/26 £	Gross Expenditure* 2026/27 £	Gross Income * 2026/27 £	Original Budget 2026/27 £
Summary of Expenditure						
Portfolio:						
Community Services	2,720,584	3,496,950	3,535,190	4,998,890	(1,302,580)	3,696,300
Housing Services	1,869,041	2,844,570	2,857,800	21,031,750	(17,060,390)	3,971,370
Environmental Services	12,800,058	8,881,990	8,708,440	25,260,850	(16,863,440)	8,397,410
Local Community Budgets	60,170	60,500	60,500	80,500	0	80,500
Resources	(5,964,272)	(4,915,590)	(5,107,900)	16,479,880	(19,542,170)	(3,062,290)
Resources - Support	306,360	389,920	541,460	24,591,200	(24,147,880)	443,320
Trading Accounts - Direct Services *	0	(4,800)	(10,000)	4,153,340	(4,092,620)	60,720
Net General Fund Expenditure	11,791,941	10,753,540	10,585,490	96,596,410	(83,009,080)	13,587,330
Government Baseline Funding						
Government Support - Retained Business Rates (NDR)	(2,014,081)	(2,408,413)	(2,684,669)		(3,609,322)	(3,609,322)
S31 Grants	(2,548,754)	(2,210,192)	(2,185,159)	0	0	0
Levy Surplus	(21,574)	0	0	0	0	0
Compensation grant for business rates exemption for green plant and machinery	(26,105)	0	0	0	0	0
Transfer to/from Collection Fund reserve (NDR previous years)	(838,057)	1,232,757	1,232,757	720,354	0	720,354
Transfer to/(from) Collection Fund (Council Tax previous years)	(162,403)	196,632	196,632	0	(234,991)	(234,991)
Backstop Grant			(60,044)	0	0	0
Redmond Review	(27,906)	0	0	0	0	0
Revenue Support Grant	(108,811)	(149,048)	(149,048)	0	(2,849,486)	(2,849,486)
Recovery Grant		(283,819)	(283,819)	(283,819)	0	(283,819)
Service Grant	(17,960)	0	0	0	0	0
3%/4% guarantee increase in core spending	(390,740)	0	0	0	0	0
New Homes Bonus	0	(97,000)	(97,000)	0	0	0
District Precept	(6,837,929)	(7,040,510)	(7,040,510)	0	(7,330,308)	(7,330,308)
Use of (Contributions to) General Fund Balances	(1,202,380)	(6,053)	(485,370)	97,032,945	(97,033,186)	(241)
General Fund Balance:						
Balance 1 April	(5,303,224)	(5,900,168)	(6,505,604)			(6,990,974)
Use of Balances in Year	(1,202,380)	(6,053)	(485,370)			(241)
General Fund Balance 31 March	(6,505,604)	(5,906,221)	(6,990,974)	0	0	(6,991,215)
Allocated Revenue Reserves:						
Balance 1 April	(8,758,063)	(8,206,682)	(10,954,759)			(10,012,482)
Use of Balances in Year	(2,196,697)	(100,000)	942,277			857,799
Allocated Revenue Reserves Balance 31 March	(10,954,759)	(8,306,682)	(10,012,482)	0	0	(9,154,683)
Total Revenue Reserves	(17,460,363)	(14,212,903)	(17,003,456)	0	0	(16,145,897)
Council Tax Bands for 2026/27		2025/26				2026/27
2.99% Increase on Band D Property:						
BAND A		164.27				169.18
BAND B		191.65				197.38
BAND C		219.03				225.58
BAND D		246.41				253.78
BAND E		301.17				310.18
BAND F		355.93				366.57
BAND G		410.68				422.97
BAND H		492.82				507.56

Community Services

	Actual 2024/25 £	Original Budaet 2025/26 £	Working Budaet 2025/26 £	Gross Expenditure 2026/27 £	Gross Income 2026/27 £	Original Budaet 2026/27 £
Summary of Expenditure						
7 Safeguarding Services	330	530	(6,590)	90,450	(87,650)	2,800
10 Sports & Recreational Facilities	294,664	911,650	889,690	872,770	(20,000)	852,770
11 Sports Development	135,780	124,180	136,370	153,390	(11,540)	141,850
12 Leisure Management and Leisure Promotions	336,272	247,750	392,030	1,242,300	(831,800)	410,500
14 Community Services General	575,727	640,970	571,640	730,960	(124,390)	606,570
14a Neighbourhood Wardens	188,357	203,400	172,050	220,780	(66,210)	154,570
15 Community Associations	147,633	308,420	308,420	430,080	0	430,080
16 Community Safety	202,895	250,000	250,000	257,790	0	257,790
16a Domestic Abuse Service	17,607	20,790	20,790	152,780	(130,430)	22,350
16b No More Service	74,556	74,140	74,140	94,680	(23,880)	70,800
17 Museums	372,339	349,530	361,040	364,030	(6,680)	357,350
18 Grants to Voluntary Bodies	374,424	365,590	365,590	388,870	0	388,870
Total Cost of Portfolio	2,720,584	3,496,950	3,535,170	4,998,880	(1,302,580)	3,696,300

Housing Services

	Actual 2024/25 £	Original Budaet 2025/26 £	Working Budaet 2025/26 £	Gross Expenditure 2026/27 £	Gross Income 2026/27 £	Original Budaet 2026/27 £
Summary of Expenditure						
20 Homelessness	722,760	1,138,240	1,027,397	3,221,330	(1,302,370)	1,918,960
20a Ex-Offenders & Refugees	(219,136)	0	225,257	190,970	(46,000)	144,970
21 Housing Advice	251,789	284,700	241,576	392,290	(75,220)	317,070
23 Wholly Owned Company	6,870	(52,400)	(38,290)	49,320	(55,550)	(6,230)
24 Private Houses Rent Allowance	376,931	683,320	504,000	7,534,130	(6,902,750)	631,380
25 Rent Rebates Administration	94,759	203,750	299,430	9,097,050	(8,638,300)	458,750
26 Health & Safety and Food Safety	635,067	586,960	598,430	546,660	(40,200)	506,460
Total Cost of Portfolio	1,869,041	2,844,570	2,857,800	21,031,750	(17,060,390)	3,971,360

Environmental Services

	Actual 2024/25 £	Original Budget 2025/26 £	Working Budget 2025/26 £	Gross Expenditure 2026/27 £	Gross Income 2026/27 £	Original Budget 2026/27 £
Summary of Expenditure						
28 Abandoned Vehicles	1,129	3,180	3,180	2,000	(1,000)	1,000
29 Allotments	(244,089)	2,120	14,760	93,940	(88,490)	5,450
30 Cemeteries	257,715	268,450	296,720	619,400	(291,120)	328,280
31 Pavilions	376,181	283,130	284,750	306,110	(3,500)	302,610
31a Parks Playing Fields & Open Spaces	359,087	388,860	400,340	661,450	(214,440)	447,010
31b Verge Maint	609,536	665,920	613,930	1,445,410	(722,710)	722,700
31c Landscape Maint	540,677	742,120	849,470	1,261,530	(508,700)	752,830
31d Fairlands Park	128,545	222,210	222,210	201,790	(11,730)	190,060
31e Play spaces	281,800	299,920	315,820	289,640	0	289,640
31f Amenity Woodland	435,750	526,920	546,310	675,300	(143,920)	531,380
32 Drainage	7,198	11,520	11,710	10,470	0	10,470
33 Town Centre	642,109	757,550	761,540	821,410	(21,880)	799,530
33a Town Centre Conveniences	33,881	52,110	55,540	52,850	0	52,850
33b Street Cleansing/Graffiti	474,234	370,920	544,220	1,509,660	(1,262,840)	246,820
33c Environmental Development	78,276	164,480	90,510	98,210	(19,810)	78,400
33d Neighbourhood Centres	311,426	328,600	328,600	349,050	0	349,050
35 Local Highway Services	485,248	545,280	523,520	580,200	(14,770)	565,430
36 Christmas Illuminations	30,894	25,490	25,560	28,940	0	28,940
37 Recycled Waste	992,645	(131,980)	85,030	2,206,930	(1,976,540)	230,390
38 Refuse Services	1,826,053	1,993,060	2,117,030	1,958,360	(48,750)	1,909,610
39 Animal Control & Environmental Health Management	190,750	195,670	200,590	244,000	(67,740)	176,260
40 E-car Club and Travel Plan	11,996	15,010	15,190	16,720	0	16,720
41 Parking Facilities - Off Street	1,556,820	(2,299,170)	(2,978,630)	2,170,000	(4,967,970)	(2,797,970)
42 Parking Facilities (On Street)	(326,371)	(280,940)	(256,260)	963,930	(1,201,390)	(237,460)
43 CCTV	345,788	367,760	374,130	400,210	0	400,210
44 Planning Policy	1,478,388	1,382,360	1,425,700	1,256,990	0	1,256,990
44a Climate Change	162,933	104,030	209,020	222,300	(111,150)	111,150
44b CIL	(15,162)	(3,080)	(2,130)	24,580	(28,930)	(4,350)
44c Town Centre Management	726,106	431,280	426,290	617,990	(316,300)	301,690
46 Regeneration	912,833	1,393,170	1,338,310	1,497,590	(240,000)	1,257,590
47 Development Control	82,478	(11,750)	(5,000)	597,330	(572,130)	25,200
48 Building Control	44,070	53,520	42,520	63,780	(15,280)	48,500
49 Engineers and on-street parking	0	(1,040)	910	585,940	(585,940)	0
50 Property & Design	941	(1,230)	(52,450)	749,890	(749,460)	430
51 Environmental Health	195	(1,750)	(23,350)	1,006,730	(1,006,730)	0
52 DSO Admin & Management	0	18,290	(97,150)	1,670,220	(1,670,220)	0
Total Cost of Portfolio	12,800,058	8,881,990	8,708,440	25,260,850	(16,863,440)	8,397,410

Local Community Budgets

	Actual 2024/25 £	Original Budget 2025/26 £	Working Budget 2025/26 £	Gross Expenditure 2026/27 £	Gross Income 2026/27 £	Original Budget 2026/27 £
Summary of Expenditure						
54 Local Community Budgets	60,170	60,500	60,500	80,500	0	80,500
Total Cost of Portfolio	60,170	60,500	60,500	80,500	0	80,500

Resources

	Actual 2024/25 £	Original Budaet 2025/26 £	Working Budaet 2025/26 £	Gross Expenditure 2026/27 £	Gross Income 2026/27 £	Original Budaet 2026/27 £
Summary of Expenditure						
56 Commercial Properties	(9,153,416)	(2,001,820)	(1,805,200)	3,608,400	(5,468,170)	(1,859,770)
56a Bus Interchange	181,063	86,600	24,020	252,980	(205,940)	47,040
57 Garages	(1,576,536)	(2,791,180)	(2,660,580)	1,498,000	(4,510,630)	(3,012,630)
58 Council Tax	703,575	785,600	775,600	1,128,010	(268,750)	859,260
59 Non Domestic Rate (NDR)	139,759	135,360	141,890	277,270	(116,230)	161,040
60 Elections	215,593	227,930	191,530	452,320	(220,840)	231,480
61 Electoral Registration	171,077	137,950	137,950	336,890	(198,590)	138,300
62 Indoor Market	200,902	88,170	91,510	342,540	(287,870)	54,670
63 NHC St George	0	(44,110)	74,000	114,100	(88,580)	25,520
64 Hackney Carriages	15,516	0	(5,440)	97,600	(158,240)	(60,640)
65 Local Licensing	37,424	56,830	60,290	93,370	(94,010)	(640)
66 Local Land Charges	12,114	(4,140)	(4,140)	79,870	(88,390)	(8,520)
67 Miscellaneous Services	(31,324)	130,000	130,000	130,000	0	130,000
68 Corporate Projects	73,614	41,250	84,560	545,920	(49,500)	496,420
68a Transformation	354,343	230,890	250,010	557,300	(501,510)	55,790
69 Investment Income and Expenditure	(2,352,727)	(1,380,480)	(2,361,350)	1,316,090	(2,397,170)	(1,081,080)
70 Movement on General Fund Balance	3,324,059	(3,238,490)	(2,846,590)	1,869,740	(3,635,700)	(1,765,960)
71 Corporate & Democratic Core	1,577,977	2,471,580	2,461,570	3,613,670	(1,252,050)	2,361,620
71a Emergency Planning	61,659	88,810	88,810	87,820	0	87,820
71b Civic Links	81,056	63,660	63,660	77,990	0	77,990
Total Cost of Portfolio	(5,964,272)	(4,915,590)	(5,107,900)	16,479,880	(19,542,170)	(3,062,290)

Resources - Support Services

	Actual 2024/25 £	Original Budaet 2025/26 £	Working Budaet 2025/26 £	Gross Expenditure 2026/27 £	Gross Income 2026/27 £	Original Budaet 2026/27 £
Summary of Expenditure						
72 Daneshill House	51,250	42,240	53,400	1,603,740	(1,589,890)	13,850
74 Facilities Management	4,918	31,070	141,830	1,253,700	(1,191,100)	62,600
75 Corporate Management	0	40,240	50,090	892,300	(881,850)	10,450
76 Democratic Services	0	20	20	580,210	(579,880)	330
76a Members Expenses	0	15,240	35,240	694,060	(686,770)	7,290
77 Legal Services	(9,537)	0	0	546,910	(546,910)	0
78 Policy	0	44,770	44,170	597,530	(597,230)	300
78a Communications	0	(9,600)	6,100	442,790	(443,800)	(1,010)
79 ICT	184,301	(17,530)	(17,530)	6,740,160	(6,718,550)	21,610
79a GDPR	0	(310)	(310)	155,770	(155,670)	100
79c Digital	239	(146,110)	(163,370)	835,360	(829,550)	5,810
80 Human Resources & Organisational Development	79,034	278,760	278,760	330,530	0	330,530
80a Corp Health&Safety	(4)	(270)	(270)	188,700	(188,810)	(110)
80b Human Resources and Training	(1,098)	440	(160)	1,154,160	(1,139,990)	14,170
81 Creditors	0	(900)	(1,050)	421,990	(421,040)	950
81a Payroll	0	(9,370)	(9,370)	58,870	(59,460)	(590)
82 Financial Services	(4,493)	10,580	18,760	2,251,240	(2,257,670)	(6,430)
82a Financial Services - Procurement	0	(1,500)	(1,500)	265,660	(265,930)	(270)
82b Financial Services - Paralegal	0	(4,350)	(4,850)	105,950	(105,240)	710
82c Insurance, Audit, Anti Fraud & Corp Banking Charges	1,751	1,210	10,650	412,190	(413,870)	(1,680)
82d Estates	0	94,110	93,500	913,640	(845,400)	68,240
82e Financial Services - Commercial	0	(270)	(4,870)	286,630	(283,830)	2,800
83 Revenues, Benefits & Local Taxation	0	25,000	8,370	2,301,700	(2,386,160)	(84,460)
84 Customer Services	0	(3,550)	3,850	1,557,410	(1,559,280)	(1,870)
Total Cost of Portfolio	306,360	389,920	541,460	24,591,200	(24,147,880)	443,320

Stevenage Direct Services (SDS)

Street Scene (Graffiti); Refuse (Trade Waste; Skips; Junks); Vehicle Repairs; CCTV Partnership

TJ***, TV110, DA***, DC***, DE***, DS***

01	Actual	Original	Working	Gross	Gross Income	Original
	2024/25	Budget	Budget	Expenditure		Budget
	£	2025/26	2025/26	2026/27	2026/27	2026/27
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Expenditure						
Employee Costs:						
Direct Employee Expenses	846,046	933,050	923,740	906,820	0	906,820
Indirect Employee Expenses	12,011	8,500	8,500	6,790	0	6,790
Premises Related:						
Repairs & Maintenance Of Buildings	115,062	86,060	106,020	93,140	0	93,140
Grounds Maintenance	98,791	63,110	63,110	63,110	0	63,110
Energy Costs	88,904	100,520	100,240	121,910	0	121,910
Rents, Rates & Water Services	222,443	226,910	226,910	235,480	0	235,480
Fixtures & Fittings	3,642	3,410	2,910	3,410	0	3,410
Cleaning & Domestic Supplies	1,057	1,010	550	1,010	0	1,010
Apportionment Of Operational Buildings	159,016	155,570	157,850	164,520	0	164,520
Premises Insurance	5,150	5,640	5,640	5,630	0	5,630
Transport Related:						
Fleet Vehicle Recharges	190,423	237,300	232,840	93,090	0	93,090
Hire Of Vehicles	0	0	0	0	0	0
Travelling Expenses	3,111	1,840	1,840	1,900	0	1,900
Supplies & Services:						
Equipment, Tools & Materials	881,863	458,700	403,400	488,160	0	488,160
Catering	2,342	1,800	1,800	1,800	0	1,800
Clothing, Uniforms & Laundry	4,702	2,770	2,770	2,770	0	2,770
Printing, Stationery & General	1,148	1,300	1,300	1,300	0	1,300
Communications & Computing	43,444	34,220	55,220	54,100	0	54,100
Grants & Subscriptions	11,811	6,430	7,760	6,430	0	6,430
Miscellaneous Expenses	8,223	11,680	14,110	12,280	0	12,280
Third Party Payments:						
Bank Charges	35	0	0	0	0	0
Contract Services	102,791	74,030	61,400	71,770	0	71,770
Private Contractors	470,368	465,600	479,350	489,990	0	489,990
Consultancy & Agency Fees	433,952	384,900	498,900	448,010	0	448,010
Recharges:						
Support Services	393,327	438,440	438,440	397,460	0	397,460
Contract Services Recharge	365,790	374,810	394,430	389,250	0	389,250
Capital Charges:						
Capital Charges	65,855	65,860	65,860	93,210	0	93,210
Total Expenditure	4,064,749	4,143,460	4,254,890	4,153,340	0	4,153,340
Income:						
Other Contributions & Donations	(340,811)	(338,370)	(330,800)	0	(349,640)	(349,640)
Fees & Charges	(1,167,114)	(1,207,780)	(1,289,340)	0	(1,179,060)	(1,179,060)
Recharge Income	(2,556,825)	(2,602,110)	(2,644,750)	0	(2,563,920)	(2,563,920)
	(4,064,749)	(4,148,260)	(4,264,890)	0	(4,092,620)	(4,092,620)
Net Cost of Service	0	(4,800)	(10,000)	4,153,340	(4,092,620)	60,720

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Meeting CABINET/COUNCIL
Portfolio Area Resources and Performance
Date 11 February 2026 / 25 February 2026



FINAL GENERAL FUND CAPITAL STRATEGY 2025/26-2029/30

KEY DECISION

Authors Rhona Bellis
Contributors Senior Leadership Team
Lead Officers Atif Iqbal
Contact Officer Clare Fletcher

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To approve revisions to the 2025/26 Capital Programme and Strategy and approve the 2026/27 Capital Programme.
- 1.2. To provide Members with an update on the Council's Five-Year Capital Strategy and the resources available to fund the Capital Strategy.
- 1.3. To provide Members with an update on the Council's investment strategy as required by the updated prudential code.
- 1.4. To set out the Council's approach to funding its key priorities.
- 1.5. To update Members on the work of the Council's Financial Security Group (CFSG) in reviewing all General Fund capital bids prior to inclusion in the final 2026/27 Capital Strategy and comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the following proposals be recommended to Council on 25 February 2025:

- 2.1. Final General Fund growth bids identified for inclusion in the Capital Strategy (section 4.2, and Appendix A to the report) be approved totalling £7.9Million for 2026/27-2028/29.

- 2.2. Final General Fund Capital Budget for 2025/26 to 2029/30 of £118Million, as set out in Appendix B to the report be approved.
- 2.3. Forecast of and approach to resourcing the General Fund capital programme as outlined in the report (Paragraph 4.4) be approved.
- 2.4. The revenue contribution to capital, 2026/27 to 2028/29 as set out in table 4, paragraph 4.3.4 be approved of £4.6Million to fund the capital programme.
- 2.5. That the proposed use of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) contributions of £225k as set out in section 4.6 be approved.
- 2.6. The approved revenue surplus in any year of up to £500K that can be allocated to the capital reserve to support capital expenditure be noted.
- 2.7. That the comments from Council Financial Security Group and Overview and Scrutiny as set out in section 4.11 are noted.
- 2.8. To note the legal implications of Section 24 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 in relation to financial decisions (capital) made by a council that is due to be abolished or reorganised in section 5.2.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1. Introduction

- 3.1.1. This report is an update on the Council's Draft Capital Strategy 2025/26-2029/30 presented to the January 2026 Cabinet meeting. Changes since that meeting can be found in section 4.2.8.
- 3.1.2. The purpose of the Capital Strategy is to outline how the Council determines its priorities for capital investment and how much it can afford to borrow as well as setting out any associated risks. The Council's Financial Security Group (CFSG) and the Senior Leadership Team reviewed the capital bids for 2026/27 onwards contained within the Capital Strategy in November 2025 /January 2026 and the results of that review are included in this report.
- 3.1.3. The framework the government uses to control how much Councils can afford to spend on capital investment is known as the Prudential Framework. The objectives of the Prudential Code, requires local authorities to produce a capital strategy to demonstrate that capital expenditure and investment decisions are taken in line with long-term objectives and take account of stewardship, value for money, prudence, sustainability, and affordability.
- 3.1.4. The definition of an investment covers all the financial assets of a local authority as well as other non-financial assets that the organisation holds primarily or partially to generate a profit; for example, investment property portfolios.
- 3.1.5. The Prudential Code requires authorities to look at capital expenditure and investment plans in the light of overall organisational strategy and resources and ensure that decisions are made with sufficient regard to the long-term financing implications and potential risks to the authority.
- 3.1.6. The Capital Strategy is a key document for the Council and forms part of the authority's integrated revenue, capital, and balance sheet planning. It provides

a high-level overview of how capital expenditure; capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of services. It also provides an overview of how associated risk is managed and the implications for future financial sustainability. It includes an overview of the governance processes for developing proposals, approval, and monitoring of capital expenditure.

- 3.1.7. The Capital Strategy specifically excludes investments that are entered into under Treasury Management powers; these are covered in the Treasury Management Strategy. The Treasury Management Strategy also includes the policy for borrowing to finance capital expenditure.

General Fund Investment Strategy

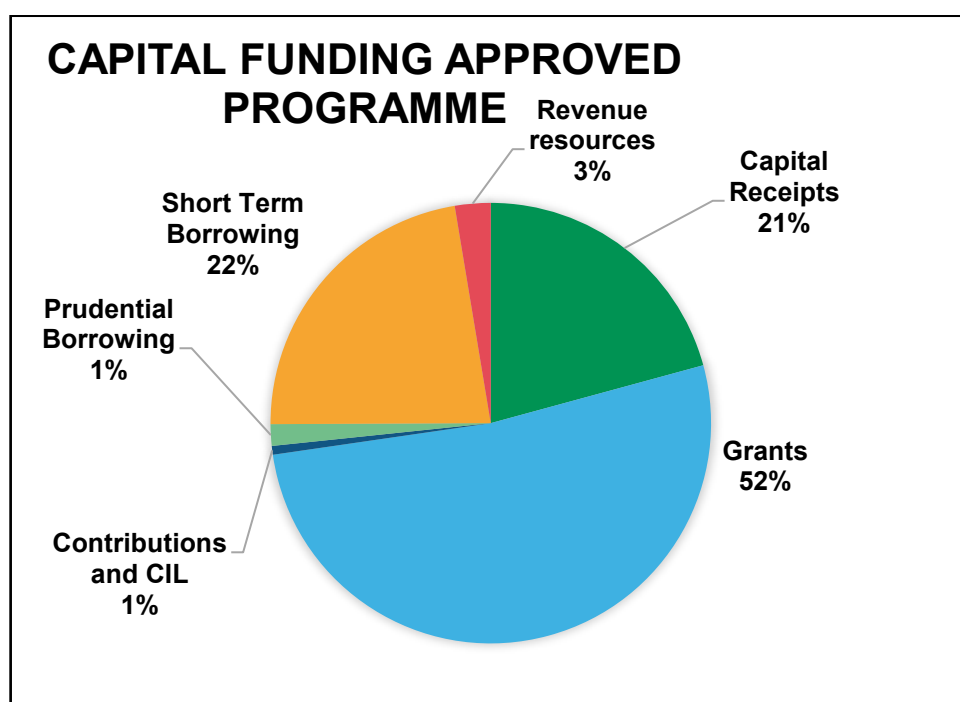
- 3.2.1 For a number of years capital spend has been significantly prioritised due to the limited availability of capital receipts and the Council's ability to afford borrowing costs. Accordingly, the Council has applied a 'fix on fail' approach to assets with no significant asset improvements being funded, with the exception of those supported through external funding or partially through external funding. This approach cannot be sustained in the medium to long term as it will lead to a gradual degradation of the Council's assets with reactive works only being undertaken to keep sites wind and watertight. Sustaining such an approach in the medium term will inevitably lead to close of buildings even before consideration is given to the legal requirements in terms of Energy Performance Certificate (EPC's) and other legal and climate change requirements.
- 3.2.2 To address the issues above, The General Fund Capital Strategy Overview - Priorities versus Funding Requirement 2023/24-2029/30 report to Executive 15 November 2023 set out the Council's key capital regeneration and community asset ambitions and key land and asset disposals, to determine a funding strategy to meet corporate objectives and address the issues outlined above.
- 3.2.3 The following priority schemes / activities required a funding strategy:
- Regeneration SG1- Public Sector Hub, Leisure Centre, and Theatre
 - Climate Change - green fleet, buildings (operational, community and commercial)
 - Towns fund programme where match funding is required
 - Operational need investment in Community Assets
 - Response to Legislative changes e.g. waste and recycling
 - Protection of key income streams to ensure the financial resilience of the General Fund
- 3.2.4 The high-level assessment in the November 2023 report of the potential value of capital receipts that could be realised by SBC is £44Million which is significantly less than the cost of investment needed of £127Million. This means that even if all approved receipts were delivered there will still be a requirement to find alternative funding strategies or third-party funding to meet the gap. The total high level investment requirement and total receipt realisation are currently

excluded from the Capital Strategy but will come forward in future reiterations of the programme as projects and funding are approved.

3.2.5 The current limited funding available compared to the identified current need means (prior to funding recommended in the Final 2026/27 General Fund budget) that in the main priority schemes will need to provide a significant element of self-funding through providing land development opportunities and the bids included for approval are in the main to maintain operational efficiency.

3.2.6 The current years capital programme (approved February 2025 and as subsequently amended through the quarterly monitoring and supplementary reports), is fully funded, and shown in the chart below which reflects the quarter two monitoring report to the November 2025 Cabinet.

- Grants includes £19.2Million Towns Fund Grant from an overall allocation of £37.5Million which is fully allocated to specific regeneration projects. Funding is received in stages as relevant projects proceed.
- Short term borrowing is used to bridge funding gaps and is generally “repaid” from capital receipts in the following years.
- Prudential Borrowing remains an option to fund capital schemes. Due to the on-going net cost to the General Fund, any such proposal requires a business case to be completed to determine affordability and benefit to the Council. This approach may be used to fund income generating schemes which support the Councils Priorities.



3.3 Budget and Policy Framework

- 3.3.1 The process for approving capital budgets is set out in the Budget and Policy Framework in the Constitution. This includes a consultation period, and the timescale required to implement this is outlined below:

Table 1 Date	Meeting	Report
Jan-26	Cabinet	Draft 2025/26 – 2029/30 Capital Strategy (GF)
	Overview and Scrutiny	Draft 2025/26 – 2029/30 Capital Strategy (GF)
Feb-26	Cabinet	Final 2025/26 – 2029/30 Capital Strategy (GF)
	Overview and Scrutiny	Final 2025/26 – 2029/30 Capital Strategy (GF)
Feb-26	Special Council	Final 2025/26 – 2029/30 Capital Strategy (GF)

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1 Capital Programme – General Fund

- 4.1.1. The financial pressures as set out section three of this report resulted in only the most urgent bids or those supporting the delivery of a top priority being included in the list of capital growth for consideration by members.
- 4.1.2. Budgets in the Capital Strategy are reviewed quarterly to ensure that they remain relevant and deliverable. No significant changes to the phasing of the existing Capital Strategy presented to members in the Draft Capital Strategy 2025/26-2029/30 report are expected at the time of drafting this report.

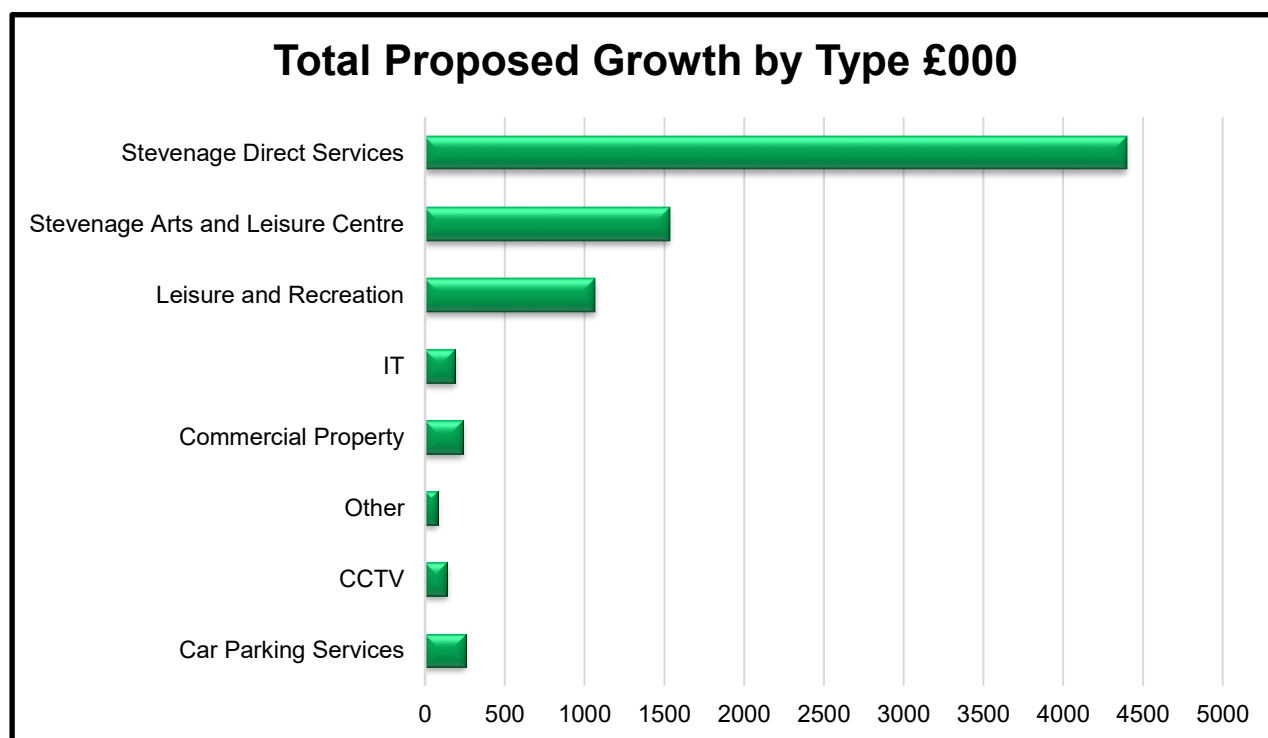
4.2. Proposed Capital Bids from 2026/27

The proposed capital growth bids received and recommended for inclusion in the Capital Strategy (reviewed by Council's Financial Security Group (CFSG)) and as prioritised by the Council's Senior Leadership (SLT), are summarised in the table below and are detailed in Appendix A. These bids totalled £7Million for 2026/27, 2027/28 and 2028/29. Late, fully funded bids added after the consultation amounted to £910k (see section 4.2.7). The revised total bid value is £7.9Million.

- 4.2.1. The table below shows the proposed growth by priority and the proposed funding. the detail of the individual bids are summarised in Appendix A.

Table 2 Proposed General Fund Growth 2026/27 – 2028/29 £000					
		26/27	27/28	28/29	Total
Priority 1	Financial Return	135	1,010	0	1,145
Priority 3	Mandatory requirements (including Health & Safety)	60	525	25	610
Priority 4	Schemes to maintain operational efficiency	3,705	783	1,009	5,497
	Deferred works reserve	400	250	0	650
Total Proposed Capital Growth Bids		4,300	2,568	1,034	7,902
Funding Proposal					
General Capital Receipts		1,615	1,348	14	2,977
Revenue contributions		1,200	1,200	1,200	3,600
EPR Funding		1,185	0	0	1,185
CIL/BNG		260	0	0	260
Match Funding Contributions		40	20	20	80
Total Funding Available		4,300	2,568	1,234	8,102

4.2.2. The proposed growth can be split into eight types as illustrated in the graph below.



- 4.2.3. As a result of the positive impact on the Council of the Fair Funding review (Balancing the Budget - Cabinet November 2025 and the General Fund and Council Tax Setting 2026/27 – on this agenda), the Council has benefited from the revised system of government funding.
- 4.2.4. This has enabled a potential proposed significant increase in investment in the Councils' assets for 2026/27 and future years, which has not been possible for many years and if approved will help ensure the operational viability and future of a number of significant local assets for the town.
- 4.2.5. These investments include:
- £2.5Million for fleet replacements for waste and recycling collection and maintenance of the Council's parks and open spaces.
 - £535k for Stevenage Arts and Leisure Centre (SLAC) to improve customers and performers experience – new carpets, lighting, and sound systems
 - £1Million to re-purpose the sports hall at SALC – creating a new space able to host higher profile events.
 - £500k replacement of the track at Ridlins to ensure it retains county status.
 - £490k investment in new play equipment, shrub bed improvements, and other green space infrastructure
 - £225k for environmental improvements (CIL/BNG)
- 4.2.6. Included in the proposed bids is a £650k increase in the deferred works reserve budget for the period 2026/27 and 2027/28 to fund works arising from asset condition surveys and to add capacity to the capital program in case any deferred bids become urgent.
- 4.2.7. Total funding identified for future years capital growth amounted to £8.1Million. The proposed bids for consideration above amount to £7.9Million. The modest surplus funding identified could be used to fund bids that have not been put forward for approval and remain unfunded – see Appendix C, in addition further bids may also be required in the future arising from stock condition surveys.
- 4.2.8. **Changes since the Draft Capital Strategy Report**
- 4.2.9. Additional s106 contributions received in 2025/26 have now been allocated to the Stevenage Sports & Leisure Club project funding, allowing at this stage the balance of borrowing (£6Million) needed to be reduced by £580k.
- 4.2.10. Proposals for use of the 2026/27 EPR (Extended Producer Responsibility) funding included in the Council tax and General Fund report (elsewhere in this agenda), include the £500k funding for freighters, replacement bins and waste related infrastructure improvements amounting to an additional £685k. These have been added to the growth bids in Appendix A as fully funded (EPR) growth bids for 2026/27.
- 4.2.11. Proposed use of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) contributions of £255k (see section 4.6.2) have been added to the growth bids to enable deliver of projects aligned with the Council's Climate

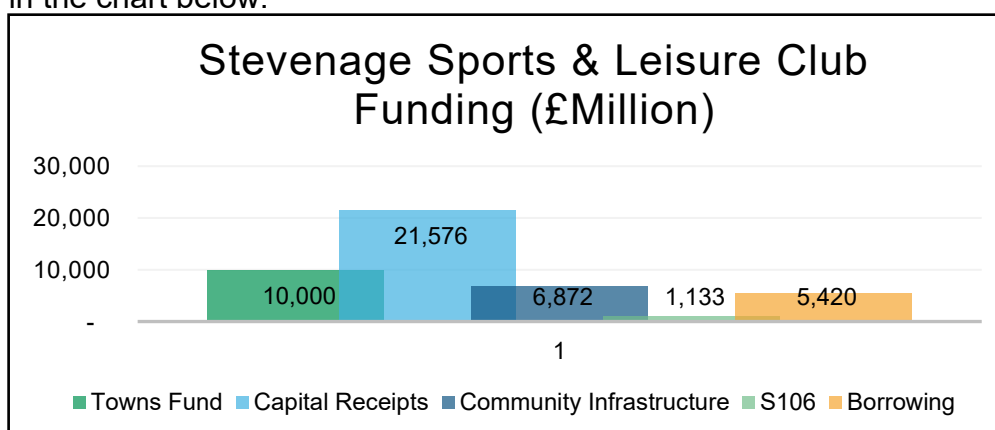
Action Plan, Green Space Strategy, Woodlands Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan.

4.3. Revised Summary Capital Programme 2025/26 – 2028/29 including Proposed Growth

- 4.3.1. The revised Capital Strategy for 2025/26 – 2029/30 totals £118Million which includes the proposed growth bids of £7.9Million. This is summarised by service in the table below, and in detail in Appendix B.

Table 3: Final Capital Programme including proposed growth by Service £000						
	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30	Total
Environment & Leisure	4,538	5,925	3,070	1,823	2,317	17,673
Land, Development & Neighbourhood Regeneration	2,900	17,179	2,750	2,750	0	25,579
Estates	1,132	2,046	0	0	0	3,178
Technology	205	138	79	79	0	501
Regeneration	20,097	21,215	24,714	2,434	0	68,460
Planning & Regulation	809	558	55	45	0	1,467
Deferred Works Reserve	149	400	250	0	0	799
Total GF Schemes¹	29,830	47,461	30,918	7,131	2,317	117,657

- 4.3.2. Stevenage Sports & Leisure Club was approved at the October 2023 Executive and is now included in the approved programme. This £45Million project is expected to be delivered by 2028/29. The project funding is set out in the chart below.



¹ Service names have been updated since the draft report to reflect the new 2026 Structure

- 4.3.3. The September MTFS report identified the revenue headroom to fund the Community and Retail assets at the Oval of £5.5Million and this is now included in the capital programme. Borrowing to fund the project of £5.5Million is spread over 2027/28 and 2028/29. The indicative annual revenue costs of the scheme include £137.5k MRP for repayment of the principal commencing in 2029/30 in the General Fund budget.
- 4.3.4. Further capital investment will be required over the medium to long term to support service delivery. Capital bids not deemed a high enough priority for funding at this stage have been listed in Appendix C to be considered for approval in future budget rounds, pending funding availability. These include “ongoing” capital investments (e.g., Fleet replacement). The funding of the medium to long term capital strategy is set out in the section 3.2, however the improved financial position of the General Fund as a result of Fair Funding has allowed for a potential £3.6Million in investment to 2029/30.

Table 4 Capital Funding (Revenue) £000					
	26/27	27/28	28/29	2029/30	Total
Additional funding for capital	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,000	4,600
Growth Bids not funded	175	622	141	670	1,608

- 4.3.5. The Deferred Works Reserve, after the inclusion of growth above will have a total maximum budget of £799K by 2027/28. This budget is for any health & safety emergency works that may arise after the budgets are agreed at Council in February, and for works arising as a result of condition surveys including at BTC (£150k) and for other property assets (£250k 2027/28).

4.4. Capital Resources for the Revised General Fund Capital Strategy, including proposed Growth

4.4.1. The projected resources used to fund the Capital Strategy are summarised in the table below.

Table 5: Revised Capital Programme Resourcing including Proposed Growth £000							
	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30	Total (£000)	Total (%)
Capital Receipts	5,463	8,910	19,539	1,855	900	36,667	32
Grants and other contributions	13,580	20,838	603	28	5	35,054	30
RCCO and Revenue Reserves	1,125	2,691	1,273	1,269	31	6,389	5
Capital Reserve	116	338	105	134	0	693	<1
CIL/EPR	109	5,182	1,138	909	0	7,338	6
Borrowing	9,437	9,502	8,260	2,936	1,381	31,516	27
TOTAL	29,830	47,4611	30,918	7,131	2,317	117,657	100

4.4.2. The total borrowing recommended of £32Million includes £16Million of short term borrowing for SG1 Joint Venture, garage improvements, and Housing Development schemes the latter scheduled to be repaid by 2027/28 using capital receipts profiled to be received by that year. The remaining balance includes £5.4Million for the new leisure centre, £5.5Million for the Oval commercial and retail development, further Garage Improvements and Housing Development schemes including through the Wholly Owned Company (WOC). The borrowing is repaid through a minimum revenue contribution (MRP) from the General Fund (see also section 4.7).

4.4.3. The use of capital receipts is dependent on delivery of the disposal sites to the market, assuming that all the General Fund Growth Bids in Appendix A are approved. Ring-fenced Town Centre Transformation and SG1 receipts are restricted.

4.4.4. The use of revenue and revenue reserve in the Strategy totals £6.4Million, includes -

- £3.6Million proposed use of General Fund reserves for growth
- £1,185K of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) funding for two freighters, bin replacements, and additional Flat block recycling
- £719K revenue grant – for flat block recycling
- Garage improvement plans – revenue contributions £415k
- Leisure contributions and reserves £260k

4.5. Capital Receipts Review Update

- 4.5.1. The current position is detailed below now includes ring fenced capital receipts allocated to part fund the leisure centre (£22Million) across 2027-2029.
- 4.5.2. Anticipated receipts from Kenilworth phase II have now been slipped a year into 2027/28 (£6Million). This will delay the associated re-financing of internal general fund borrowing by a year.
- 4.5.3. Garage sales of £1.35Million forecast to be received from 2027/28 to 2028/29 have been revised down to £1.1Million with only £200k expected in 2027/28 rather than the original £700k forecast when the Garage improvement programme was approved. Receipts of £300k per annum from 2028/29 to 2030/31 are also uncertain. This change has resulted in planned borrowing for the scheme of £3.2Million being brought forward to 2026/27 resulting in higher borrowing costs.
- 4.5.4. Forecasts are based on best information available at the time the report is written.

Table 6: Capital Receipts £000	Previous Forecast	Revised Forecast	Variance
Capital Receipts (GF)			
Year 2025/26 Forecast	2,184	2,058	(126)
Year 2026/27 Forecast	9,493	3,560	(5,933)
Year 2027/28 Forecast	19,276	36,314	17,038
Year 2028/29 Forecast	-	11,568	11,568
Total Capital Receipts (GF)	30,953	53,500	22,547

4.6. Community Infrastructure, Biodiversity Net Gain and S106 Update

- 4.6.1. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), introduced under the Planning Act 2008 and implemented by the Council in April 2020, remains a vital funding mechanism for delivering both strategic and neighbourhood priorities. To date, £5Million of Strategic CIL has been committed to the Sports and Leisure Hub and, where applicable, the Public Sector Hub. In addition, Neighbourhood CIL contributions of £97k per annum have supported the Community Climate Change budget, enabling wards to deliver local climate initiatives.
- 4.6.2. It is proposed that £225k of CIL funding, supplemented by £30k from Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) contributions (£112.5k in 2025/26 and £142.5k in 2026/27) be allocated to deliver projects aligned with the Council's Climate Action Plan, Green Space Strategy, Woodlands Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan. These initiatives will deliver tangible benefits, including extensive tree planting, biodiversity enhancements, improved health and wellbeing

outcomes, and enhancements of the public realm, reinforcing Stevenage's commitment to creating greener, healthier, and more inclusive spaces.

- 4.6.3. The current unallocated balance stands at £663k, alongside £68k in non-ringfenced BNG contributions secured prior to mandatory implementation. Officers will continue to work closely with Members to prioritise and progress future investments.
- 4.6.4. The council holds £1.725Million in Section 106 (S106) contributions as at 22 December 2025. Of these contributions, £1.2Million is already accounted for in the Capital programme (£553K contributing to the funding of Sports and Leisure Hub (in addition to CIL above), £211k for cycling infrastructure and £123k funding Play Area Improvements). A further £516k is earmarked for sports including at the new country park or used to support the Leisure Hub. The remaining ring fenced contributions include those for affordable housing £69k and biodiversity projects £186k. In many cases the planning legal agreements require monies to be allocated towards a specific project in a specific location. Even where the Council has more flexibility it will need to ensure any eventual projects comply with the s106 conditions of use.

4.7. Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)

- 4.7.1. MRP is applied where the council has to set aside a revenue allocation for provision of debt repayments (borrowing in the capital programme). MRP replaces other capital charges (e.g., depreciation) in the statement of accounts and has an impact on the council's bottom line. MRP will increase and decrease throughout the programme and is sensitive to both expenditure and funding changes. The council will continue to balance the use of capital receipts, internal borrowing, and external borrowing to ensure the most efficient use of resources, including the need to fund MRP.
- 4.7.2. The other main risks to the capital programme are:
- Potential for scheme overspends.
 - Potential for delay in realising capital receipts noting that £5.6Million of land/asset sales are forecast to be achieved in 2025/26 and 2026/27.
 - The deferred works budget may not be sufficient to fund any schemes not currently funded in the Strategy due to the ongoing and aforementioned fix-on-fail policy approach.
 - Potential for money spent as capital on Towns Fund projects to revert to a future revenue liability if projects do not progress to physical completion, e.g., only feasibility and early design are completed.
 - Cost volatility and increased client risk in construction projects due to the impact of cost of living, which has resulted in supply chain pressures and significant price increases across the construction sector.

4.8. Other capital investment and Finance Lease

- 4.8.1. The Council purchased several properties in the town centre to enable it to meet its SG1 regeneration aims. These properties were purchased in part

using LEP funding. These properties have been purchased for regeneration purposes and therefore do not fall under the Property Investment Strategy. Prior to making these strategic acquisitions full risk assessments were undertaken to ensure the cost of carrying these assets in the short to medium term could be met by the Council.

- 4.8.2. The 2026/27 General Fund Budget Strategy includes the Council's approach to set aside money to repay the LEP loan. An initial £500k will be set aside in 2026/27 with further set asides planned for future years. This strategy can be found elsewhere in the agenda.
- 4.8.3. The Council undertook a long-term finance lease for a circa £50Million mixed development scheme on Queensway in the town centre. This is a lease arrangement and falls outside the scope of capital investment. Prior to the decision to proceed being made a risk assessment was undertaken and presented to Members. Key Officers were given training on their roles and responsibilities for the new governance arrangements associated with the Limited Liability Partnership. Performance of this asset is reported to members as part of the Group companies updates to cabinet.
- 4.8.4. External legal, financial, and commercial advice is procured to ensure the validity and viability of business cases presented to Members.

4.9. De Minimis Level for Capital Expenditure 2025/26

- 4.9.1. No change to the de-minimis expenditure limit of £10,000 per scheme is being proposed this year.

4.10. Contingency Allowance

- 4.10.1. The contingency allowance for 2025/26 is £250,000. The contingency proposed for 2026/27 remains at £250,000, for schemes requiring funding from existing capital resources. A limit of £250,000 is also set for schemes for each fund that have new resources or match funded resources identified in addition to those contained within this report. This limit applies individually to both the General Fund and the HRA. This contingency sum constitutes an upper limit on both funds within which the Cabinet can approve supplementary estimates, rather than forming part of the Council's Budget Requirement for the year.
- 4.10.2. Separate to the contingency allowance, is the delegation to Cabinet or Portfolio Lead/Leader of the Council to approve increases to the capital programme for grant funded projects, when external funding sources have been secured. Officers propose that this contingency allowance remains at £5Million where a scheme is fully funded from third party contribution/grant.

4.11. Consultation

Council Financial Security Group (CFSG) 6 & 13 January 2026

- 4.11.1. Following a review of all growth bids by Senior Leadership Team (SLT), a priority list was presented to CFSG a cross party Member group on 6th January 2026 with the 27 new proposed Growth Bids to be funded for 2026/27, these are summarised in Appendix A. The scoring rationale applied to these budgets was "do not support" 0 point, "support but low priority" 1 point and support with high priority" 3 points.

4.11.2. The seven members of CFSG scored the schemes which resulted in range of between 12 and 21.

Table 7 Consultation results – funded bids (6 January 2026)		
Number of schemes	Total Points per scheme (max 7*3 = 21)	Support % (Actual points v max points)
11	21	100
7	17	81
6	19	90
1	16	76
1	13	62
1	12	57
27	98	

4.11.3. As can be seen from the table above all the proposed schemes received a score of above 50% and were supported by a majority of members.

4.11.4. During the meeting, members sought some clarifications. Where these were not resolved during the meeting, the Director for Finance circulated information afterwards and was discussed during the meeting on the 13th of January 2026. These clarifications were:

- **Upgrade/Replacement Programme for CCTV Cameras across Stevenage (£70k in 26/27, £40k in 27/28 and £30k in 28/29, total £140k), Question: Do the replacement CCTV cameras include those for tower blocks?** Yes - tower blocks are covered under this budget for replacement of existing equipment as they come to their end of life.
- **The parking restrictions £75k – Question: what are the details?** An analysis of projects planned was circulated to members for information, including schemes in Bedwell Shephall and the Old Town– there were no follow up queries received.
- **Green Space Infrastructure £150k – Question: what are the details?** An explanation of works was circulated to members for information such as enable repairs and improvements to footpaths, roads, access, etc, within green spaces to reduce costs examples given were:
 - Continued replacement of the worn footboards around the pond edge in the Town Centre Gardens

- Continued resurfacing of Fairlands Main Car Park.
- Thermoplastic re-marking of car parks where necessary
- Installation of new bollards/metal hoops/gates, etc., in parks and open spaces to deter/limit vehicle access
- Repair/replacement of park/green space signage
- Path resurfacing works

4.11.5. Members also asked about the investment in the theatre and SALC once the new Leisure Hub is built (£1Million 2027/28), Members were advised that although there are plans to have a new Theatre as part of the Station gateway agreement this was likely to be 10-15 years in the future. In addition, the Council would be responsible for mothballing parts of the building under the existing leisure contract, and the investment would be to expand the size and offer in the building for shows, but that any bid/business case once completed could be reviewed by CSFG, but was based on including the following:

- To have a fixed venue, which can operate up to seven days per week in the main hall on a permanent basis with seating replaced with more comfortable seats.
- The Bowls Hall will be used as an events venue, the changing rooms converted to a toilet facility commiserate with a large capacity audience.
- The ground floor gym area could be converted to a dedicated bar for main hall shows and events and the squash courts converted to performers dressing rooms.

4.11.6 The lowest scoring bid, the sign at Fairlands raised a number of queries regarding the cost, the officer responsible stated that the sign would be:

- V shaped each side of the V mirrored so it can be seen by vehicles travelling in each direction, the sign will be modular ladder type (with park features listed on the ladder)
- any new features changes can be adapted easily making the sign future proof the sign will be constructed of metal and relocated to a more prominent position subject to planning approval
- The sign will display the parks features for example, splash park, activity centre, café, cycle hub to name a few.

4.11.6. CFSG Members also asked about the 'not recommended' bids and were in a subsequent meeting asked to score the nine bids in Appendix C which are currently unfunded. The scoring rational was the same as for the bids above. This consultation took place on 13 January 2026, and the results are in the table below. Of the seven original members, six attended and voted, resulting

in no majority vote for those bids and remain a lower priority and therefore not funded.

Table 8 Consultation results – un-funded bids (13 January 2026)		
Number of schemes	Total Points per scheme (max 7*3 = 21)	Support % (Actual points v max points)
1	5	28
4	3	17
1	4	22
2	2	11
1	0	0
9	14	

- 4.11.7. Overview and Scrutiny met on the 20 January 2026 to consider the Draft Capital Strategy as part of the budget and policy framework. The Director of Finance gave an overview of the Strategy setting out the size of the programme and the scrutiny by CSFG and the resultant scoring results.
- 4.11.8. A question was asked about why there was no growth bid for the lighting in Fairlands park, to which the Strategic Director (S151) stated the results of the bat survey needed to be considered, followed by a lighting survey and that potential solutions could range from a modest £7,000 to £850,000, which is difficult to budget for and the relative prioritisation of other bids. The Strategic Director stated that there was a deferred works reserve and Capital Reserve that can be utilised if additional works arise in the year.
- 4.11.9. Cabinet is requested to consider the views of CFSG and Overview and Scrutiny and agree to approve all 27 fully funded schemes. These have all been included within the proposed capital programme for 2026/27 (in Appendix B).

5. IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Financial Implications

- 5.1.1. This report is financial in nature and consequently financial implications are included in the above.

5.2. Legal Implications

5.2.1. Local Government Reorganisation

Section 24 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 provides the Secretary of State with powers to control financial decisions made by local authorities that are due to be abolished or reorganised under a structural changes order. Under this provision, the Secretary of State may

issue a direction that prevents a relevant authority from doing any of the following without written consents: -

- Disposing of land where the consideration exceeds £100,000
- Entering into any capital contract under which the consideration payable to the relevant authority exceeds £1,000,000 or which includes a term allowing the consideration to be varied
- Using financial reserves in budget calculations under the Local Government Finance Act 1972

The direction can specify that the consent must be obtained from the Secretary of State or a designated person of an authority (e.g. a shadow executive). The timing of the direction will be determined by the Secretary of State but will usually be linked to the issuing of the structural change order, the indicative timeframe of which for Hertfordshire is autumn 2026.

- 5.2.2. The legal implications for each individual scheme within the capital programme will be considered when approval is sought for that scheme. Each scheme within the capital programme will be approved in accordance with the council's constitution.

5.3. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 5.3.1. None specifically in relation to this report.

5.4. Risk Implications

- 5.4.1. The significant risks associated with the capital strategy are inherent within this report.
- 5.4.2. There is a risk that the value of land sales is not realised due to the impact of the cost-of-living crisis reducing demand and prices lower than anticipated as a result. In order to mitigate the impact of this, revenue underspends of up to £500k may be made available to support capital resource in the short term.
- 5.4.3. The Council manages this risk by reviewing and updating the Strategy quarterly, including resources where a sale is likely to complete. This will enable action to be taken where a receipt looks doubtful.
- 5.4.4. A significant risk exists that works deferred due to lack of resources and materials. A reasonable assessment has been made in the prioritisation process to try to keep this risk to a minimum.
- 5.4.5. The impact on the Council's medium - long term capital strategy as a result of the governments English Devolution White Paper (16 December 2024) is currently unknown. Measures include plans for new powers for mayors across strategic planning – giving them the ability to guide infrastructure and development projects across areas, housing, transport, and skills. Impacts if any, will be included in future years capital strategy documents.

5.5. Climate Change Implications

- 5.5.1. In their current form the Council's buildings do not currently support the climate change ambitions in terms of energy efficiency or divestment of use of fossil fuels.
- 5.5.2. However, there is an opportunity through the local asset review programme to build in design principles to improved / future assets in terms of energy efficiency and sustainable energy sources. This should be a core principle of any future designs arising from the local asset reviews. There would be a further benefit of reduced energy costs.
- 5.5.3. The climate change agenda is far wider than the buildings the Council uses. For example, the Council is also examining the vehicle fleet and consideration will be given to reducing its carbon impact
- 5.5.4. In addition to existing assets, new buildings being planned and delivered as part of the regeneration of Stevenage – e.g., the Hub and new Leisure Centre will be designed and equipped to meet modern standards.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- BD1 Quarter 2 monitoring report (Cabinet, December 2025)
- BD2 GF MTFS (2025/26-2029/30) (Cabinet, September 2025)
- BD3 General Fund Capital Strategy Overview – Priorities Versus Funding Requirement 2023/24-2029/30 (November 2023 Executive)
- BD4 Balancing the Budget 2026/27 (Cabinet November 2025)

Appendices

- A General Fund Capital Bids for consideration
- B General Fund Capital Strategy
- C Non-priority Capital Bids for note – unfunded

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
GF CAPITAL - PRIORITY BASED BUDGETING 2026/27 CAPITAL GROWTH BIDS (£000)

Ref No	Service	Priority	Description of Growth Proposal	Capital in 2026/27	Capital in 2027/28	Capital in 2028/29
1	Housing & Neighbourhoods	4	Upgrade / Replacement program for CCTV cameras across Stevenage	70,000	40,000	30,000
	Total Housing and Neighbourhoods			70,000	40,000	30,000
2	Estates	3	St Georges Way MSCP - Installation of lightning protection system	35,000	-	-
3	Estates	4	Homestart, 4-5 Bedwell Park. Replacement flat roof.	55,000	-	-
4	Estates	4	Stock Condition survey	150,000	-	-
	Total Estates			240,000	-	-
5	Planning & Regulatory	3	Parking Restriction Schemes	25,000	25,000	25,000
6	Planning & Regulatory	1	Replacing parking machines	80,000	10,000	-
7	Planning & Regulatory	4	Christmas Decorations Phased Replacement	80,000	-	-
8	Planning & Regulatory	4	Power bollards for Town Square	30,000	-	-
9	Planning & Regulatory	4	Parking Hardstandings	20,000	20,000	20,000
9b	Planning & Regulatory	4	Phase 1 CIL	225,000		
	Total Planning & Regulatory			460,000	55,000	45,000
10	ICT	4	Tablets, Monitors, Laptop Replacement	8,460	78,960	78,960
11	ICT	4	Mobile Phone	22,560	-	-
	Total ICT			31,020	78,960	78,960
12	SDS and Leisure	3	Ridlins Athletics - track needs replacing or lose County status	-	500,000	-
13	SDS and Leisure	4	Carpet replacement -Theatre	100,000	-	-
14	SDS and Leisure	4	Phase 2 & 3 Theatre Stage lighting	290,000	-	-
15	SDS and Leisure	1	Re Purpose Stevenage Arts & Leisure Centre post opening of new centre	-	1,000,000	-
16	SDS and Leisure	4	Sound system - Theatre	-	-	145,000
17	SDS and Leisure	4	Fleet Replacement	1,195,000	230,000	393,000
18	SDS and Leisure	4	Plant Replacement	379,000	314,000	292,000
19a	SDS and Leisure	4	Bin Replacement - Town Centre	85,000	-	-
19b	SDS and Leisure	4	180lt Bin Replacement	175,000		
19c	SDS and Leisure	4	Flat Block Improvements (recycling)	460,000		
20	SDS and Leisure	4	Fairlands Valley Park - new main sign	20,000	-	-
21	SDS and Leisure	1	Floodlights for Tennis Courts at Shephalbury Park	55,000	-	-
22	SDS and Leisure	4	Refurbishment of play equipment	140,000	-	-
23	SDS and Leisure	4	Shrub Bed Removal Programme	150,000	50,000	-
24	SDS and Leisure	4	Green Space Infrastructure	50,000	50,000	50,000

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
GF CAPITAL - PRIORITY BASED BUDGETING 2026/27 CAPITAL GROWTH BIDS (£000)

Ref No	Service	Priority	Description of Growth Proposal	Capital in 2026/27	Capital in 2027/28	Capital in 2028/29
	Total SDS and Leisure			3,099,000	2,144,000	880,000

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

GF CAPITAL - PRIORITY BASED BUDGETING 2026/27 CAPITAL GROWTH BIDS (£000)

Ref No	Service	Priority	Description of Growth Proposal	Capital in 2026/27	Capital in 2027/28	Capital in 2028/29
25	Deferred Works Reserve		Business Technology Centre	150,000	-	-
26	Deferred Works Reserve		Property works arising from Stock Condition Survey	250,000	-	-
27	Deferred Works Reserve		Property works arising from Stock Condition Survey	-	250,000	-
	Total Deferred Works Reserve			400,000	250,000	-
	Total New Capital Projects			4,300,020	2,567,960	1,033,960

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GENERAL FUND CAPITAL STRATEGY

Cost Centre	Scheme	2025/26				2026/27			2027/28			2028/29	2029/30
		Actual Costs	Draft Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy	Variance	Draft Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy	Variance	Draft Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy	Variance	Final Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Page 107	General Fund - Schemes												
	Environment & Leisure	2,940,942	4,538,054	4,538,054	0	5,240,361	5,925,361	685,000	3,070,000	3,070,000	0	1,823,000	2,317,000
	Land, Development & Neighbourhood Regeneration	173,331	2,900,000	2,900,000	0	17,178,819	17,178,819	0	2,750,000	2,750,000	0	2,750,000	0
	Estates	272,652	1,131,609	1,131,609	0	2,046,066	2,046,066	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Technology	81,539	205,498	205,498	0	138,518	138,518	0	78,960	78,960	0	78,960	0
	Regeneration	14,342,314	20,097,388	20,097,388	0	21,214,521	21,214,520	(0)	24,713,593	24,713,593	0	2,434,295	0
	Planning & Regulation	310,445	809,095	809,095	0	332,500	557,500	225,000	55,000	55,000	0	45,000	0
	Deferred Works Reserve	0	149,073	149,073	0	400,000	400,000	0	250,000	250,000	0	0	0
	Total Schemes	18,121,222	29,830,717	29,830,717	0	46,550,785	47,460,784	910,000	30,917,553	30,917,553	0	7,131,255	2,317,000
	General Fund -Resources												
	BG902 Capital Receipts		4,382,860	4,382,860	0	5,604,926	5,604,926	(0)	1,942,960	1,942,960	0	330,000	900,000
	SG1 Receipts		823,000	823,000	0			0	0	0	0	0	0
	BG905 Ringfenced receipts		257,467	257,467	0	3,593,625	3,593,625	0	17,595,922	17,595,922	0	1,524,867	0
	BG904 Towns Fund		10,717,158	9,584,302	(1,132,856)	12,207,653	12,760,508	552,856	0	580,000	580,000		0
	BG904 Other Grants and other contributions		2,469,012	2,469,012	0	7,734,000	7,734,000	0	23,000	23,000	0	28,000	5,000
	BG862 S106		339,563	1,472,418	1,132,856	606,856	84,000	(522,856)	0	0	0	0	0
	BG904 Contractors Deposits		54,644	54,644	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	BG936 Priorities – Strategic CIL		0	0	0	4,824,422	4,824,422	0	1,137,671	1,137,671	0	909,429	0
	BG937 Local – Neighbourhood CIL		109,375	109,375	0	132,500	327,500	195,000	0	0	0	0	0
	BG903 Capital Reserve (Housing Receipts)		116,014	116,014	0	263,019	263,019	0	0	0	0	0	0
	RCCO		944,819	944,819	0	1,464,968	2,149,968	685,000	1,273,082	1,273,082	0	1,268,592	31,143
	Revenue Reserves		180,273	180,273	0	41,503	41,503	0	0	0	0	0	0
	BG916 Capital Reserve (Revenue Savings)		0	0	0	75,281	75,281	0	105,000	105,000	0	133,960	0
	EPR					500,000	500,000	0			0		
	Prudential Borrowing Approved		97,000	97,000	0	3,585,001	3,585,001	0	8,839,918	8,259,918	(580,000)	2,936,408	1,380,857
	Short Term borrowing and funded from private sale		9,339,533	9,339,533	0	5,917,031	5,917,031	0	0	0	0	0	
	Total Resources (General Fund)		29,830,717	29,830,717	0	46,550,785	47,460,785	910,000	30,917,553	30,917,553	0	7,131,255	2,317,000

GENERAL FUND CAPITAL STRATEGY

Cost Centre	Scheme	2025/26				2026/27			2027/28			2028/29	2029/30
		Actual Costs	Draft Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy	Variance	Draft Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy	Variance	Draft Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy	Variance	Final Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
	<u>Environment & Leisure</u>												
	<u>Parks & Open Spaces</u>												
KC218	Hertford Road Play Area (S106 Funded)	0	0	0	0	25,000	25,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC256	Valley School Playzone (s106)	0	73,000	73,000	0	29,000	29,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE494	Green Space Access Infrastructure	0	52,024	52,024	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE542	Flat block waste management infrastructure	21,937	18,730	18,730	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE543	Shrub bed programme	5,492	46,779	46,779	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE911	Play Area Improvement Programme	0	96,602	96,602	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE916	Peartree skate park	64,791	96,663	96,663	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KG002	Garages (GIP)	103,064	29,870	29,870	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KG039	Garages (GIP) 10 year plan (£250k/annum)	180,563	125,000	125,000	0	383,000	383,000	0	266,000	266,000	0	274,000	282,000
KG040	Garages asbestos roof capital works	0	0	0	0	1,186,000	1,186,000	0	620,000	620,000	0	639,000	2,035,000
	<u>Community & Neighbourhoods</u>												
KC232	SALC and the Swim Centre Urgent and H&S Works includes roof	31,502	53,181	53,181	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC242	SLL Leisure management - end of contract capital provision	10,555	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC237	Fire stopping works at SALC	0	177,819	177,819	0	120,000	120,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC238	Lift replacement at SALC	153,124	177,000	177,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC252	Lift procurement at SALC	1,850	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC240	Replacement Camera programme	6,072	15,052	15,052	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC052	Shephalbury Park	3,950	10,600	10,600	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE917	Ridlins Athletics Facility (boilers)	11,366	80,000	80,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE245	Toilets at TVP	0	31,887	31,887	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE246	Aqua Park - Rubber crumb surface replacement	0	0	0	0	35,000	35,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE247	Lighting of clock tower - permanent install	60,000	60,000	60,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE253	Sailing Centre	2,900	5,052	5,052	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE218	Lighting Desk SALC - Equipmt & Tools	8,588	215,000	215,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE606	Operational Plant	110,229	105,000	105,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE604	CCTV Upgrade	302,157	159,900	159,900	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE611	New pumps/aerators to FVP lakes	0	12,000	12,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC903	Golf course works	5,948	60,000	60,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Padel Courts	0	10,000	10,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC210	Riddlins Track Works	35,312	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Growth	Growth bids	0	0	0	0	465,000	465,000	0	1,500,000	1,500,000	0	145,000	0
Growth	Growth bids					70,000	70,000	0	40,000	40,000	0	30,000	0
	<u>Vehicles,Plant,Equipment</u>												
Various	Vehicle/Plant replacement Programme	1,815,900	2,060,295	2,060,295	0	953,204	953,204	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE925	Repair closed church wall St Nicholas church	600	600	600	0	25,157	25,157	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE609	Fuel pumps at Cavendish Road fuel station.	0	30,000	30,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE609	Replacement work Cavendish Road fuel station - manhole covers	0	17,000	17,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE952	Flat block recycling (EPR & grant funded)	5,042	719,000	719,000	0	0	460,000	460,000	0	0	0	0	0
New	Replacement Bins (EPR) - Household and Public	0	0		0	0	225,000	225,000	0	0	0	0	0
Growth	Growth Bids	0	0	0	0	1,609,000	1,609,000	0	544,000	544,000	0	685,000	0
Growth	Growth Bids	0	0	0	0	340,000	340,000	0	100,000	100,000	0	50,000	0
	<u>Total Environment & Leisure</u>	2,940,942	4,538,054	4,538,054	0	5,240,361	5,925,361	685,000	3,070,000	3,070,000	0	1,823,000	2,317,000

GENERAL FUND CAPITAL STRATEGY

Cost Centre	Scheme	2025/26				2026/27			2027/28			2028/29	2029/30
		Actual Costs	Draft Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy	Variance	Draft Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy	Variance	Draft Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy	Variance	Final Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
	<u>Land, Development & Neighbourhood Regeneration</u>												
KG035	Kenilworth - Community Centre	0	0	0	0	1,211,538	1,211,538	0	0	0	0	0	0
KG042	The Oval (Redevelopment)	0	1,400,000	1,400,000	0	7,600,000	7,600,000	0	2,750,000	2,750,000	0	2,750,000	0
KG036	Kenilworth - private sale (Malvern Close & Blocks A3&A6)	173,331	1,500,000	1,500,000	0	5,917,031	5,917,031	0	0	0	0	0	0
Various	Housing Development Schemes (Joint GF/HRA)	173,331	2,900,000	2,900,000	0	14,728,569	14,728,569	0	2,750,000	2,750,000	0	2,750,000	0
KG038	Marshgate Wholly Owned Housing Development Company (WOC)	0	0	0	0	2,450,250	2,450,250	0	0	0	0	0	0
	<u>Total Land, Development & Neighbourhood Regeneration</u>	173,331	2,900,000	2,900,000	0	17,178,819	17,178,819	0	2,750,000	2,750,000	0	2,750,000	0
	<u>Estates</u>												
KE527	Depots: Planned Preventative Works (reroof) - constuct roof over refuse bay	6,274	22,960	22,960	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE529	Community Centres Urgent and H&S Works	2,046	3,970	3,970	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE536	Multi Storey Car Park - Installation of emergency lighting	107,509	200,299	200,299	0	5,000	5,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE927	Thermal Image Cameras	0	2,109	2,109	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE928	Health and Safety Works – Cavendish Depot	11,513	29,862	29,862	0	670,024	670,024	0	0	0	0	0	0
KR110	Daneshill Accomodation improvements	13,752											
KR150	Vacant Premises	10,490	36,208	36,208	0	0	0	0				0	0
KR151	Daneshill: Urgent and H&S Works	3,709	48,951	48,951	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KR152	BTC 2019/20 Backlog H&S Works	3,123	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KR153	BTC Urgent and H&S Works	1,692	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KR154	BTC Planned Works (combined)	61,071	248,565	248,565	0	216,000	216,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
KR155	EPC Surveys	1,084	8,251	8,251	0	69,508	69,508	0	0	0	0	0	0
KR156	EPC remedials	0	0	0	0	209,710	209,710	0	0	0	0	0	0
KR182	EV Cavendish	0	300,000	300,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KR179	Daneshill House boilers	0	100,000	100,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KR180	Fry Road Nursery	0	0	0	0	80,000	80,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
KR181	All buildings across corporate estate	0	10,000	10,000	0	15,000	15,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
KR171	Burwell Road shops - Reroofing,	0	0	0	0	267,167	267,167	0	0	0	0	0	0
KR173	Commercial - shop units roof works	3,425	3,424	3,424	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KR174	Commercial properties - General refurbishment	20,784	10,535	10,535	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KR176	King George V Pavilion - Works to existing Fascia boards	20,461	20,461	20,461	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KR916	Commercial Properties Refurbishment (MRC Programme)	5,720	86,014	86,014	0	273,657	273,657	0	0	0	0	0	0
Growth	Growth Bids	0	0	0	0	240,000	240,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
	<u>Total Estates</u>	272,652	1,131,609	1,131,609	0	2,046,066	2,046,066	0	0	0	0	0	0

GENERAL FUND CAPITAL STRATEGY

Cost Centre	Scheme	2025/26				2026/27			2027/28			2028/29	2029/30
		Actual Costs	Draft Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy	Variance	Draft Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy	Variance	Draft Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy	Variance	Final Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
	Technology												
KS268	Infrastructure Investment	63,479	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KS320	Telephony Hardware Refresh 2425	0	0	0	0	75,638	75,638	0	0	0	0	0	0
KS322	Hardware Replacment Program	0	175,225	175,225	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KS324	SBC Idox Re-Tender, and Dell Memory (RAM) for Virtual desktop	0			0	31,860	31,860	0	0	0	0	0	0
Growth	Growth bids	0	0	0	0	31,020	31,020	0	78,960	78,960	0	78,960	0
	Total IT General	63,479	175,225	175,225	0	138,518	138,518	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Connected to Our Customer (CTOC)												
KS274	New CRM Technology	18,060	30,273	30,273	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total CTOC	18,060	30,273	30,273	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total Technology	81,539	205,498	205,498	0	138,518	138,518	0	78,960	78,960	0	78,960	0
	Regeneration												
KE506	Public Sector Hub	7,335	14,035	14,035	0	796,399	796,399	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Lease buy outs	0	0	0	0	379,750	379,750	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE947	SG1 Joint Venture	7,864,197	7,910,632	7,910,632	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE541	Railway MSCP	(35,980)			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE566	Stevenage Sports & Leisure Club (not TF Funded element)	0		1,132,856	1,132,856	7,830,719	7,277,863	(552,856)	24,713,593	24,133,593	(580,000)	2,434,295	0
KE251	Parkplace - works ahead of Indoor Market relocation (Boston House)	1,101,104	1,244,000	1,244,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Towns Fund:	0	0	0		0	0	0			0		
KE538	Towns Fund	34,110	(113,817)	(113,817)	0	(88,390)	(88,390)	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE560	Stevenage Enterprise Centre	(41,320)	23,142	23,142	0	1,820,583	1,820,583	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE561	Gunnels Wood Road Infrastructure	979,177	979,177	979,177	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE563	Marshgate Biotech	47,638	22,393	22,393	0	149,892	149,892	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE564	Stevenage Innovation & Technology Centre (SITEC)	235,326	1,140,982	1,140,982	0	1,648,793	1,648,793	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Old Indoor Market space - reconfiguration	0	2,000,000	2,000,000	0	0	0						
KE565	New Towns Heritage Centre	0	0	0	0	1,979,820	1,979,820	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE566	Stevenage Sports & Leisure Club	1,861,347	3,813,169	2,680,313	(1,132,856)	4,890,661	5,443,517	552,856	0	580,000	580,000	0	0
KE567	Cycling & Pedestrian Connectivity	885,975	1,500,000	1,500,000	0	502,304	502,304	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE568	Diversification of Retail & Garden Square	1,403,407	723,282	723,282	0	1,102,146	1,102,146	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE568	Diversification of Retail & Garden Square (Boston House)		840,392	840,392	0	201,844	201,844	0	0	0	0	0	0
Various	Towns Fund	5,405,659	10,928,721	9,795,865	(1,132,856)	12,207,653	12,760,508	552,856	0	580,000	580,000	0	0
	Total Regeneration	14,342,314	20,097,388	20,097,388	0	21,214,521	21,214,520	(0)	24,713,593	24,713,593	0	2,434,295	0

GENERAL FUND CAPITAL STRATEGY

Cost Centre	Scheme	2025/26				2026/27			2027/28			2028/29	2029/30
		Actual Costs	Draft Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy	Variance	Draft Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy	Variance	Draft Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy	Variance	Final Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
	<u>Planning & Regulation</u>												
KC244	Community Climate Change Fund	13,938	109,375	109,375	0	97,500	97,500	0	0	0	0	0	0
Growth	Phase 1 CIL (CIL, BNG)						225,000	225,000					
KC916	Street Scene UKSPF	10,169	68,645	68,645	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC917	St Georges MSCP	30,642	31,000	31,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE504	Station Ramp	775				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE558	MSCP resurface worn stairwell floor	424	283	283	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KR172	MSCP fire door replacement	141	141	141	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE119	Phase 4 ENPR - Forum (Off Street Car Parks)	70,538	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE120	Park Place Remedials	2,618	54,644	54,644	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE201	Hard standings	5,313	16,444	16,444	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE217	Parking Restrictions	36,436	20,000	20,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE531	Workplace Travel Plan	71,825	63,563	63,563	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC918	MSCP Lift Reinstatement	5,549	200,000	200,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC919	Car Parks Resurfacing	52,276	140,000	140,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC920	Car Parks - Lighting Phased Replacement (2 years)	9,800	40,000	40,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC918	MSCP Painting (westgate and st george's)	0	40,000	40,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC918	MSCP Fire Alarm Upgrade (st george's)	0	25,000	25,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Growth	Growth bids	0	0	0	0	235,000	235,000	0	55,000	55,000	0	45,000	0
	<u>Total Planning & Regulation</u>	310,445	809,095	809,095	0	332,500	557,500	225,000	55,000	55,000	0	45,000	0
KC911	<u>Deferred Works Reserve</u>	0	149,073	149,073	0	400,000	400,000	0	250,000	250,000	0	0	0

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
GF CAPITAL - UNFUNDED CAPITAL GROWTH BIDS (£000)

Ref No	Head of Service	Service	Priority	Description of Growth Proposal	Capital in 2026/27	Capital in 2027/28	Capital in 2028/29	Capital in 2029/30
1	Kerry Clifford	Housing & Neighbourhoods	4.	Upgrade / Replacement program for CCTV cameras across Stevenage	-	-	-	25,000
2	Kerry Clifford	Housing & Neighbourhoods	4.	Purchase of a fully electric vehicle (EV) for the Neighbourhood Warden team, including full branding .	31,500	-	-	-
		Total Housing and Neighbourhoods			31,500	-	-	25,000
3	Matt Canterford	ICT	4.	VDI hardware	-	293,280	-	-
4	Matt Canterford	ICT	4.	Laptop Replacement Program	-	-	-	78,960
		Total ICT			-	293,280	-	78,960
5	Steve Dupoy	SDS and Leisure	4.	Theatre - Cooling and heating backstage	28,500	28,500	38,000	-
6	Steve Dupoy	SDS and Leisure	4.	Replacement of Ground Keepers Cabin	15,000	-	-	-
7	Steve Dupoy	SDS and Leisure	4.	Golf flood & erosion protection scheme	60,000	60,000	60,000	60,000
8	Steve Dupoy	SDS and Leisure	4.	Ridlins infield upgrades	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
9	Steve Dupoy	SDS and Leisure	4.	Ladder beam and fly bars SALC	-	-	32,500	32,500
10	Steve Dupoy	SDS and Leisure	4.	Fleet Replacement	-	-	-	280,000
11	Steve Dupoy	SDS and Leisure	4.	Plant Replacement	-	-	-	133,000
12	Steve Dupoy	SDS and Leisure	4.	Renew theatre stage floor	-	200,000	-	-
17	Steve Dupoy	SDS and Leisure	4.	Green Space Infrastructure	-	-	-	50,000
13	Steve Dupoy	SDS and Leisure	3.	Pool & Leisure Centre works Golf and Riddlins	30,000	30,000	-	-
		Total SDS and Leisure			143,500	328,500	140,500	565,500
		Total Individual Bids			175,000	621,780	140,500	669,460

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Meeting Cabinet
Portfolio Area Environment and Regeneration
Date 11 February 2026



STEVENAGE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN PARTIAL UPDATE: CONSULTATION ON MAIN MODIFICATIONS FOLLOWING EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC

KEY DECISION

Author Lewis Claridge | 2158
Lead Officer Alex Robinson | 2257
Contact Officer Lewis Claridge | 2158

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update on the progress of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan Partial Update now it has progressed to Examination in Public stage.
- 1.2 To seek Members' approval to consult on proposed Main Modifications to the Local Plan Partial Update in order to make the Plan 'sound' and ready for formal adoption.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

- 2.1 Approves the proposed changes to the Stevenage Borough Local Plan Partial Update, as set out in Appendix A and B, following Examination in Public in order to make the Plan sound.
- 2.2 Approve that the Main Modifications as set out in Appendix A and B be subject to public consultation for 6 weeks, as directed by the Planning Inspector.

3 BACKGROUND

Stevenage Borough Local Plan

- 3.1 The Stevenage Borough Local Plan [BD1] was adopted on 22 May 2019. The Plan sets out a spatial vision for the town to 2031 and contains detailed land use policies for the Borough.
- 3.2 The Local Plan aligns closely with several themes set out in the Council's Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan 2024–2027 [BD2]. Under the priority “Transforming our Town” and the Council's wider regeneration agenda, the Local Plan's objectives and related policies support the regeneration of the Town Centre and other strategic growth areas. This includes delivering benefits for residents and businesses through new homes, enhanced public services, improved local amenities, increased employment opportunities, better transport connections, and greater access to green spaces.
- 3.3 Under the priority “More Social, Affordable and Good Quality Homes”, the Local Plan's objectives and policies promote both the delivery of new, sustainable homes and the maintenance of high-quality existing housing.

Local Plan Review

- 3.4 The requirement to review the plan was triggered in May 2024 as it had reached 5 years since it was adopted; with just under seven years of the plan period remaining. The status of the Stevenage Local Plan alongside other Local Plans in Hertfordshire is shown in the table below:

Hertfordshire Local Authority	Local Plan Status
Broxbourne	Local Plan adopted June 2020. Plan period 2018–2033. Review: TBC.
Dacorum	Local Plan adopted September 2013. Plan period 2006–2031. Review: New Local Plan submitted to Secretary of State March 2025. Plan period to 2041.
East Hertfordshire	Local Plan adopted October 2018. Plan period 2011–2033. Review: Regulation 18 planned for 2026.
Hertsmere	Local Plan adopted January 2013. Plan period 2012–2027. Review: Regulation 18 in 2024. Plan period 2023–2040.
North Hertfordshire	Local Plan adopted November 2022. Plan period 2011–2031. Review: Commenced upon adoption of 2022 Local Plan. LDS produced in 2025.
St. Albans	The current plan is at Examination in Public (2025). It is the St Albans Local Plan (2020 – 2036). It is scheduled for Adoption in March 2026.

Hertfordshire Local Authority	Local Plan Status
Stevenage	<i>Local Plan adopted May 2019. Plan period 2011 – 2031. Review: Examination in Public December 2025, Adoption Summer 2026.</i>
Three Rivers	Local Plan adopted October 2011. Plan period 2011–2026. Review: Regulation 18 in Jul7 2025. Plan period to 2041.
Watford	Local Plan adopted October 2022. Plan period 2021–2038. Review: TBC.
Welwyn Hatfield	Local Plan adopted October 2023. Plan period 2016–2036. Review: Regulation 18 in 2025.

- 3.5 The Council duly carried out a full review of the Local Plan which revealed a number of areas where policies required updating. In light of the review, the following options were considered by the Council:
- a) Carry out a comprehensive update of the plan, with strategic policies looking ahead over the following 20 years (in effect, an entirely new Local Plan).
 - b) Carry out a comprehensive update of the plan, with the plan period unchanged (a full update).
 - c) Carry out a limited update of the plan, including only the changes most immediately necessary to keep the plan up-to-date and with the plan period unchanged (a partial update).
- 3.6 The Council decided to proceed with option (c) – a partial update of the Local Plan, with the changes limited to those most urgently necessary to ensure that the plan remains up-to-date and effective in dealing with the most pressing issues facing the borough.
- 3.7 It was agreed, following legal advice and internal discussion, that there should be a two-stage process to reviewing the Stevenage Borough Local Plan, given the position the local authority finds itself regarding the age of the current Local Plan being 5 years since adoption; Stage 1 consisting of a Partial Update with Stage 2 comprising a full New Local Plan.
- 3.8 The scope of the Local Plan Partial Update is limited to new and revised policies of the existing adopted Stevenage Borough Local Plan (2019) and that it was limited to making necessary changes only relating to key drivers of change since the Plan was adopted in 2019. Changes proposed to the adopted Local Plan are detailed in the Officer Report to Cabinet in June 2024 [BD3] and November 2024 [BD4] and focus on the continued effort to tackle Climate Change and promoting sustainable and active travel across the Borough.

- 3.9 Proposed changes to tackle Climate Change further strengthened links to the Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan 2024–2027, by showcasing connection to the “Tackling Climate Change” priority of the Corporate Plan. In particular, proposed policies aim to reflect the Corporate Plan’s ambition to progress the reduction of carbon emissions to net zero by 2030.
- 3.10 The proposed changes to the adopted Local Plan, as part of the Partial Update, are limited to necessary changes only, in order to have a robust and up to date Plan ahead of the future changes we will be preparing for, under the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025.

Changes to the Planning System

- 3.11 The Partial Update is being developed during a period of unprecedented change to the planning system.
- 3.12 The Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 [BD8] gained Royal Assent in Parliament on 18 December 2025 and has now become Law. It sets out changes to the planning system that the Government hopes will speed up decision making and streamline the delivery of new homes and major infrastructure.
- 3.13 The relevant highlights arising from the presenting of the Act include Strategic Planning; the Act restores strategic planning across England, requiring strategic authorities to produce spatial development strategies (SDS). SDS will set housing figures and distribution, contribute to climate change mitigation, and align with local nature recovery strategies. SDS will be assessed via public examination, with modifications reported to the Secretary of State.
- 3.14 It is not envisaged that the new wave of SDSs will be detailed or lengthy and instead will be similar to Joint Strategic Plans (JSP) and more information will follow in due course. Stevenage is part of a 6-authority approach to an emerging North East Central Hertfordshire JSP with Hertfordshire County Council, East Herts Council, North Herts Council, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and Broxbourne Borough Council.
- 3.15 Future Local Plans prepared by unitary authorities will need to conform to the new SDS. In the meantime, local authorities are required to have up to date local plans in place, a message only recently restated by Government.
- 3.16 In addition, on 16 December 2025 Government is published a consultation on a revised, more rules-based National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) [BD7]. Consultation runs until 10 March 2026.
- 3.17 The proposed changes to the NPPF underline the Government’s commitment to a plan-led system that supports sustainable and high-quality development, boosts housing supply, increases affordability, makes effective use of land and supports a modern economy. As part of the consultation on the revised NPPF, the Government is also consulting on National Development Management Policies (NDMP). These will be put in place for the purposes of decision-making.
- 3.18 The 2025 version of the NPPF will replace the version published on 12 December 2024 [BD6], which itself replaced the version published on 19 December 2023 [BD5].

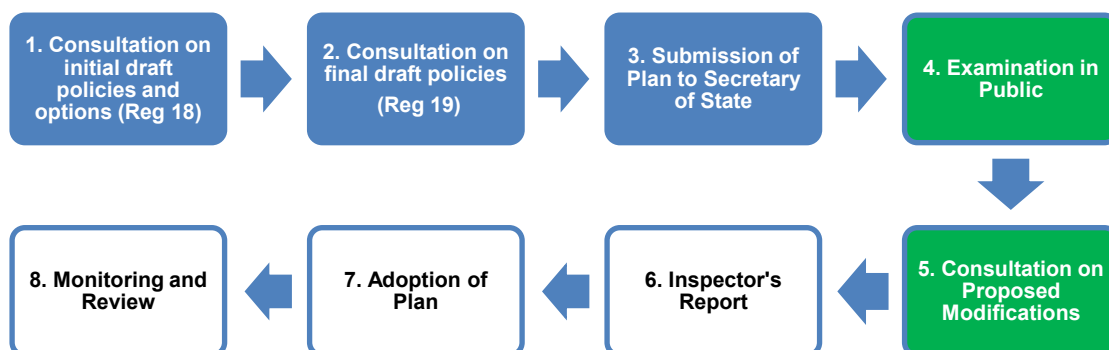
- 3.19 A series of national changes and developments, as explained above, have meant that the planning policy landscape for Stevenage is rapidly evolving. The table below illustrates some of the key issues and challenges being faced.

	Adopted Local Plan (2019)	Local Plan Partial Update (2026)	New Local Plan (2026 onwards)
Relevant NPPF	March 2012	December 2023 (Transitional Arrangements)	December 2024. More likely to be latest version of NPPF (currently out to consultation) or subsequent versions of NPPF
Plan Period	2011 – 2031	2011 – 2031	Beyond 2031; Vision document to outline time horizons
Housing requirement	7,600 homes 2011 – 2031	7,600 homes 2011 – 2031	New requirement to be calculated, beyond 2031
Employment space requirement	At least 140,000 sq m employment floorspace to be completed 2011 – 2031	At least 140,000 sq m employment floorspace to be completed 2011 – 2031	New requirement to be calculated, beyond 2031
Spatial Development Strategy	No Spatial Development Strategy	Emerging Spatial Development Strategy (early work on, following Planning & Infrastructure Act 2025)	New Local Plans to conform to Spatial Development Strategy

- 3.20 There are no proposed changes to housing or employment targets in the Local Plan Partial Update. Housing and employment targets are key pillars of the Local Plan. In Stevenage, housing supply remains a challenge; however, the Council is confident that it can meet the targets of the Plan and that it maintains a healthy housing land supply, as well as meeting employment needs of the borough; in the context of the wider delivery challenges facing the South East region as well as the country.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

Recommendation 2.1: That Cabinet approves the proposed changes to the Stevenage Borough Local Plan Partial Update, as set out in Appendix A and B, following Examination in Public in order to make the Plan sound.



- 4.1 The first consultation on the Local Plan Partial Update was held from 5 July to 15 August 2024 and took place in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012).
- 4.2 A second round of public consultation (under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012) was held from 21 November 2024 to 14 February 2025.
- 4.3 The Local Plan Partial Update was submitted to the Secretary of State (MHCLG) on 15 August 2025, ahead of an independent Examination in Public by an appointed Planning Inspector [BD9].
- 4.4 Given that the Local Plan Partial Update was at Regulation 19 stage prior to 12 March 2025 and the draft housing requirement meets in excess of 80% of local housing need, under the transitional arrangements outlined as part of the NPPF 2024, this means that the Local Plan Partial Update was submitted and examined under the NPPF 2023 and not NPPF 2024. This provides more certainty with regard to the need to update the Plan, being over 5 years old and as such progressing the revised Plan to adoption at an earlier stage would mean that policies carry greater weight in decision making.
- 4.5 The consequence of not falling under the transitional arrangements and instead operating under the NPPF 2024, would mean that we would need to prepare a new Plan from scratch, thus increasing the risk that policies in the 2019 Local Plan would lose weight in decision making over time, until the new Plan progressed to the first stage of consultation. By operating under the transitional arrangements and therefore under the NPPF 2023, we are working to a broad two-stage process:
1. *Local Plan – Review and Partial Update (to be submitted and examined under the NPPF 2023)*
 2. *New Local Plan (to be progressed under the NPPF 2024 or subsequent versions of the NPPF thereafter)*

- 4.6 The Stevenage Borough Local Plan Partial Update Examination in Public Hearing sessions were held from 2–10 December 2025 and conducted by and independent Planning Inspector (PINS). Further details regarding the Examination in Public can be viewed at the dedicated Examination website: <https://www.hwa.uk.com/projects/stevenage-local-plan-partial-update/>
- 4.7 A series of “Matters, Issues and Questions” (MIQs) were addressed in turn by the Inspector, in order to scrutinise our submitted Local Plan Partial Update to assess the Plan against the tests of soundness set out in the NPPF. The MIQs addressed were as follows:
- *MIQ1: Scope, legal and procedural requirements*
 - *MIQ2: Climate Change and Sustainable Development*
 - *MIQ3: Housing and Design*
 - *MIQ4: Employment, Town Centres and Opportunity Areas*
 - *MIQ5: Infrastructure, Transport, Flood Risk, Drainage and Trees*
 - *MIQ6: Monitoring and Review*
- 4.8 The Hearing Sessions invited those who had objections or significant representations to appear at the Hearings. Officers from the Council’s Planning, Climate Change, Regeneration and Stevenage Direct Services were supported by external viability consultants and by Simon Bird KC of Francis Taylor Building.
- 4.9 At the conclusion of the Examination in Public Hearing sessions, the Inspector advised that the Plan was capable of being found sound, but that Main Modifications (MM) would be required. This letter was prepared on 16 December 2025 [BD10] and made the following points:
- *Having considered all the representations and all evidence before him, the Inspector is now satisfied that the Plan is likely to be capable of being made sound and legally compliant through MMs.*
 - *The Inspector invited the Council to prepare a schedule containing the proposed wording for all the MMs discussed as necessary for soundness and legal compliance reasons so far.*
 - *Once the Inspector has agreed the wording of the MMs with the Council, he will invite the Council to publish the final schedule of proposed MMs for a period of public consultation. The nature and duration of the consultation should reflect that of the consultation held at the Regulation 19 stage, where appropriate. This means it should last at least six weeks.*
 - *The MMs will also need to be the subject of Sustainability Appraisal, Equality Impact Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment, insofar as necessary. These documents will need to be published alongside the proposed MMs when they are consulted upon.*
 - *The MMs documents should also make it clear that interested parties can comment on the additional documents that have been submitted to the Examination after the close of the Regulation 19 consultation insofar as they relate to the proposed MMs and the soundness of the partial update Plan.*
 - *Any consequential Submission Policies Map Changes and any additional Modifications being proposed by the Council should be set out in separate schedules and published alongside the MMs for completeness, although these are outside of the scope of the Examination.*

- 4.10 The full schedule of proposed Main Modifications to the Local Plan Partial Update (MMs) is attached as Appendix A and B to this Report and provides a schedule of proposed modifications to the submitted [BD9] Local Plan Partial Update. Appendix A provides a track changes version to show the MMs in the context of the overall Plan Partial Update, as submitted; Appendix B provides a detailed schedule of the MMs only. The substantive changes to the Partial Update (as submitted) and the version of the Local Plan that will be subject to Main Modifications consultation include:
- *Ensure the new Climate Change Policies are effective, justified by the evidence base and are sufficiently flexible to ensure they do not prejudice the delivery of development in the Borough.*
 - *Partial updates to the housing elements of the adopted Plan to make clear that the housing requirement remains unchanged as a result of the partial update.*
 - *Replace the proposed requirement for M4(3)(2)(b) wheelchair accessible dwellings with the requirement for M4(3) wheelchair user dwellings. This is because the specific requirement for M4(3)(2)(b) dwellings is not justified.*
 - *Ensure the updated policies and new policies are consistent with national policy, justified and effective.*

Recommendation 2.2: That Cabinet approve that the Main Modifications as set out in Appendix A and B, be subject to public consultation for 6 weeks as directed by the Planning Inspector.

- 4.11 When Main Modifications (MMs) are recommended at the conclusion of the Hearing Sessions a final consultation on any modifications proposed by the Inspector to the Plan is then held prior to the Inspector's Report, which would confirm whether the Plan can progress to formal adoption.
- 4.12 Subject to Recommendation 2.2 being agreed, public consultation on the proposed MMs to the Local Plan Partial Update, in order to ensure that the Plan is deemed sound and able to be progressed towards adoption, is scheduled to run from 18 February to 31 March 2026, a total of 6 weeks.
- 4.13 Once the Main Modifications consultation is complete, and assuming there are no major issues raised at the consultation, the Inspector will prepare a legally binding report for the Local Plan Partial Update, recommending adoption. We would expect these to be received by May 2026.
- 4.14 Officers will then aim to present the Local Plan Partial Update back to Cabinet in June 2026 to seek approval to adopt the revised Local Plan, after which the revised Local Plan will then be presented to Council for adoption. This report will also include proposals for a forthcoming visioning document as prelude to the next Local Plan. The purpose of this document is to set out the housing and economic growth ambitions for Stevenage as it forms with nearby authorities to form a new unitary authority. This will ensure continued momentum on our Making Stevenage Even Better Plan.

5 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising from the Main Modifications to the Local Plan Partial Update.
- 5.2 Any potential future schemes or plans that are referenced in the Local Plan Partial Update and subsequently developed would need to be subject to a business case and / or will require developer or potentially Council funding.

Legal Implications

- 5.3 The Local Plan Partial Update has been prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).
- 5.4 Officers have sought legal advice from Counsel on the broad approach and Counsel are content that we are following the most appropriate process.

Risk Implications

- 5.5 Given that the adopted Local Plan is now over 5 years old, there is a risk that if the Local Plan Partial Update is not adopted, policies would be considered out of date and therefore have less material weight in the planning decision making process.
- 5.6 The Local Plan Partial Update serves to provide greater certainty in the plan making process and therefore reduce elements of risk in the overall process. Further delay to progressing the Local Plan Partial Update could also potentially mean that the new NPPF (currently out for consultation) would be in place by the time the Local Plan reached adoption stage, resulting in further uncertainty.

Planning and Policy Implications

- 5.7 The Local Plan Partial Update is proposed to revise, develop and update policies in the adopted Stevenage Borough Local Plan (2019).
- 5.8 The Local Plan Partial Update will align with other corporate Council documents such as the Climate Change Strategy (adopted September 2020), Action Plan and Charter as well as Stevenage's Future Town Future Transport Strategy.
- 5.9 The Local Plan Partial Update ensures that the Council's Making Stevenage Even Better key policies and objectives are improved and reflected as far as possible, as mentioned in paragraphs 3.2, 3.3 and 3.9 of this Report. Officers will work with the Corporate Policy team to ensure the relevant links and references are made.
- 5.10 The Local Plan Partial Update will build upon the adopted Development Plan for Stevenage. It will be a material consideration for planning applications. Future proposals will need to be in accordance with revised and new policies in the Local Plan as it progresses through the process to adoption.

Environmental Implications

- 5.11 The Local Plan Partial Update includes updates to policies relating to environmental protection and management in the borough. This has been informed by internal consultation by officers with officers in the Green Spaces and Environmental Policy and Development team, to ensure the relevant updates have been incorporated.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.12 The Local Plan Partial Update includes updates to policies relating to tackling climate change in the borough. This has been informed by internal consultation by

officers with officers in the Climate Change team, to ensure the relevant policies created and updates incorporated.

- 5.13 The Local Plan Partial Update includes a comprehensive update to policies relating to Climate Change in the borough. Policies were significantly strengthened as part of the submission to the Secretary of State in August 2025. Following Examination in Public Hearings in December 2025 and the fact that Government have reneged on Climate Change ambitions in recent months, the ambition of new Climate Change policies has been scaled back to provide a degree of flexibility in their application, rather than being a strict requirement. However, this still goes significantly above what is prescribed in the adopted Local Plan.
- 5.14 The Local Plan Partial Update supports the aims and objectives of the Stevenage Climate Change Strategy (September 2020) [BD11] and contributes to the overall climate change aspirations of the Council. In addition to being reflected in the Local Plan Partial Update and Climate Change Strategy, the Council's "Making Stevenage Even Better" Corporate Plan includes a priority "Tackling Climate Change" and is therefore applied across a range of Council functions.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 5.15 There are no significant equalities and diversity risks associated with producing the Local Plan Partial Update.

Community Safety Implications

- 5.16 There are no significant community safety implications associated with producing the Local Plan Partial Update.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- BD1 Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011–2031 (May 2019)
<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/planning-policy/stevenage-borough-local-plan/stevenage-borough-local-plan.pdf>
- BD2 Making Stevenage Even Better: Corporate Plan 2024–2027 (April 2024)
<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/corporate-plan/appendix-a-making-stevenage-even-better-2024-2027.pdf>
- BD3 Meeting of the Stevenage Borough Council Cabinet, Item 4: Local Plan Review and Revised Local Development Scheme (5 June 2024)
<https://democracy.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/s36560/4%20Cabinet%20Report%20Local%20Plan%20Review%20LC%20Final%2030524.pdf>
- BD4 Meeting of the Stevenage Borough Council Cabinet: Item 4: Local Plan Partial Review and Update: Regulation 18 Consultation Feedback and Regulation 19 Consultation (13 November 2024)
<https://democracy.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/s37640/4%20Cabinet%20Report%20Local%20Plan%20Review%20LC%20Final%20011124.pdf>
- BD5 National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023)
<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20231228093504/https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>
- BD6 National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>
- BD7 National Planning Policy Framework: Proposed reforms and other changes to the planning system (December 2025)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-proposed-reforms-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system>
- BD8 Planning & Infrastructure Act (December 2025)
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2025/34/enacted>
- BD9 Partial Update of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011 – 2031: Schedule of Changes from Adopted Local Plan to Submission Version – Changes since Adoption of Local Plan in May 2019 (August 2025) <https://www.hwa.uk.com/site/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/CD3-Schedule-of-Changes-Adopted-Local-Plan-to-Partial-Update-Submission.pdf>
- BD10 Formal response from the Inspector to the Council, inviting Main Modifications to the Local Plan Partial Update (December 2025) <https://www.hwa.uk.com/site/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Stevenage-Partial-Update-PHN-161225-.pdf>
- BD11 Stevenage Climate Change Strategy (September 2020)
<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/about-the-council/climate-change-strategy/climate-change-strategy-september-2020.pdf>

APPENDICES

- A Proposed Main Modifications to the Local Plan Partial Update: Track Changes Version (January 2026)
- B Proposed Main Modifications to the Local Plan Partial Update: Schedule of Changes Version (January 2026)

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Stevenage Borough Local Plan
2011-2031

**Partial Update to
Local Plan
(adopted 22 May 2019)**

**Main Modifications proposed by
the Council to make the Plan
sound**

January 2026



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1 Introduction

What is planning and the local plan?

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

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

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

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

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

1.5 This plan contains three main sections:

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

Why have we prepared a new plan?

1.6 Our last Local Plan was adopted in 2004¹. Since this time, there have been a lot of important changes. This includes:

- **Legislation:** This refers to Acts (or laws) that are passed by Parliament and regulations that are written by the Government and tell us the things that we legally have to do. The 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act changed the way we have to prepare and adopt our plans. The 2011 Localism Act introduced more new requirements. Our last Local Plan was written before these came fully into force. The Government has recently stated that all authorities must produce a local plan by early 2017.
- **National planning advice:** A new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012. This replaced all previous advice into one, much shorter, document. We have to take the NPPF into account when we write our new Plan. Detailed National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) was released in March 2014. This provides more information on how we should achieve the aims of the NPPF.
- **Neighbourhood Planning:** The 2011 Localism Act introduced Neighbourhood Plans. This is a new type of plan that has to be taken into account when we decide planning applications.
- **Local evidence:** We have carried out a large number of evidence studies. These have provided us with important and up-to-date information. This includes things like the type of homes that should be built in the future, what facilities are provided in the town's neighbourhood centres and the likely effect of our policies on the environment.

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

Why have we carried out a **partial** review and **partial** update of the plan?

1.7A Local planning authorities are required to review their planning policies every five years to ensure that they remain fit for purpose. The Local Plan was adopted in May 2019 and the five-year period therefore elapsed in May 2024. The requirement to review the plan was therefore triggered in May 2024 i.e. with just under seven years of the plan period remaining.

1.7B The Council carried out a full review of the plan, which revealed a number of areas where policies would benefit from -updating. In light of the review, the following options were considered by the Council:

- a) Carry out a comprehensive update of the plan, with strategic policies looking ahead over the following 20 years (in effect, an entirely new Local Plan).

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

- b) Carry out a comprehensive update of the plan, with the plan period unchanged (a full update).
- c) Carry out a limited update of the plan, including only the changes most immediately necessary to keep the plan up-to-date and with the plan period unchanged (a partial update).

1.7C The Council considered that immediately proceeding to introduce a new 15-to-20-year strategic horizon was not realistic given the timetable and progress of its neighbouring authorities with their Local Plans and would have risked producing a strategy that was neither effective nor deliverable. On that basis, option (a) was discounted.

1.7D Whilst the picture of cross-boundary growth is largely settled for the remainder of the existing plan period up to 2031, a comprehensive update of the Local Plan as envisioned by option (b) would still have required a commensurate review of the Council's evidence base. In the Council's view, this would have amounted to an additional one to two years' worth of preparation and by the point of adoption, with so little time remaining in the plan period, the updated plan would be of limited benefit.

1.7E In any case, this option would have been subject to the same constraints in terms of updates to strategic policies as a more limited update of the plan. For these reasons, option (b) was discounted.

1.7F The Council therefore decided to proceed with option (c) – a partial update of the Local Plan, with the changes limited to those most urgently necessary to ensure that the plan remains up-to-date and effective in dealing with the most pressing issues facing the borough. At the same time, the Council also committed to producing an entirely new Local Plan immediately upon the conclusion of the update process.

1.7G This approach ensures that the most important elements of the current plan are kept up to date now, avoiding an extended period during which key policies would otherwise be out of date. It also enables the Council to align a new plan with the timetables of its neighbours and the emerging work on a joint strategic plan for the region.

1.7HB The review identified that the spatial strategy remains fit for purpose but a number of individual policies required updating. Consequently, a partial update was carried out to address those issues. The key changes are as follows:

- **Climate Change:** The updated plan takes a stronger approach to climate change, with a new strategic climate change policy, a new chapter of detailed climate change policies, and revised policies relating to sustainable drainage and flood risk.
- **Station Gateway:** The detailed policy for the Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area has been updated to reflect the Station Gateway Area Action Plan.
- **Housing:** The requirements for accessible and adaptable housing have been updated to reflect the latest evidence of need.

- **Use Classes:** Changes have been made throughout the plan to reflect the changes to the Use Classes Order, which came into effect in 2020.

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

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

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

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

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

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

What is neighbourhood planning?

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

1.13 Any Neighbourhood Plan must be in conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan (see Part II). But beyond this requirement, the Neighbourhood Plan

can set the policies that it thinks are appropriate. A Neighbourhood Plan takes priority if it says something different to the detailed policies of the Local Plan (see Part III of this document).

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

What is environmental assessment?

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

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

1.17 We have carried out both of these assessments when writing this plan. When we talk about SA, we are referring to both processes and all of the documents we have written. This is to avoid any confusion. A SA report accompanies this plan. This has helped us to understand the most important issues facing Stevenage and the likely effects of our different policies and allocations².

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

1.19 A third process, called Appropriate Assessment (AA), says if our plan will harm certain types of wildlife habitat known as European Sites. We have carried out an AA screening exercise. This concludes that, with the measures and safeguards included in this draft plan, the scale and type of development being proposed is unlikely to have a significant effect upon any European sites³.

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

³ Appropriate Assessment Screening Opinion (SBC, 2015)

2 A picture of Stevenage

History

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

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

2.3 Stevenage was designated as England's first New Town in 1946. It was followed by a series of New Towns across the country so that people could move out from damaged or deprived cities⁴. Lewis Silkin, the Minister for Town and Country Planning, said that:

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



Old Town High Street; New town centre

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

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

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

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

Stevenage today



2.7 Stevenage is divided into distinct land use areas. The town centre, Old Town and railway station are the core of the town. They are surrounded by individual residential neighbourhoods containing around 38,000 homes. 4,500 of these have been built in, or on the edge of, the town since the turn of the century⁵.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Main challenges

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

Geography and population

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

Housing

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

Employment and retail

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



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

Design

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

Health, education and skills

- Life expectancy is lower than the Hertfordshire average. There are higher than average levels of smoking, obesity, physical inactivity and premature deaths from heart disease and cancer. Stevenage residents have fewer qualifications than the Hertfordshire average. Less than one
- in every four Stevenage residents is qualified to NVQ Level 4 or above⁶. This compares to
- one in three across the rest of Hertfordshire.
- There is a mismatch between skills and jobs. Residents earn less than people who work in the town. Higher paid jobs are held by people who commute in from elsewhere.
- Aspirations are low. Many pupils leave school at 16. There are low levels of progression into higher education or higher earning jobs.

Environment and transport

- There are many open spaces in the town but some urban spaces are of poor quality and are not well used by the public. Many of our designated parks are in fact recreation or sports grounds.
- There is a Site of Special Scientific Interest immediately adjacent to the Borough boundary at Knebworth Woods.

⁶ NVQ Level 4 is equivalent to a HNC qualification.

- The A1(M) narrows to two lanes between junctions 6 and 8. There are frequent peak hour tailbacks.
- Trains are full at peak times while the cycle and pedestrian network is underused.

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

Drivers of change

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

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

Population

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

Housing

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

Employment and retail

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

Health, education and skills

- The health system is subject to frequent change. Recently, doctors have become more responsible for commissioning the services they need.
- Emergency strategic health services for north and east Hertfordshire have been centralised onto the Lister Hospital site in north Stevenage.

- The Government has been making changes to school curricula to equip children with the skills they say are needed in the 21st century.



Our town centre has changed; Major investment at Lister Hospital

Environment and transport

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

Political

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

3 Strategic context

Strategic context

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

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

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

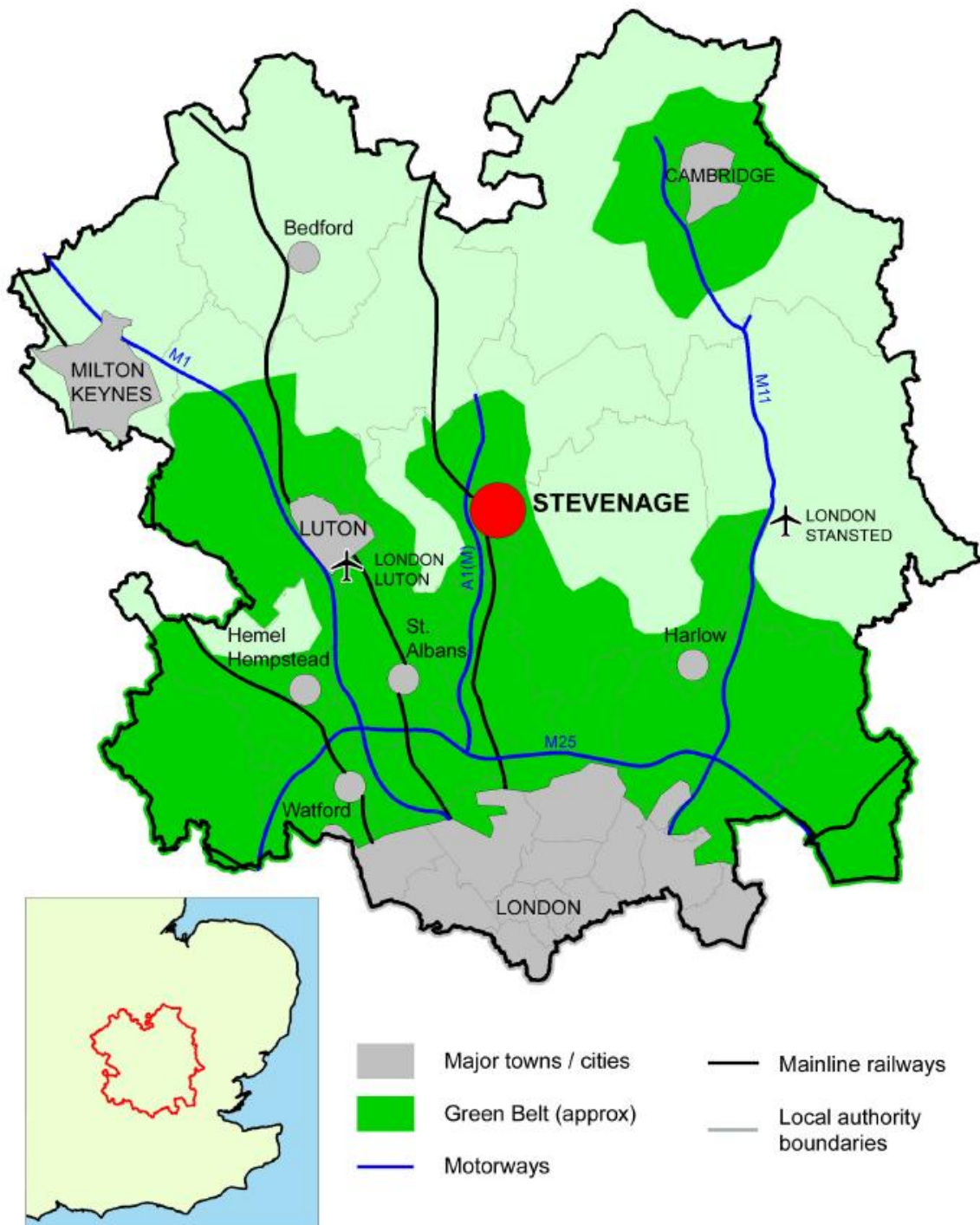
3.4 Hertfordshire itself does not have one, dominant population centre. Instead there are a number of historic market towns, garden cities and new towns. Larger urban areas such as Milton Keynes, Luton and Cambridge lie outside of the county but within this area of influence.

3.5 This area shares a number of common characteristics:

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

suburbs of the capital beyond Luton, Stevenage and Harlow. There is a smaller Green Belt around Cambridge.

- Although this picture is generally affluent, there are areas of deprivation and under-performance. This is particularly the case in centres such as Harlow, Luton and Milton Keynes. Areas of suburban London are among the most deprived in the country.



Stevenage's strategic context

Strategic planning

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

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

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

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

What does this mean for Stevenage?

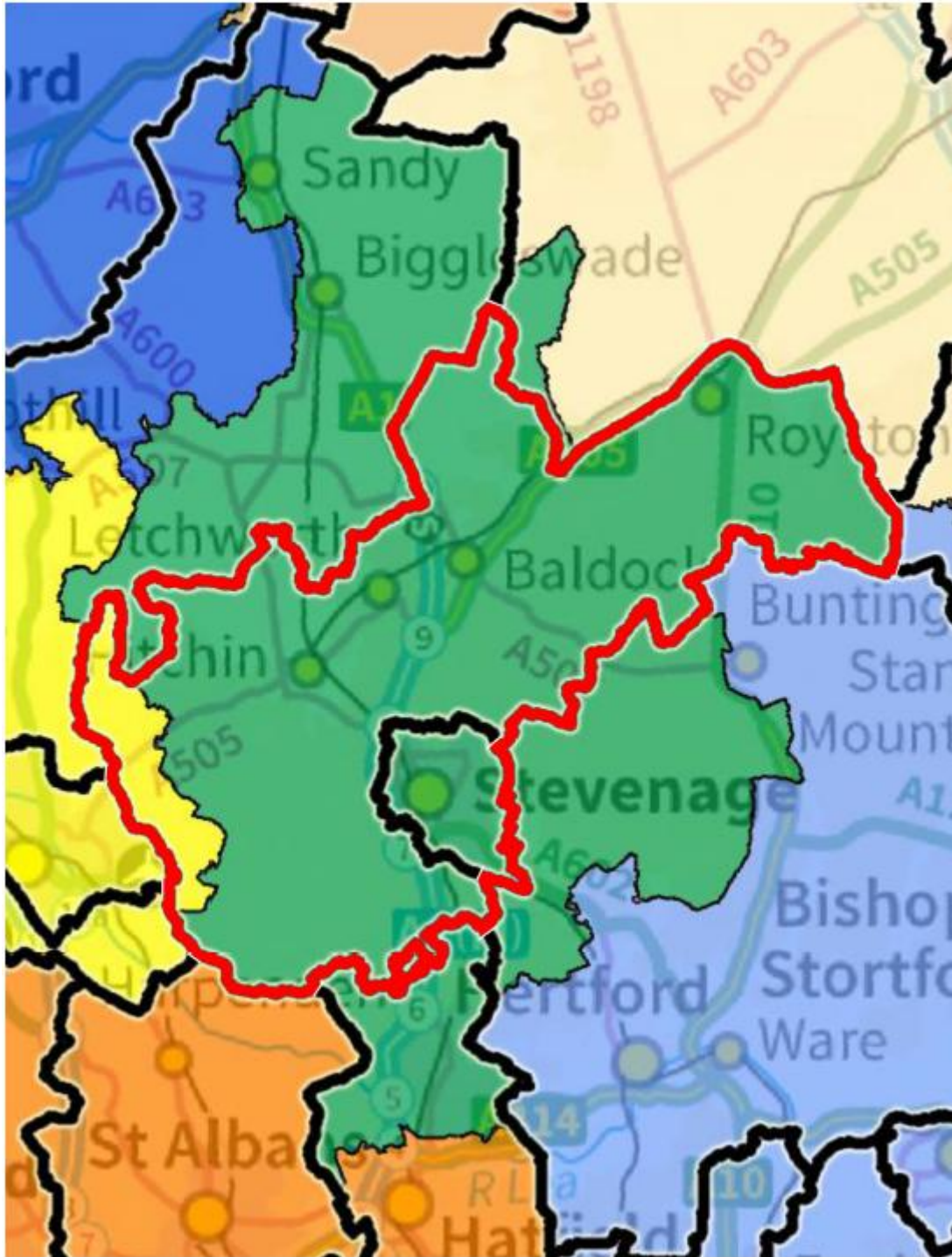
3.10 In preparing this plan, the following issues have proved particularly important:

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

3.11 National policy is clear that development should be co-ordinated across wider 'market areas' for both housing and employment. These are zones that share similar characteristics in terms of house prices, commuting patterns or the costs of business premises. They will not necessarily follow administrative boundaries and authorities should work together to try and meet development needs across these areas⁷.

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

⁷ NPPF paragraphs 47, 159 and 160



Stevenage is within a functional Housing Market Area stretching from Welwyn Garden City to Sandy and shares a 'best fit' area with North Hertfordshire District. Source: ORS

3.13 We have worked co-operatively with a number of authorities to define Housing Market Areas across northern Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire⁸. This work is consistent with studies carried out for other areas around Stevenage⁹. These studies make the distinction between two different types of Housing Market Area:

⁸ Housing Market Areas in Bedfordshire and surrounding areas (ORS, 2015)

⁹ West Essex and East Hertfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (ORS, 2015)

- **Functional housing market areas (HMAs)** are the geographical areas in which a substantial majority of the employed population both live and work, and where those moving home without changing employment choose to stay. These areas should not be constrained by local authority boundaries in order that their full extent can be understood; while
- **'Best fit' HMAs** are a pragmatic solution that constrain functional areas to local planning authority boundaries for the purposes of collecting evidence or drafting policy.

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

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

3.16 The Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA) covers a similar area. Our evidence shows that Stevenage, North Hertfordshire and the eastern half of Central Bedfordshire form a clearly defined FEMA. 70% of people that work in this area, also live here. The economic profiles of the three areas are complementary while commercial property market data does not suggest that nearby commercial property markets, such as Luton, Bedford or Watford, extend this far¹⁰. The FEMA is shown in the map on the following page.

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

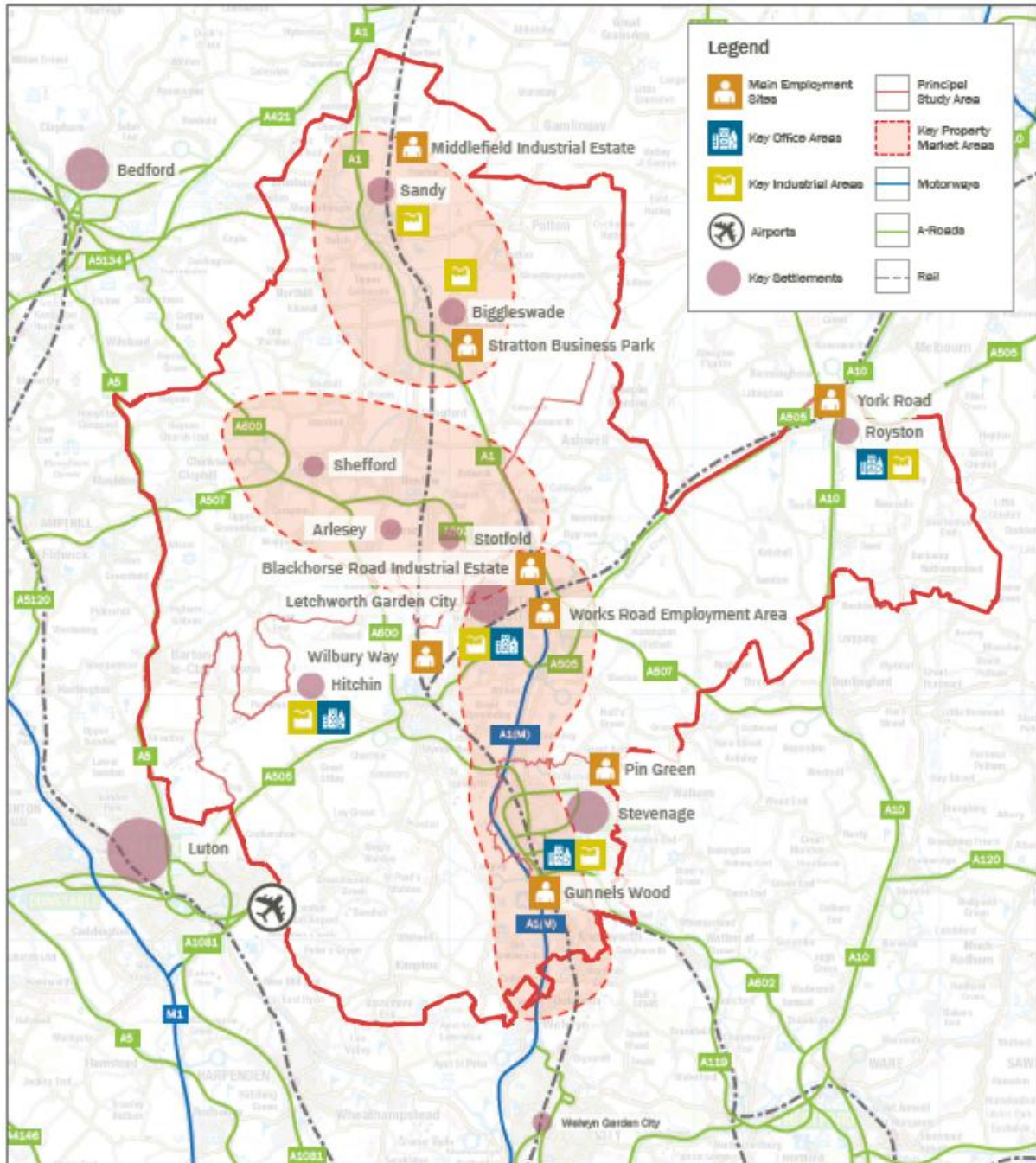
3.18 Stevenage Borough is small. It is completely surrounded by North Hertfordshire and East Hertfordshire. This means that the decisions we make and the decisions our immediate neighbours make are particularly closely related. Our three authorities will have to ensure that our respective Local Plans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

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

¹⁰ Functional Economic Market Area Study (Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners (NLP), 2015)

to more pressure for facilities and infrastructure within the Borough. This includes schools, open spaces and roads.

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



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

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

decisions that affect land immediately to the east of the Borough will be made by East Hertfordshire District Council.

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

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

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

3.25 More information on the elements of our strategy that could be affected by our neighbours or other organisations, or require their co-operation, is included throughout the Local Plan. Our evidence base will include a statement setting out who we have talked to, and what we have agreed¹¹. We will continue to talk with our neighbours and other relevant bodies as the proposals in this plan are implemented.

Other relevant plans and programmes

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

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

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

3.29 The Local Plan can impact, directly or indirectly on a number of these. Those key priorities with which the Local Plan is most able to assist are highlighted in the

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

following table. The Community Strategy identifies a number of key aspirations and actions which are directly relevant:

- Maximise opportunities for economic growth within the town by supporting businesses, as well as working with partners to deliver housing growth;
- Explore opportunities to increase footfall in the town centre;
- Provide new and affordable housing and thereby increase the supply of decent social housing; Tackle any negative misconceptions of Stevenage;
- Promote active lifestyles;
- Maintain the high quality spaces we have, and promote their use for a variety of activities, including exercise; and
- Raise the profile of the climate change agenda and the impact of climate change on the town

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4 Vision and objectives

A vision for the future

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

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

4.3 Our plan will guide the future regeneration, development, and growth of Stevenage. We will take advantage of our position between, and good links to, London and Cambridge.

4.4 The strategy is to deliver a new vision for Stevenage: a vision that has been evolved with our partners, particularly the Hertfordshire LEP. We plan to deliver transformational physical, social and economic regeneration of the original new town. This will be twinned with housing and employment growth, necessarily rolling back the inner Green Belt boundary. Regeneration and growth will bring benefits to all. Together, these will help to break the cycle of low aspirations, low skills and deprivation that characterise parts of the town.

4.5 Achieving this strategy will create a virtuous circle. Regeneration will address concerns about lack of investment. Significant housing growth will drive the demand for jobs and new employment. In turn, this will create a demand for new facilities which will support our ambitious regeneration programme.

4.6 Our strategy sets out how 7,600 homes will be built in and around Stevenage between 2011 and 2031 (~~4,956 homes between 2024 and 2031~~). This will mean that we can meet our objectively assessed housing needs within our own administrative boundaries, although we maintain an on-going dialogue with our neighbours on this topic.

4.7 Our primary focus is on regeneration, inward investment and renewal. We will maximise the use of previously developed sites in the Town Centre, the Old Town and the New Town neighbourhoods.

4.8 Our top priority is the regeneration of the Town Centre – or Stevenage Central as it is now badged. This will be a flagship scheme to address negative perceptions of the town by providing a vibrant centre fit for the 21st Century. This major public-private sector regeneration programme will deliver in the region of 3,000 new homes, making a significant contribution to meeting our housing target.

4.9 This development will help stimulate interest in Stevenage as an attractive place to live, work, visit and invest. It will drive new residential developments. Six Major Opportunity Areas will be designated to deliver specific high-calibre, mixed-use

schemes of homes, offices, retailing, sporting, cultural, civic and leisure uses. These high density schemes will deliver a step-change in the perception of our Town Centre.

4.10 But regeneration and the use of brownfield sites within the urban area will not be enough to meet our objectively assessed housing needs. We need to meet those needs not only for their own sake, but also because they will underpin our economic growth ambitions and our regeneration aims.

4.11 Our strategy identifies three new neighbourhoods to be provided on greenfield sites: to the west, north and south-east of the existing town.

4.12 We have reviewed the Green Belt and found it necessary to roll-back the inner Green Belt boundary. This will mean new boundaries will be set, often in conjunction with our neighbours in East and North Hertfordshire District Councils.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.21 Our ambition for new employment growth will be matched by a drive to increase the skill base of our workforce. Today, Stevenage is characterised by relatively low educational attainment and aspirations. Residents are under-represented in executive, management and professional positions. We aim to improve the life-chances of our children by working with the County Council and other education providers to increase the capacity of the town's schools and their educational attainments.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- protecting existing open space and areas designated for environmental purposes;
- requiring new developments to include open space to meet locally defined targets;
- requiring developments to make links to the surrounding countryside;
- seeking to create an ecological network; and
- protecting and enhancing our heritage assets.

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

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

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

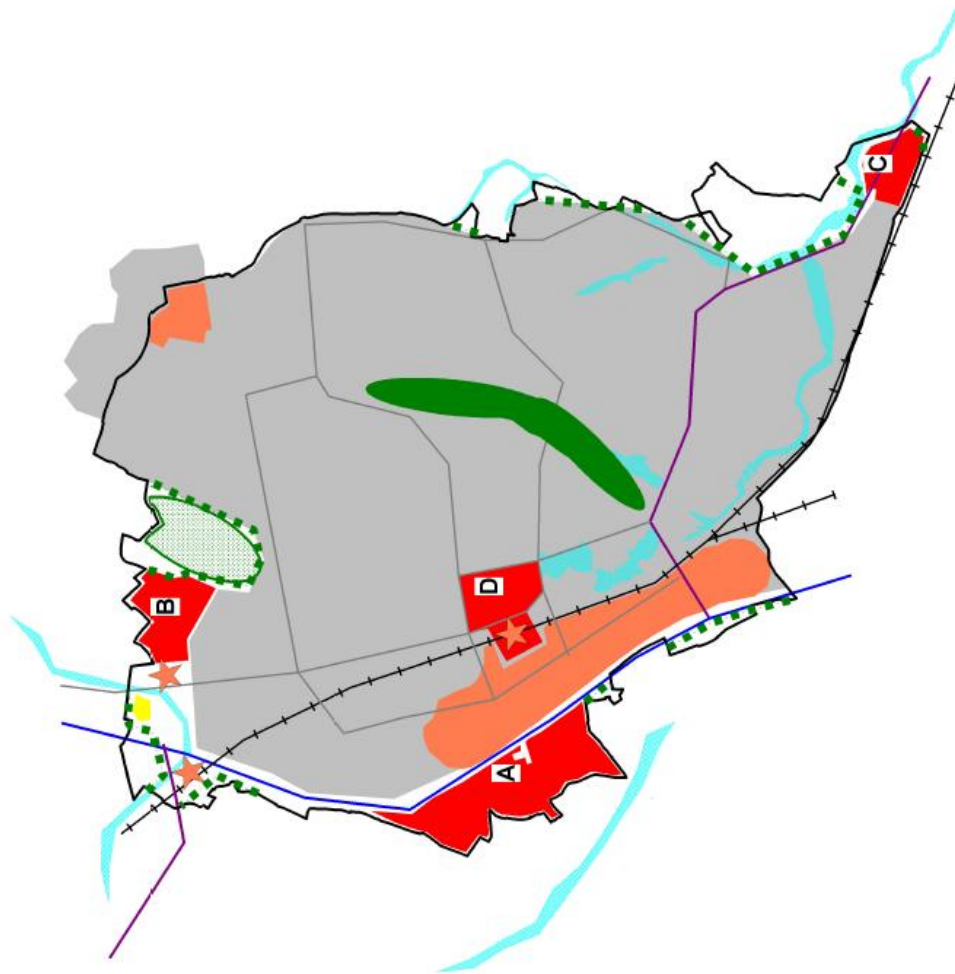
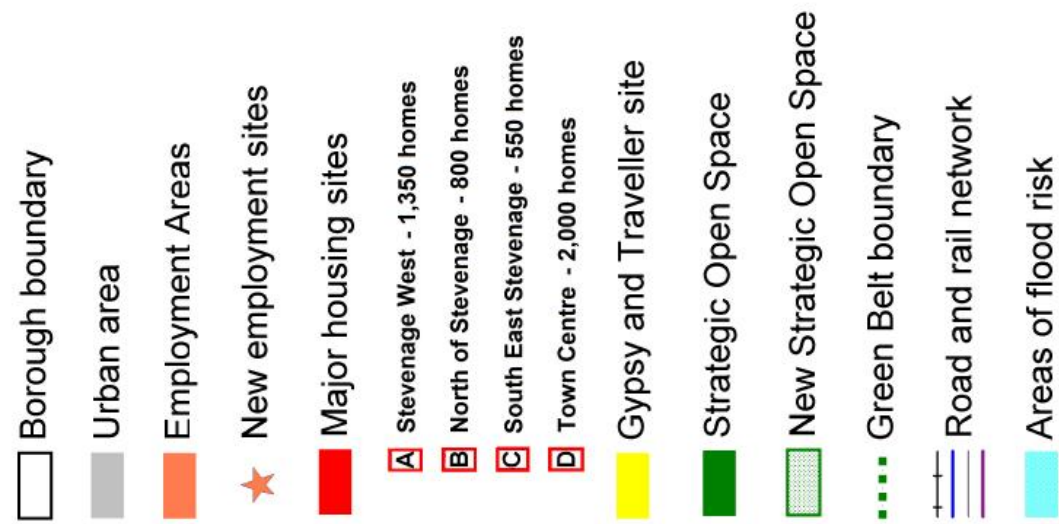
4.33 Bus station facilities will be relocated as part of the Town Centre regeneration scheme. The opportunity will be taken to improve bus - train transfer. Pedestrian and cycle links from the town centre to Gunnels Wood and the Old Town will be improved.

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

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

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

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



Picture 1 Key Diagram

Picture 1 Key diagram

5 Strategic Policies

Climate Change

Policy SP1: Climate Change

We will require development to contribute to both mitigating and adapting to climate change. The extent to which developments reduce greenhouse gas emissions, sequester and store carbon, prevent overheating and flooding and its negative effects, use water and other resources efficiently, produce clean energy, and contribute to a green local economy will be considered in the assessment of each planning application. Developments which demonstrate positive consideration of these issues will be supported.

We will:

- a. apply emission reduction targets to major developments ~~according to their scale~~, supporting developments that achieve these targets by reducing overall energy demand, supplying energy efficiently, and generating ultra-low and zero carbon energy;
- b. require developments to prioritise active travel and public transport by providing the infrastructure necessary to maximise their use;
- ~~c. ensure that any on-site shortfall against emission reduction targets is offset by an alternative off-site proposal;~~
- ~~d.~~ c. apply water usage targets to developments, seek rainwater harvesting and grey water recycling, and encourage water neutrality;
- ~~e.~~ d. encourage the sustainable use of all other resources throughout the development life-cycle;
- ~~f.~~ e. support the use of decentralised energy networks, district heat networks, and intelligent energy systems in developments;
- ~~g.~~ f. support the use of ultra-low and zero carbon combined heat and power systems in developments;
- ~~h.~~ g. strongly support development proposals whose primary purpose is to generate ultra-low and zero carbon energy with a surplus to be injected into the national grid;
- ~~i. protect the borough's significant carbon sinks, support the creation of new carbon sinks, and encourage developments to deliver net gains in carbon sequestration;~~
- ~~j.~~ h. encourage urban greening, particularly through the use of green roofs and walls;
- ~~k.~~ i. promote a green economy through the provision of local green jobs, local food production, and supporting the principles of a circular economy;
- ~~l.~~ j. ensure site waste is disposed of as sustainably as possible; and
- ~~m.~~ k. work collaboratively with neighbouring authorities to exploit cross-boundary opportunities to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

5.1A Climate change refers to long-term changes in temperatures and weather patterns. Such changes occur naturally but for the last 200 years, human activity has been the main driver of climate change, primarily due to the burning of fossil fuels.

5.1B The average temperature of Earth's surface is now roughly 1.2°C warmer than it was before the industrial revolution, which is warmer than at any time in the last 100,000 years. 2011 to 2020 was the warmest decade on record and each of the last four decades has been warmer than any previous decade since 1850¹².

5.1C The UK has warmed by at least 1°C since the 1950s. Temperatures reached 34°C seven times between 2011 and 2020, which is as many times as in the preceding 50 years between 1961 and 2010. A new record high temperature of 40.3°C was reached in the summer of 2023, beating the previous record set only three years before that in 2019. Six of the ten wettest years on record have occurred since 1998¹³.

5.1D Climate change is placed at the forefront of this plan in recognition of the serious and immediate challenge it presents. Policy SP1 sets out the council's strategic approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change.

5.1E Mitigating climate change means reducing the flow of greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere in order to limit further warming. Under the Paris Agreement, the UK has committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in an effort to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Locally-driven action will be crucial to meeting this target. Accordingly, the council has committed to ensuring that Stevenage has net-zero emissions by 2030 and has developed a climate change strategy¹⁴ and action plan.

5.1F The planning system can aid these efforts by ensuring that places are designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. To this end, Policy SP1 promotes the sustainable use of resources, sustainable travel, green energy production, and energy efficiency ~~and carbon sequestration~~, as well as outright emission reduction targets.

5.1G Adapting to climate change means altering our behaviour to protect ourselves from the effects of climate change. For planning purposes, this means making developments more resilient to extreme weather events, such as intense heat and rainfall, and periods of drought. Policy SP1 therefore promotes the sustainable use of water resources, urban greening, and the balancing of solar gain and solar shading. Flooding is also related to climate change but this issue is covered by a separate policy.

5.1H Development proposals will be expected to contribute positively to mitigating and adapting to climate change. Planning applications will be assessed against the detailed policies in the new climate change chapter of this plan and applications which ~~fail to~~ make an acceptable appropriate contribution will be ~~refused~~ supported.

¹² United Nations, 2024.

¹³ Met Office, 2020.

¹⁴ <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/about-the-council/climate-change>

Sustainable development

Policy SP2: Sustainable development in Stevenage

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A strong, competitive economy

Policy SP3: A strong, competitive economy

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

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

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

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

5.14 ~~The definition of “employment uses” is provided in appendix D to this plan.~~ In planning, employment land usually refers to the following uses and is provided in appendix D:

- Class E(g)(i) - offices
- Class E(g)(ii) - research and development
- Class E(g)(iii) - light industry
- B2 - general industry; and
- B8 - storage and distribution.

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

- In the event that future economic growth, or future projections of growth, out-perform current forecasts;
- If higher targets for employment growth are pursued by the Hertfordshire LEP;
- If a greater proportion of future jobs are to be contained within the local area rather than commuting elsewhere; and / or
- To facilitate schemes that sit outside of forecasts based on past local performance. This includes developments that:
 - Service national or international demand such as the Government-backed Bioscience Catalyst at the south of the town; or
 - Address new, or currently underperforming, markets such as high-intensity town centre office provision¹⁵.

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

5.17 Making better use of existing land in and around the town centre is another element of this Plan's employment strategy. This accords with Government planning guidance which directs intensive, trip-generating uses to the most accessible locations¹⁶. The demand for office space in central Stevenage is currently weak. This is because of the poor image of the town centre and lack of suitable premises. Our evidence base demonstrated that much of the office stock in the town centre was not fit for modern business¹⁷. These areas were deliberately excluded from our successful application for an exemption from office to residential permitted development rights in 2013. A number of large office blocks in and around the town centre have now secured 'prior approvals' and are delivering much-needed residential units.

5.18 Providing replacement, new town centre office space forms part of our regeneration proposals for Stevenage Central¹⁸. It will be fit-for-purpose and capable of attracting new investment to the town. We will deliver new floorspace both within the current Leisure Park site and in the 'gateway' areas to the Town Centre adjacent to the remodelled train station.

¹⁵ Stevenage Employment & Economy Baseline Study (NLP, 2013); Functional Economic Market Area Study (NLP, 2015); Employment Technical Paper (SBC, 2015)

¹⁶ NPPF paragraph 34.

¹⁷ Employment and Economy Baseline Study (NLP, 2013)

¹⁸ Stevenage Central Town Centre Framework (DLA, 2015)

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

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

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

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

5.23 These responses will deliver a significant amount of new employment in Stevenage by 2031 but will not meet all of the identified needs. A shortfall of around 11.5ha has been identified by the most up-to-date evidence on employment needs¹⁹.

5.24 However, economic activity is not contained by the Borough boundary and Stevenage needs to be viewed within its wider FEMA²⁰. Joint work has identified a FEMA along the A1(M) corridor. This area broadly covers Stevenage, North Hertfordshire and the eastern half of Central Bedfordshire (see Chapter 3). The FEMA contains several distinct sub-areas while links can also be seen between Stevenage and other areas such as Welwyn Garden City²¹.

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

¹⁹ Employment Technical Paper (SBC, 2016)

²⁰ NPPF Paragraph 160, PPG: Housing and economic development needs assessments: Scope of assessments, paragraphs 008 and 012 (Reference ID: 2a-008-20140306 and 2a-012-20140306)

²¹ Functional Economic Market Area Study (NLP, 2015)

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

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

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

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

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

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

A vital Town Centre

Policy SP4: A vital Town Centre

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

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

e-d. _____Tightly regulate new out-of-centre comparison goods floorspace and refuse the relaxation or removal of conditions on the type of goods that can be sold from existing out-of-centre comparison retail units.

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

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

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

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

5.35 Our evidence studies show that there is a projected need for 4,700m² of additional comparison retail floorspace during the lifetime of this plan. In accordance with the retail hierarchy, and to support the regeneration of the Town Centre, this floorspace will be directed to the Town Centre. The projected significant increase in the resident population in and around the Town Centre may support some further growth in comparison floorspace: in which case, this will be directed towards the creation of additional floorspace in appropriate locations within the Stevenage Central area. ~~In order to avoid potential adverse impacts upon the town centre, this area will be re-examined at a Full Review to ensure existing and future need for comparison has been updated to reflect changes since the Plan was adopted.~~

5.36 In order to protect the Town Centre from adverse competition from the extensive amount of out-of-centre comparison floorspace in the Borough, it is our intention not to permit any additional comparison floorspace in out-of-centre locations nor to permit existing out-of-centre retail units to benefit from any relaxation or removal of existing conditions on the type and nature of the goods that can be sold (i.e. that might permit them to compete more directly with the Town Centre). Applications must satisfy the sequential test or will be refused if they are likely to have an impact on one or more considerations in paragraph 94 of the NPPF.

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

5.38 Provision is made for a major new convenience store on Graveley Road in the north of the Borough (on the existing garden centre site) to help to meet identified needs towards the middle of the plan period. ~~In order to avoid potential adverse impacts upon the existing retail hierarchy, this site will be re-examined at a full review to ensure existing and future need for convenience has been updated to reflect changes since the plan was adopted.~~

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

Infrastructure and transport

Policy SP5: Infrastructure

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

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

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

5.40 New development places extra demand on services. New homes will be occupied by families that need school places and open spaces. A new employment site might require a bus route to be changed or created so that employees have choices over how to reach work. It is also essential to make sure that new

development is supported by suitable infrastructure. This includes providing access to key utilities such as water and electricity and ensuring that the major schemes needed to support development are delivered in a timely fashion.

5.41 Our evidence demonstrates that a growing Stevenage will need a range of new services and facilities²². Growth will also help us to tackle our identified housing needs by requiring new developments to provide affordable housing.

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

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

5.43 Policy SP5 sets out a number of items for which developer contributions might be necessary. Although the way in which contributions are collected may change over the lifetime of this plan, our list of requirements is less likely to change. As part of the preparation of this plan, we have collected evidence which shows that a CIL could work in Stevenage²³. CIL will be developed alongside the Local Plan, though it will be subject to its own process and Examination.

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

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

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

5.47 Further road schemes have been identified to mitigate other effects of the development proposed in this plan²⁴. These will provide additional capacity on local roads which are predicted to come under stress as a result of future development. This includes improvements, for all users, to a number of key junctions in the town as well as on the approaches to, and at, the motorway junctions at the south-west and north-west of the Borough.

²² Infrastructure Delivery Plan (SBC, 2016)

²³ Whole Plan Viability Study including Community Infrastructure Levy (HDH Planning & Development, 2015)

²⁴ Stevenage Borough Council Preferred Option Housing Assessment - Transport Modelling Report (AECOM, 2015)

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

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

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

5.51 Our evidence base has assessed the capacity of Rye Meads to cope with development across its wider catchment area. It concludes that the works should have capacity to accommodate development from across the catchment until at least 2026 with a reasonable prospect of accommodating development until 2031²⁵. New infrastructure will deliver additional capacity, both at the works themselves and in the connections from Stevenage. The Council will continue to engage with Thames Water, local authorities within the Rye Meads catchment, the Environment Agency and Natural England to ensure the need for additional capacity is reflected in appropriate plans and strategies and delivered without causing harm to the SPA.

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

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

²⁵ Rye Meads Water Cycle Strategy Review (SBC, 2015)

5.54 With these measures, it is considered that Stevenage's Local Plan will deliver the infrastructure necessary to support its proposals and can proceed without causing significant harm to the Lee Valley SPA²⁶.

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

²⁶ Appropriate Assessment Screening Opinion (SBC, 2015).

Policy SP6: Sustainable transport

We will create the conditions for a significant increase in active travel and the use of public transport and reduce the need to travel by directing new development to the most accessible locations. We will achieve this by:

~~reduce the need to travel by directing new development to the most accessible locations;~~

~~a.~~ a. ~~requir~~inge developments to first prioritise active travel in the layout of sites; ~~and by~~

~~a-b.~~ a-b. ~~providing connections to surrounding pedestrian and cycle networks~~ and requiring developments to prioritise accessibility to public transport with layouts that maximise the catchment area for public transport services and infrastructure that encourages their use;

~~b-c.~~ b-c. ~~requir~~inge developments to provide appropriate cycle parking and supporting facilities, having regard to the supplementary planning documents and relevant Hertfordshire County Council guidance;

~~c-d.~~ c-d. ~~requir~~inge developments to ~~then~~ prioritise accessibility to public transport with layouts that maximise the catchment area for public transport services and infrastructure that encourages their use;

~~d-e.~~ d-e. ~~support~~ing the provision of new high-quality sustainable transport facilities identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, including:

- i. schemes identified in local transport plans and other relevant plans and strategies;
- ii. new pedestrian and cycle links, particularly between the town centre, the Gunnels Wood employment area, and Old Town;
- iii. a new borough-wide cycle hire scheme;
new bus termini and waiting facilities; and
- iv. a remodelled railway station that reflects Stevenage's position on the network and wider regeneration ambitions;

~~e-f.~~ e-f. ~~reduc~~inge car dependency by limiting the provision of car parking according to site accessibility;

~~f. refuse permission where development proposals fail to provide any relevant plans or assessments relating to transport;
seek any necessary developer contributions, in accordance with Policy SP5, to achieve all of the above.~~

Development proposals should provide any relevant plans or assessments relating to transport necessary to the determination of the application.

The Council will seek ~~and to seek where required~~, any necessary developer contributions, in accordance with Policy SP5, to achieve all of the above.

5.56A Active Travel comprises everyday journeys made by walking, wheeling (wheelchairs, scooters, adapted cycles), or cycling, aiming to make these low-carbon, healthy, and efficient transport choices for shorter trips, reducing car use and improving public health, air quality, and street life. Active travel is about creating

communities where walking, wheeling, and cycling are safe, easy, and attractive alternatives to driving for everyday trips, making England healthier and greener.

5.56 The Government encourage us to plan positively for cycling, walking and passenger transport. It recognises that the transport system needs to be balanced in favour of sustainable transport modes, giving people a real choice about how they travel²⁷. Stevenage is well placed to meet these requirements. There are a large number of bus routes serving the town with most homes within walking distance of a bus stop. There is a comprehensive cycle and footpath network, fully segregated along key routes. Stevenage station is on the East Coast Main Line providing regular and fast services to London, Cambridge and towns and cities in the north of England.

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

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

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

5.60 Our evidence recognises the need to deliver major interventions in and immediately around the railway station²⁸. As well as creating a sense of arrival in the town, these will also provide practical linkages across the railway line. Any operational works on land that is controlled by Network Rail and the train companies will not require planning permission from the Council. However, we will work together to ensure that any such schemes integrate with our wider proposals for the Town Centre.

5.61 We will support high density uses in the Town Centre and in other locations with good access to passenger transport that will help reduce the number and length of journeys that people need to make. Developments will be required to make appropriate on-site provision for cyclists and pedestrians. This might include cycle parking spaces and ancillary facilities such as lockers and showers. Where

²⁷ NPPF Paragraph 29

²⁸ Town Centre Framework (David Lock Associates (DLA), 2015)

appropriate we will require Transport Assessments and Travel Plans to demonstrate that the proposed development will not have an unacceptable impact.

5.62 Whilst promoting active and public transport, we recognise that cars will continue to play a role in people's lives. We will assess development proposals against parking standards, which will limit car parking in areas with good access to public transport and local services, whilst ensuring that appropriate cycle parking and disabled persons' parking is provided borough-wide. We will also support the transition to electric vehicles, albeit electric vehicle charging provision is now determined by the Building Regulations.

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

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

High quality homes

Policy SP7: High quality homes

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

- a. Provide at least 7,600 new homes within Stevenage Borough between 2011 and 2031, ~~of which no fewer than 4,956 will be provided between 2024 and 2031.~~
- b. Deliver these through the sites and broad locations identified in this plan that allow for:
 - i. 2,950 new homes in and around the Town Centre;
 - ii. 1,350 new homes in a new neighbourhood on undeveloped land to the west of the town within the Borough boundary;
 - iii. 1,350 new homes to the north and south-east of the town on land removed from the Green Belt;
 - iv. 1,950 new homes elsewhere in the Borough; and
 - v. 11 new, permanent Gypsy and Traveller pitches on a new site close to Junction 8 of the A1(M).
- c. Ensure at least 60% of new homes completed within the Borough boundary between 2011 and 2031 are on previously developed land.
- d. Make sure there is always enough land to build homes for the next five years.
- e. Support applications for housing development on unallocated sites where they are in suitable locations and will not exceed our environmental capacity.
- f. Build a full range of homes in terms of tenure, type and size. This plan positively addresses housing needs and existing imbalances in the housing stock by setting targets for:
 - i. At least 20% of all new homes over the plan period to be Affordable Housing with an aspiration to deliver up to 40% affordable housing where viability permits;
 - ii. An appropriate mix of housing sizes, in line with the most up-to-date evidence of need; and
 - iii. At least 3% of new homes over the plan period to be 'aspirational' to deliver a more balanced housing stock; and
 - iv. At least 1% of new homes on the urban extensions to be self-build.
- g. Supplement these homes through the provision of up to 200 bed spaces in supported accommodation subject to up-to-date evidence of need; and
- h. Work with North Hertfordshire District Council and, if necessary, East Hertfordshire District Council to ensure any homes provided on the edge of Stevenage but outside the Borough boundary are successfully integrated into the urban fabric of the town.

5.66 Providing new homes is a key outcome of the plan-making process. Stevenage currently has a population of around 86,000²⁹. This will continue to grow and change over the plan period driving demand for places to live within the Borough.

5.67 The NPPF says that plans should normally meet the full, objectively assessed needs (OAN) for market and affordable housing in the housing market area. ~~When the local plan was originally adopted in 2019, our evidence identified a~~ requirement for Stevenage of 7,300 homes over the period 2011-2031. This ~~took~~ takes into account migration trends over a 10-year period and also includes ~~se~~ adjustments in response to market signals in line with Government guidance³⁰.

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

- The acute need for affordable housing in the town. A modest increase in the target allows more homes in response to this pressure and particularly reflects the Council's emerging housebuilding programme which will deliver up to 100% affordable homes on sites in the Borough³¹.
- The fact that as people live for longer, and live in their own homes for longer, it may be appropriate to assume that more of their needs will be met in the normal housing stock;
- Official Government household projections for the Borough³²;
- The need to ensure development viability and set a challenging target that provides a clear signal that we are serious about delivering regeneration and change in the Borough; and
- What we consider to be a reasonable and achievable rate of housing delivery.
- ~~• The partial review and update of the local plan identifies a requirement for 4,956 homes to be delivered over the remainder of the plan period (to 2031). This figure represents the overall plan period target of 7,600 homes minus the net housing completions from 2011 to 2024.~~

5.68A The housing requirement of the Plan is significantly above what would be required, using the National Planning Policy Framework's standard housing methodology calculation.

5.69 This target meets the future needs of Stevenage within the Borough boundary and does not rely on other authorities to make good any shortfall. Simultaneously, the small size of the Borough and the challenging target we have set means there

²⁹ Population Estimates for UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, Mid-2014 (Office for National Statistics, 2015)

³⁰ Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update 2015 (ORS, 2015)

³¹ Our previous SHMA (DCA, 2013) said 575 affordable homes were required each year. The latest SHMA suggests that our Objectively Assessed Needs should contain a 10% uplift in response to market signals and affordable housing needs. These extra homes would equate to a 14% uplift.

³² The 2012-based household projections (DCLG, 2015) suggest 7,700 households will form over the plan period. Although the evidence suggests our housing requirements should be calculated in a slightly different way, we think it is also important to aim towards this higher number.

are not additional sites or land which might be used to meet unmet needs from other areas.

5.70 Notwithstanding this point, we have worked with other authorities to define the functional HMA in which Stevenage lies (see Chapter 3)³³. We will continue to have regard to emerging proposals across the HMA and work with relevant authorities to ensure the requirements of national guidance are met³⁴.

5.71 Taking into account completions and permissions since 2011, this target will require development to accelerate to a rate of around 708 homes per year over the remainder of the plan period³⁵. This is above long-term development rates since the Development Corporation was wound up. However, the development industry supports our belief that this level of delivery can be achieved³⁶.

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

5.73 Our most recent housing land study³⁷ identifies sufficient sites within the Borough to meet our housing requirement to 2031. In trying to meet these needs, whilst ensuring sustainable development, we have chosen sites for development in the order shown below.~~The sites allocated in the 2019 version of the plan remain sufficient to meet our housing requirement to 2031.~~ In trying to meet these needs, whilst ensuring sustainable development, we have chosen sites for development in the order shown below:

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

5.74 A technical paper³⁸ has been produced to explain how we have decided which sites from the land availability assessment to take forward and allocate within this plan.~~how these sites will continue to meet the borough's needs up to 2031.~~

5.75 Since 2011, 593 homes have been completed, and a further 1,758³⁹ are already in the planning process. This means that land for a further 5,249 homes needs to be identified.

³³ Housing Market Areas in Bedfordshire and surrounding areas (ORS, 2015)

³⁴ Paragraph 47 of the NPPF requires local plans to ensure that the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area are met, insofar as this would be consistent with the policies of the Framework. The Housing Technical Paper (SBC, 2015) considers provision across this wider area.

³⁵ To reflect the current outcome of the standard method for assessing housing need

³⁶ Housing completions in the 20- and 30-year periods to 2011 averaged 300 per year. The required rate represents an uplift of around 235%

³⁷ Strategic Land Availability Assessment: Housing. Update 2015

³⁸ Housing Technical Paper (SBC, 2024)

³⁹ Excludes some schemes that we know are unlikely to come forward in their current form, to avoid double-counting.

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

5.76 National guidance encourages the reuse of land that has been previously developed (brownfield land). Since the start of the plan period around 85% of new homes and planning permissions (including prior approvals) have been on previously developed land (PDL). We also plan to redevelop a number of large PDL sites in the future, including the Town Centre and some of the Neighbourhood Centres. However, Stevenage has a limited supply of these sites, so we will also require a number of greenfield sites to be developed. Our evidence⁴⁰ suggests that just over 45% of future housing could be built on PDL. Overall, we expect that approximately 60% of all housing completions over the period 2011-2031 will be on PDL.~~National guidance encourages the reuse of land that has been previously developed (brownfield land). We plan to redevelop a number of large PDL sites in the future, including the Town Centre and some of the Neighbourhood Centres. However, Stevenage has a limited supply of these sites, so we will also require a number of greenfield sites to be developed. Our evidence⁴¹ suggests that just over 43% of future housing could be built on PDL. Overall, we expect that approximately 43% of all housing completions over the period 2011-2031 will be on PDL.~~

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

5.78 Stevenage was developed around the concept of individual neighbourhoods, each having their own centre for facilities and services. However, many of these

⁴⁰ Housing Technical Paper (SBC, 2015)

⁴¹ ~~Housing Technical Paper (SBC, 2015)~~

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

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

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

5.81 As well as ensuring we meet the overall housing target, national guidance also requires us to maintain a rolling five-year housing land supply. As we are reliant on a number of large schemes, and relatively few small sites, many of our new homes will be delivered towards the end of the plan period⁴².

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

5.83 As part of the housing strategy, this plan also makes provision to meet the future needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community⁴³. There is currently one Gypsy and Traveller Site in Stevenage. This is to the west of the A1(M) at Dyes Lane and provides 17 pitches.

5.84 Our evidence suggests a requirement for between 11 and 16 new pitches by 2031⁴⁴. There is some uncertainty around the precise level of future requirements because of the small size of the existing community and the difficulties of projecting their needs over a long time period. We will ensure that the minimum requirement identified is met and will keep our evidence under regular review to ensure that appropriate levels of provision are made over the period to 2031. Our existing site at Dyes Lane has been developed to the limits of the existing land ownership and this plan identifies a new site at the north-west of the Borough to meet future requirements.

⁴² Housing Technical Paper, Appendix B (SBC, 2024)

⁴³ In accordance with Government advice in Planning policy for traveller sites (DCLG, 2015)

⁴⁴ Stevenage Borough Council Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Study (David Couttie Associates (DCA), 2013); Housing Technical Paper (SBC, 2015)

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

5.86 The provision of affordable homes is a key priority for the Council. Over the plan period, at least 1 in 5 of the new homes provided should be affordable homes. The partial review and update of the local plan introduces an uplift to the proportion of affordable homes required on greenfield sites, from 30% to 40%, in line with aspirations when the plan was originally adopted in 2019⁴⁵. The provision of affordable units on private developments, in line with our policy requirements, will be supplemented by the Council's own housebuilding programme. This will deliver schemes containing up to 100% affordable housing on public land.

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

5.88 Similarly, we need to ensure the right sorts of provision are made for older residents. Much of this can be accommodated within the housing stock though the data suggests up to 200 bed spaces of specialist accommodation is likely to be required⁴⁶. However, it is important to be flexible in this regard. The ways in which older people choose to live, and in which providers seek to deliver services is changing. This is reflected in the housing target we have set (see Paragraph 5.67). We will continue to support proposals for care homes, and other appropriate forms of provision, that respond to future demands.

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

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

⁴⁵ Strategic Housing Market Assessment (Opinion Research Services, 2023) and Local Plan & CIL Review Viability Assessment (Aspinall Verdi, 2024)

⁴⁶ Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update 2015 (ORS, 2015). This suggests a requirement for almost 200 additional institutional bedspaces over the period to 2031. These would normally be classified as a class C2 use, compared to dwellings which are C3 and are excluded from the OAN. It is standard statistical practise to assume that the proportion of older persons requiring this form of accommodation will remain constant.

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

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

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

Good design

Policy SP8: Good design

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

- a. preserve and enhance the most important areas and characteristics of Stevenage whilst delivering substantial improvement to the image and quality of the town's built fabric;
- b. require significant developments to be masterplanned to ensure the delivery of high-quality schemes;
- c. set out detailed design criteria and require applicants to have regard to supplementary planning documents and other relevant guidance;
- d. implement the government's nationally described space standard and Building Regulations optional requirements to ensure schemes deliver the space, accessibility and water efficiency expected of modern developments;
- e. require developments to be safe and secure, reducing crime and the fear of crime; and
- f. support developments that are designed to achieve high levels of certification against nationally and internationally recognised sustainability standards.

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

5.94 Stevenage was the UK's first designated 'New Town', which incorporated the pre-existing settlement (see Chapter 2). There are examples of high-quality design

and layout, both historic and modern, which should be preserved whilst also influencing the future. The high quality design of transport infrastructure, for example, positively contributes to sustainability and quality of life objectives. New development proposals should continue to ensure that movement on foot or bicycle is as easy and convenient as travelling by car.

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

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

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

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

Healthy communities

Policy SP9: Healthy communities

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

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

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

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

5.100 This policy broadly relates to C2, E, F.1 and F.2 Use Classes and includes facilities such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, healthcare facilities, public houses and places of worship.

5.101 Stevenage performs worse than the national average, and significantly worse than the surrounding area (Hertfordshire) in many areas of healthy living, with particularly low levels of educational attainment and physical activity, and higher levels of smoking related deaths and obesity⁴⁷.

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

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

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

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

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

⁴⁷ Stevenage Health Profile (Public Health England, 2015); Hertfordshire Health Profile (Public Health England, 2015)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5.116 Limited land availability within the Borough means that a proactive approach to planning for sport and recreation is essential. Our evidence⁴⁸ identifies a number of key priorities for the town. The highest priority being the replacement of the currently ageing facilities within the Arts and Leisure Centre and Swimming Centre to a new wet and dry leisure centre. Other requirements include increased sports hall provision, skate parks or other youth facilities, a new cricket ground and securing Community Use Agreements at schools.

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

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

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

⁴⁸ Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy 2014-2031 (SBC, 2015)

Green Belt

Policy SP10: Green Belt

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

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

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

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

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

5.122 The Green Belt boundary around the town, previously identified by the District Plan⁴⁹, was very close to the existing urban area. In conjunction with this, the town's urban nature means that limited opportunities are available for development. In the past the Green Belt has been reviewed and land has been released to allow for development to the north east of the town at Great Ashby, and to the west of the town. Development to the west has been the subject of various planning applications, but is yet to proceed.

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

⁴⁹ Stevenage District Plan Second Review, 1991-2011 (As amended 2004)

5.124 This plan is informed by a Green Belt Review⁵⁰.

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

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

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

5.127 There is no definition of 'exceptional circumstances' within the NPPF. However, it has been considered by the Courts. The recent Calverton judgement⁵¹ identifies criteria that should be taken into account when considering whether these circumstances exist. Our overarching approach to Green Belt review and consideration of these criteria is set out in a technical paper⁵². We consider that the future development and regeneration needs of the Borough do provide the 'exceptional circumstances' that are required to alter Green Belt boundaries.

5.128 Our evidence⁵³ demonstrates that the sites recommended for release will not harm the overall purposes of the Green Belt in this area.

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

5.130 The Local Plan releases the following parcels of land:

- Land at North Stevenage (Housing - 800 new homes)
- Land to the South of Stevenage (Housing - 550 new homes) Garden Centre site (Convenience retail)

⁵⁰ Review of the Green Belt around Stevenage: Part 1 - Survey against Green Belt Purpose (AMEC, 2013); Review of the Green Belt around Stevenage: Part 2 - Site Assessment and Capacity Testing (AMEC, 2015)

⁵¹ Calverton Parish Council v Nottingham City Council & Ors [2015] EWHC 1078 (Admin) (21 April 2015)

⁵² Green Belt Technical Paper (SBC, 2015)

⁵³ Review of the Green Belt around Stevenage: Part 2 - Site Assessment and Capacity Testing (AMEC, 2015)

- Land adjacent to Graveley Road (Gypsy and Traveller provision) Land west of Junction 8 (Employment)

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

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

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

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

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

Flooding and pollution

Policy SP11: Flooding, drainage and pollution

We will work to minimise flood risk, surface water run-off and all forms of pollution. We will:

- a. direct development to areas at the lowest risk of flooding through the application of a sequential approach;
- b. determine planning applications in accordance with national flood risk planning policies;
- c. ensure development utilises sustainable drainage systems wherever possible, with a preference for the most sustainable, surface SuDS features;
- d. recognise the multifunctional benefits of SuDS;
- e. protect existing flood storage reservoirs and require new flood storage reservoirs to be provided where appropriate;
- f. protect existing watercourses, including requiring their re-naturalisation, where appropriate; and
- g. ensure that development does not result in unacceptable harm to human health or the natural environment as a result of pollution.

5.137 Some small areas of the Borough are at risk from flooding⁵⁴. Land has been allocated for development using the sequential approach and conforms to Government guidance on flood risk. We will require development proposals to assess risks from all types of flooding and mitigate or reduce risk through the provision of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) and other measures.

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

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

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

⁵⁴ Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) (Faber Maunsell, 2009); SFRA Update (SBC, 2013)

5.141 Government guidance requires us to ensure new development is appropriate for its location⁵⁵. High levels of light and noise pollution can have a negative impact on the amenity of surrounding land uses. It can also have an adverse effect on wildlife where existing (diurnal and nocturnal) patterns are disturbed.

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

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

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

⁵⁵ Para 120 (NPPF 2012)

The natural and historic environments

Policy SP12: Green infrastructure and the natural environment

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

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

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

5.146 Identifying and conserving a network of green spaces is a vital part of the planning process. Government guidance recognises the importance of providing access to high quality open spaces. It recognises that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. We should plan

positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure⁵⁶.

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

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

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

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

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

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

5.153 The provision of new open spaces and associated facilities will be supported where they would support a space's existing function or meet an identified deficit.

⁵⁶ Policies 73, 109 and 114 of the NPPF

However, we also recognise that some areas of open space in the town are not valued. They are not used by members of the public or are of particularly poor quality. In some instances, it may be acceptable for these sites to be developed for alternate uses. Our approach to these areas is set out in our detailed Part III policies.

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

Policy SP13: The historic environment

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

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

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

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

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

5.158 Conservation areas are defined in law as 'areas of special architectural or historic interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'⁵⁷. There are seven conservation areas in Stevenage, listed below along with the key features of these areas:

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

⁵⁷ The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Amendment No.2) (England) Regulations 2009

Symonds green	To protect historic buildings and their setting which were a small rural hamlet before the development of the New Town.
Town Square	It was the first pedestrianised town centre in the country.

Table 1 Stevenage conservation areas

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

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

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

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

6A Climate change

Efficiency

Policy CC1: Energy efficiency

Where appropriate, major development proposals should aim to achieve net zero regulated operational emissions, with consideration for the following:

- a. The provision of demand-side energy efficiency measures;
- b. The provision of supply-side energy efficiency measures; and
- c. The adoption of ultra-low and zero carbon energy generation.

-The council will apply Policy CC1 to decisions on planning applications flexibly, in recognition of the fact that it may not always be appropriate to achieve net zero emissions.

Where appropriate, aAny development proposal designed to be whole-life carbon net zero⁵⁸ will be strongly supported.

~~Development proposals must demonstrate how they will maximise reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, with consideration for the following:~~

~~The provision of demand-side energy efficiency measures;
The provision of supply-side energy efficiency measures; and
The adoption of ultra-low and zero carbon energy generation.~~

Major development

~~Major development proposals (including large scale major development proposals⁵⁹) must achieve net zero regulated operational emissions.~~

~~At the application stage, an energy statement must be submitted to demonstrate how the proposal will meet the net zero target.~~

~~Post-permission, planning conditions will be used to ensure that the net zero target is met in practice.~~

Large scale major development

~~Outside of the town centre⁶⁰, large scale major development proposals must also achieve net zero emissions during construction and demolition i.e. be whole-life carbon net zero⁶¹.~~

⁵⁸ Defined as the total greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the construction and use of a building over its entire life.

⁵⁹ Defined as proposals involving the creation of more than 150 dwellings or 15,000m² of non-residential floor space.

⁶⁰ As defined by Policy TC1.

⁶¹ Defined as the total greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the construction and use of a building over its entire life.

~~At the application stage, an energy statement, which includes a whole life-cycle carbon (WLC) assessment, must be submitted to demonstrate how the target will be met.~~

~~Post-permission, planning conditions will be used to secure an updated WLC assessment, using actual emissions figures.~~

Carbon offsetting

~~Where it is clearly demonstrated that a development proposal cannot fully meet the relevant target on-site, the shortfall may be offset by an alternative off-site proposal but only where the proposal has already been identified and delivery is certain.~~

6A.1 The council is committed to ensuring that Stevenage is net-zero carbon by 2030. Homes and workplaces account for a significant proportion of the borough's emissions and minimising these will be essential to meeting the 2030 target. For this reason, new major developments must should aim to meet the emissions targets set by Policy CC4 achieve net zero regulated operational emissions where it is appropriate to do so.

6A.2 For the purposes of Policy CC1, "major development" has the meaning given in Annex 2 to the NPPF December 2023. Householder and minor development are excluded from the policy.

6A.3 "Net zero regulated operational emissions" will be achieved when the CO₂ emission rate for the development is equivalent to a 100% improvement on the Target Emission Rate determined using the Standard Assessment Procedure 10.2.

6A.4 ~~The design, construction and operation of new buildings should be informed by the principles set out at the start of the policy.~~ In achieving net zero regulated operational emissions, the priority is should be to implement demand-side efficiency measures before addressing supply-side efficiency measures and finally, the production of clean energy.

~~6A.3~~ 6A.5 Demand-side energy efficiency measures reduce the overall amount of energy required to operate and maintain a development. This includes energy conservation, monitoring, and the adoption of efficient design principles (e.g. those relating to the form, fabric and orientation of buildings).

~~6A.4~~ 6A.6 Supply-side energy efficiency measures aim to provide the energy required by a development in a way that minimises emissions. Such measures include combined energy production (e.g. combined heat and power), efficient energy distribution (e.g. heat networks), and energy waste recovery.

~~6A.5~~ 6A.7 For the majority of developments, the production of clean energy is likely to involve the installation of solar panels but in some instances, there may be feasible alternatives. Where solar panels are considered, developers should be mindful of the benefits of combining them with green roofs to create bio-solar roofs.

~~6A.6~~6A.8 Applicants for major development proposals will be expected to include details of how their proposal will comply with Policy CC1 as part of their submission. ~~Major development proposals will be required to provide an energy statement which shows how the overall target~~net zero regulated operational emissions or a justified lower standard of operational emissions will be ~~met~~achieved and the contribution made by each of the ~~measures~~considerations listed under points (a) to (c) of the policy.

6A.9 The council will apply Policy CC1 to decisions on planning applications flexibly, in recognition of the fact that it may not always be appropriate to achieve net zero emissions. This will include instances where doing so would not be technically feasible⁶², would not be financially viable, or would otherwise compromise the delivery of sustainable development.

6A.10 The council will also, ~~where appropriate~~, support any development which is designed to be whole life carbon net zero. This is achieved when a development results in net zero greenhouse gas emissions over its entire life and includes operational emissions as well as the emissions arising from construction and demolition.

6A.11 Applicants who wish to demonstrate that a development will be whole life carbon net zero should do so by submitting a whole life carbon assessment produced in accordance with a nationally recognised standard (e.g. the RICS WLCA Standard).

~~Large-scale major development proposals will additionally be required to include a WLC assessment⁶³ as part of their energy statement. Householder and minor development are excluded from the policy.~~

~~6A.7 In practice, ensuring that the policy is effective will require the reporting of energy demand and emissions post construction. This should be done once for each development (or phase of development, where appropriate) at the earliest practicable opportunity following completion.~~

~~6A.8 Where the targets set by Policy CC1 cannot be wholly met on-site, the calculated shortfall may be offset on a different site. However, the council will only consider this where the offsetting scheme has already been identified and its delivery can, for all intents and purposes, be guaranteed.~~

~~6A.9 If permission is granted for a proposal, planning conditions and/or a legal agreement will be used to secure any measures agreed at the application stage.~~

⁶² In relation to the availability of local energy infrastructure (e.g. adequate existing and planned grid connections) and access to adequate supply chains

⁶³ ~~Produced in accordance with a nationally recognised standard (e.g. the RICS WLCA Standard).~~

Policy CC2: Heating and cooling

~~Where appropriate, all development proposals should minimise demand for energy dependent mechanical air conditioning cooling systems, with consideration for the following:~~

- a. Balancing solar gain and solar shading
- b. Minimising internal heat generation
- c. Managing the heat within the building
- d. Providing passive ventilation
- ~~e. Providing mechanical ventilation~~

~~Major development proposals must should demonstrate how buildings will be heated and cooled as part of an energy statement. Permission will be refused for proposals which rely on energy dependent cooling systems unless it is demonstrated that their use is essential.~~

~~The council will apply Policy CC2 to decisions on planning applications flexibly, in recognition of the fact that it may not always be appropriate to minimise demand for active cooling systems. This will include instances where alternatives are not technically feasible⁶⁴, would not be financially viable, or would otherwise compromise the delivery of sustainable development. The Council will apply Policy CC2, insofar as it relates to mechanical cooling systems, to decisions on planning applications flexibly, in recognition of the fact that it may not always be feasible for development to provide such systems.~~

6A.124 Climate change means Stevenage is already experiencing higher temperatures compared to the long-term average and more frequent severe heat events. For the majority of people, the impact of this is feeling uncomfortable or being unable to sleep but for vulnerable people, the impacts can be much more serious. These impacts are often compounded by the urban heat island effect, where concentrations of buildings, hard surfacing and waste heat lead to increased local temperatures. It is important that new development is designed to mitigate ~~this~~ these risks.

6A.132 ~~Active Mechanical cooling~~ Air conditioning systems, ~~such as air conditioning, have significant energy requirements and also require maintenance~~ typically require significant amounts of energy to operate and thereby contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. They also usually expel waste heat to the external environment, which exacerbates the urban heat island effect. In this way, use of mechanical cooling systems can create a feedback loop, whereby higher temperatures drive greater cooling demand, further increasing emissions and local heat stress. In addition, mechanical cooling systems require regular maintenance and replacement over the life of a building, resulting in ongoing resource use.

⁶⁴ This may include healthcare, laboratory or other settings where precise temperature control is essential to the use

~~6A.143~~ -For these reasons, ~~they~~ air conditioning systems are usually not ~~at the~~ most sustainable cooling solution. ~~Instead, the risk of overheating should, first and foremost, be mitigated through building design~~ The most sustainable approach to managing overheating is usually to reduce cooling demand at source through passive design measures.

~~6A.136A.154~~ The impacts of excessive cold can be just as serious as those of excessive heat and it is therefore important that buildings are suitably warm during periods of colder temperatures. Designing buildings to be cool during the summer only to require additional energy for heating during the winter would be counterproductive.

~~6A.146A.165~~ Therefore, the challenge is to ensure that buildings remain comfortable and safe throughout the year, including during periods of extreme temperatures, ~~without increasing whilst minimising energy demand~~ for energy and other resources. Policy CC2 explains how new development should approach this challenge.

~~6A.156A.176~~ The priority should be to balance the warming effects of the sun (i.e. solar gain) and the cooling effects of shade (i.e. solar shading). This can be done through careful consideration of building orientation, building fabric, and fenestration. High-albedo materials can be used to reflect sunlight where necessary, while green infrastructure, such as green roofs and walls, can also be used to great effect, acting as insulation during winter and providing cooling through evapotranspiration during summer.

~~6A.166A.187~~ Following this, consideration should be given to minimising internal heat generation. This can be achieved through energy efficiency, which will limit the amount of waste energy being lost as heat.

~~6A.176A.198~~ The heat within buildings can be managed effectively through the use of high ceilings and exposed internal thermal mass. Both of these measures make buildings take longer to heat up, making them less susceptible to sudden temperature shocks.

~~6A.186A.202019~~ For ventilation, passive or mechanical methods may be appropriate, depending on the approach to building design and site context. In any case, single-aspect dwellings should still be avoided as far as possible.

~~6A.196A.20~~ Policy The council will apply Policy CC2 to decisions on planning applications flexibly, in recognition of the fact that it may not always be appropriate to minimise demand for active cooling systems. This will include instances where alternatives are not technically feasible⁶⁵, would not be financially viable, or would otherwise compromise the delivery of sustainable development. CC2 recognises that in some instances, the use of active cooling systems may be unavoidable. This may include healthcare and laboratory settings, where precise temperature control is essential to the use.

⁶⁵ ~~This may include healthcare, laboratory or other settings where precise temperature control is essential to the use~~

6A.21 The council also recognises that many of the borough's existing buildings were constructed at a time when the risk of overheating was not a significant design consideration and as a result, may be vulnerable to higher summer temperatures. In these circumstances, Policy CC2 seeks to ensure that passive alternatives, such as shutters or improved glazing, are considered ahead of mechanical cooling systems. However, it is not intended as a prohibition of such systems where they are genuinely necessary to maintain safe and comfortable living conditions.

6A.22 In all cases where mechanical cooling systems are installed, these circumstances, the cooling systems they should ideally be designed to reuse the any waste heat that they produce.

~~6A.20~~ 6A.23 For major development proposals, applicants ~~will be expected to~~should include details of how Policy CC2 will be complied with as part of an energy statement ~~at the point of application submission. Applicants f~~For householder and minor development proposals, a shorter technical note is likely to be more appropriate, and applicants need only provide this information if the proposals involve mechanical cooling will not need to submit an energy statement but will still be expected to comply with the policy by taking account of heating and cooling in the design of developments and avoiding reliance on energy dependent cooling systems.

Policy CC3: Water efficiency

Development proposals involving the creation of new dwellings must ensure that water consumption does not exceed 110 litres per person per day, including external water use.

Where appropriate, D~~development proposals involving the creation of new dwellings must should additionally incorporate also provide for~~ rainwater harvesting ~~schemes unless there are clear and convincing reasons for not doing so.~~

Where appropriate, A~~all non-residential development must should provide for the recycling of grey water unless there are clear and convincing reasons for not doing so.~~

The Council will apply Policy CC3, insofar as it relates to rainwater harvesting and grey water recycling, to decisions on planning applications flexibly, in recognition of the fact that it may not always be appropriate for development to provide for such systems.

Where appropriate, DdDd development proposals which demonstrate water neutrality will be strongly supported.

6A.24 Stevenage lies in an area of severe water stress and water consumption is above the national average. With a growing population, it is therefore essential that we use our limited water resources more efficiently. For this reason, new development must comply with Policy CC3.

6A.2~~52~~ Proposals for new dwellings must ensure that wholesome water consumption does not exceed 110 litres per person per day. This aligns with the Building Regulations optional requirement G2(2)(b). Where planning permission is granted, planning conditions will be used to ensure that this target is met.

6A.2~~63~~ Where appropriate, Proposals for new dwellings ~~must~~ should ~~also incorporate provide for rainwater harvesting, which is typically achieved by storing the water captured by gutters in a water butt schemes unless there are clear and convincing reasons for not doing so. This may include instances where it would be exceptionally difficult to install or impractical to maintain. Rainwater harvesting reduces demand on mains water supplies by substituting potable water with collected rainfall for appropriate non-potable uses, helping to conserve water resources and improve resilience to drought. By capturing water at source, it also reduces surface water runoff, easing pressure on drainage networks and lowering the risk of flooding.~~

6A.2~~74~~ Where appropriate, All non-residential development ~~must~~ should provide for the recycling of grey water, which means treating the relatively clean wastewater from sources like basins, showers and laundry and re-using it for non-potable uses. Grey water recycling reduces demand on mains water supplies by reusing water that would otherwise be discharged to the sewer, helping to conserve water resources and improve resilience to water scarcity. It can significantly lower potable water consumption in buildings with high water use, reducing pressure on water infrastructure and associated energy use for water treatment and pumping. By decreasing wastewater volumes, grey water recycling can also reduce loads on sewerage networks. ~~unless there are clear and convincing reasons for not doing so. The council will consider this in the same way as rainwater harvesting for residential developments.~~

6A.2~~85~~ The council will apply Policy CC3, insofar as it relates to rainwater harvesting and grey water recycling, to decisions on planning applications flexibly, in recognition of the fact that it may not always be appropriate for development to provide for such systems. This will include instances where it is not technically feasible, would not be financially viable, or would otherwise compromise the delivery of sustainable development. ~~For the avoidance of doubt, financial cost will not, in and of itself, be accepted as a reason for failing to install rainwater harvesting or grey water recycling schemes. However, where the cost of installing these systems would demonstrably compromise other objectives in this plan (i.e. where a fully policy-compliant development is not viable), the council will seek to take a flexible and balanced approach to the requirements of Policy CC3.~~

6A.2~~96~~ Notwithstanding the mandatory requirements of the policy, all types of development are encouraged to limit water consumption and incorporate both rainwater harvesting and greywater recycling as far as possible. Water neutrality is achieved when the total water demand arising from new development is equal to or less than savings delivered by offsetting measures within the same water resource zone. The entirety of Stevenage Borough falls within the same water resource zone: WRZ 3 Lee in the South-East Region. Where a proposal can demonstrate water neutrality (i.e. not increasing demand for water abstraction above existing levels), the council will strongly support it by attributing weight in favour of granting permission.

~~6A.27 Where planning permission is granted, planning conditions will be used to secure any rainwater harvesting or greywater recycling measures agreed at the application stage.~~

Sustainable infrastructure

Policy CC4: Energy infrastructure

Where appropriate, Development proposals which create, utilise, or facilitate connection to decentralised energy networks (DENs) or district heat networks (DHNs) will be strongly supported.

Where appropriate, Development proposals which incorporate The use of ultra-low and or zero-carbon combined heat and power (CHP) systems, or Intelligent Energy Systems (IES) will also be strongly supported.

Where appropriate, Developments that which produce local ultra-low and or zero-carbon renewable energy with surplus injected into the grid will also be strongly supported.

~~The implementation of Intelligent Energy Systems (IES) is strongly encouraged.~~

6A.3028 Almost all of Stevenage's energy needs are currently met from outside of the borough, with electricity imported via the National Grid and pipelines supplying natural gas for heating. Work is underway to decarbonise the National Grid but this is not expected to be completed until 2035 and at present, only about 40% of UK electricity comes from renewable sources. It will be impossible to decarbonise heating without moving away from natural gas.

6A.3129 For these reasons, the council will strongly support development proposals that incorporate sustainable energy infrastructure. This includes DENs, DHNs, ultra-low and zero carbon CHPs, and renewable energy production which generates a surplus. Where these are proposed, the council will apply weight in favour of granting planning permission.

6A.329 It is recognised that any large-scale proposals for renewable energy generation are likely to be located beyond the borough boundary. The council will, in principle, be supportive of such schemes and will seek to work with neighbouring authorities, energy companies and developers to implement any necessary supporting infrastructure within the borough boundary.

6A.334 The council also strongly encourages developers to incorporate IES in their proposals. These are combinations of technologies which allow for the monitoring and management of energy usage, similar to smart meters but with a far greater level of detail. IES therefore acts as a tool to help understand and then reduce energy usage.

~~Policy CC5: Carbon sinks~~

~~Development proposals should not result in the loss or deterioration of significant carbon sinks. Development proposals which deliver net gains in carbon sequestration and storage through the enhancement of existing carbon sinks or the provision of new carbon sinks will be strongly supported.~~

~~6A.32 A carbon sink is anything which absorbs more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere than it releases. In Stevenage, grasslands, wetlands and woodlands are significant carbon sinks.~~

~~6A.33 Some carbon sinks are already afforded a degree of protection by other policies in this plan. The council is also in the process of identifying specific carbon sinks within the borough and may, in the longer term, provide these with specific protection. In the interim, the contribution made by all significant carbon sinks to mitigating climate change will be recognised and proposals resulting in their loss or deterioration will be resisted on this basis.~~

~~6A.34 In contrast, proposals resulting in net gains in carbon sequestration and storage through the enhancement of existing carbon sinks or the provision of new carbon sinks will be strongly supported.~~

Policy ~~CC6~~CC5: Green roofs

Where appropriate, ~~Dd~~Development proposals which incorporate green roofs, blue-green roofs, bio-solar roofs or green walls will be strongly supported.

~~6A.345~~ In Stevenage, the majority of land is already developed, which means that opportunities to provide new green space at ground level are often limited, especially in the town centre. As a result, roofs and vertical surfaces can play an important role in delivering green space and associated environmental benefits without placing additional pressure on scarce land resources.

~~6A.356~~ Green roofs, also referred to as living roofs or sedum roofs, are rooftops covered by vegetation in a multi-layered system comprising a waterproof membrane, a substrate or growing medium and (usually) a drainage layer. Green roofs have a wide variety of benefits, including:

- sequestering carbon dioxide from the atmosphere;
- delaying or reducing surface water run-off;
- naturally treating surface water run-off before it is discharged;
- increasing biodiversity by acting as a habitat;
- insulating buildings during colder months;
- cooling buildings through evapotranspiration during warmer months;
- reducing the heat island effect in built-up areas; and
- acting as a form of sound insulation.

~~6A.36 In recognition of these benefits, Policy CC6 provides strong support for developments incorporating green roofs. This includes green roofs which have been combined with other technologies to deliver additional benefits.~~

~~6A.37~~ Blue roofs are roofs which store rainwater where it falls and then gradually release it through flow restrictor outlets. Although green roofs also naturally store rainwater, their effectiveness as a SuDS feature is limited by the fact that once the substrate is saturated, there is no control over the rate of discharge. Blue-green roofs, as the name suggests, combine the benefits of blue and green roofs by

providing an additional attenuation layer below the substrate and planted surface of the roof, with discharge rates then controlled by flow restrictor outlets.

~~6A.38~~6A.37 Green roofs and blue-green roofs are also compatible with solar panels. When designed properly, so-called bio-solar roofs can actually improve the effectiveness of both the green roof (by providing shade) and the solar panels (by providing cooling).

6A.38 Green walls are vegetated vertical building surfaces, typically consisting of climbing plants grown directly against a wall or supported by trellises, cables or mesh systems, or modular living wall systems in which plants are rooted in panels fixed to the building and supplied with water and nutrients. Green walls share many of the benefits of green roofs, although they are typically more difficult to install and maintain.

6A.39 In recognition of the benefits provided by these systems, Policy CC5 provides strong support for developments incorporating green roofs, blue-green roofs, bio-solar roofs or green walls, where it is appropriate to do so. Appropriateness will vary between development proposals and will depend on a number of factors, most importantly whether green roofs or walls will be an effective means of achieving environmental benefits given the nature of the proposal and site context. They are most likely to be suitable on larger roof areas and developments in town centre or other highly constrained locations where opportunities for ground-level landscaping are limited.

~~6A.39~~6A.40 Given the wide array of potential benefits in providing green roofs, the council will take a flexible approach to visual considerations when proposals incorporating green roofs are assessed. Buildings which incorporate green roofs are currently the exception rather than the rule and to facilitate more widespread adoption, some degree of divergence from established character is likely to be necessary. However, applicants should note that this does not necessarily entail greater acceptance of flat roof designs, since solutions for pitched green roofs are now widely available.

~~6A.39~~6A.41 Visual considerations will be of greater importance where a site is located in an especially sensitive location or where there would be additional related impacts, for example on heritage assets. It is expected that proposals involving listed buildings or within conservation areas will generally not utilise green roofs but the council will support them where they are incorporated sensitively.

A green economy

Policy ~~CC7~~CC6: The green economy

Where appropriate, ~~Dd~~ development proposals which demonstrate consistency with the principles of a circular economy will be strongly supported.

Where appropriate, ~~DdDd~~ development proposals involving the provision of new local green jobs during the construction or operational phases will be strongly supported.

~~Development proposals involving the loss of existing allotments, orchards, gardens and food markets will be refused unless there is clear and convincing justification.~~ Where appropriate, ~~d~~D development proposals involving ~~their~~the provision or enhancement of existing allotments, orchards, gardens and food markets will be strongly supported.

6A.4256 A circular economy is one where materials are retained in use at their highest value for as long as possible, with minimal residual waste. A move to a more circular economy will save resources, increase the resource efficiency of businesses and help to drive down greenhouse gas emissions. For these reasons, the council will support development proposals which demonstrate consistency with the principles of a circular economy by applying weight in favour of granting permission.

6A.4357 In practice, the adoption of circular economy principles in development will mean designing buildings to be adapted, reconstructed and deconstructed. This is to extend the life of buildings and allow for their materials to be salvaged for reuse or recycling. How site waste is dealt with during demolition and construction will also be a key consideration. To this end, it is expected that applications for major development will be accompanied by a site waste management plan. Stevenage is a densely developed, growth-focused New Town with limited land availability and rising pressures on infrastructure, materials, energy and waste services. Supporting the provision of green jobs through development aligns with both Local Plan objectives and the Council's wider corporate commitments⁶⁶.

6A.4458 The definition of “local green jobs” is provided in appendix D to this plan. Development proposals resulting in the provision of new local green jobs will be strongly supported by the council, particularly where the positions would be filled by Stevenage residents. In Stevenage it is estimated that 899 green jobs will be required by 2030, rising to 1,552 by 2050. These jobs include low carbon electricity, low carbon heat, alternative fuels, energy efficiency, low carbon services, and low emission vehicles and infrastructure⁶⁷.

⁶⁶ The Council's wider corporate commitments sit under its “transforming our town” priority regarding enterprise and skills (link: <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/about-the-council/plans-and-performance/corporate-plan-making-stevenage-even-better-2024-2027>).

⁶⁷ These figures are modelled estimates provided through the Local Government Inform Service (https://lginform.local.gov.uk/reports/view/lga-research/estimated-total-number-of-direct-jobs-in-low-carbon-and-renewable-energy-sector?mod-area=E07000243&mod-group=AllDistrictInRegion_East&mod-type=namedComparisonGroup)

6A.4559 Producing food sustainably will also be an important component of the transition to a green economy. Producing food locally will reduce the greenhouse gas emissions associated with its transportation and processing, as well as reducing food waste and generally providing better nutrition. For these reasons, proposals that would reduce the borough's ability to produce its own food will be refused unless there is clear and convincing justification. This is likely to be limited to instances where it would deliver overriding benefits when assessed against the objectives of this plan as a whole. Conversely, proposals that would increase local food production in appropriate locations through the provision or enhancement of allotments, orchards and gardens will be strongly supported.

6A.4660 Food that is grown locally also requires space to be sold locally. For this reason, the council will apply similar protections to food markets and will strongly support the provision or enhancement of food markets in appropriate locations.

6 A strong, competitive economy

New employment land

Policy EC1: Allocated sites for employment development

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

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

*Small business use only

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

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

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

6.4 Alongside the intensification of the existing employment area, new land is identified to the west of North Road. This will provide a range of non-office employment uses and should be brought forward early in the plan period. Development proposals will need to have regard to the constraints on this site and, in particular, ensure appropriate clearances from the overhead lines⁶⁸.

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

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

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

⁶⁸ <http://www2.nationalgrid.com/UK/Services/Land-and-Development/A-sense-of-place/> provides advice

Gunnels Wood

Policy EC2a: Gunnels Wood Employment Area

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

Policy EC2b: Gunnels Wood Edge-of-Centre Zone

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

- a. Development (including changes of use) is for use classes E(g)(i) offices or E(g)(ii) research and development;
- b. The scheme makes efficient use of the site in terms of floorspace and job provision; and
- c. Proposals interact positively with the 'Stevenage Central' area.

Planning permission will only be granted as an exception to these criteria where the proposed development is ancillary to E(g)(i) or E(g)(ii) uses or essential to the continued operation of an established employment use.

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

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

6.10 Our evidence recognises that parts of Gunnels Wood perform differently. Some areas have modern premises and are well occupied. Others lack a coherent identity, have high levels of vacancy or are characterised by older buildings. Some sites are only developed to low density. However, the lack of new sites limits opportunities for companies to relocate to alternate premises within the town. This prevents under-used sites from being redeveloped⁶⁹. The proposed new employment sites in this plan will positively address this issue.

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

⁶⁹ Stevenage Employment and Economy Baseline Study (NLP, 2013)

6.12 This area contains a number of low density or underutilised sites. It has significant potential to deliver additional employment floorspace and jobs. Our evidence base identifies the Edge-of-Centre Zone as an area which we should expect to deliver windfall schemes in the second half of the plan period⁷⁰.

6.13 Where sites come forward for change of use or redevelopment, office and research uses will be permitted. To maximise delivery of floorspace and jobs, low-density schemes will be resisted⁷¹. By 2031, the Edge-of-Centre zone should provide a transition from the redeveloped Leisure Park to the remainder of the employment area, including the provision of improved connecting routes for pedestrians and cyclists.

6.14 In the long-term, this area may provide opportunities for other uses that complement both the operation of the employment area and the wider regeneration proposals in this area. This includes proposals for arts, culture and tourism development⁷². However, it is important to prevent an over-dominance of these uses and to protect the primacy of the employment area. Any such proposals will continue to be treated as an exception to policy. They will need to meet any requirements relating to sequential testing and / or impact assessments set out in the NPPF and other relevant policies of this plan.

Policy EC3: Gunnels Wood Industrial Zones

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

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

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

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

⁷⁰ Employment Technical Paper (SBC, 2015)

⁷¹ As a guide, plot ratios (the relationship between site area and floorspace) of 50-100% will normally be expected.

⁷² As set out in the definition of Main Town Centre uses in Annex 2 of the NPPF

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

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

Policy EC4: Remainder of Gunnels Wood

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

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

Planning permission for E(g)(i) offices will only be granted as an exception to criterion (a) where:

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

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

6.19 In setting these requirements and expectations, it is important to ensure that land in Gunnels Wood is used efficiently and effectively. Our strategic policies identify that Stevenage is unlikely to be able to meet all future employment needs within the Borough boundary. It is important to ensure that this issue is not

exacerbated. Proposals which are likely to result in a net loss of jobs, or are proposing schemes with low job densities will be subject to particular scrutiny to ensure they will not jeopardise the overall employment strategy of this plan. Large format warehousing, in particular, will be resisted.

Policy EC5: Active frontages and gateways

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

- Broadhall Way;
- Bessemer Drive;
- Gunnels Wood Road;
- Fairlands Way; and
- Six Hills Way.

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Avoiding unnecessary setbacks;
- Ensuring buildings face and overlook the street;

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

6.24 Landmark buildings, particularly on corner plots, improve legibility by providing recognisable points for navigation. With the exception of Bessemer Drive, all of the roads identified under this policy intersect at roundabouts⁷³. These corner sites provide ideal locations for more intensive and visually striking development as they have multiple frontages. Bessemer Drive will form the principal access to development west of the motorway (see Policy IT1). Any proposals on the corners of this road, and along its length, should help provide an appropriate and coherent streetscene and a 'gateway' to the new neighbourhood.

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

⁷³ The slip roads to the roundabout between Gunnels Wood Road and Six Hills Way fall within the definition of this policy

Pin Green

Policy EC6: Pin Green Employment Area

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

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

Planning permission for E(g)(i) offices will only be granted where i. it is ancillary to an acceptable E(g)(ii), E(g)(iii), B2 or B8 use;

- i. essential to the continued operation of an established E(g)(i) use; or
- ii. a sequential test clearly demonstrates that no suitable sites are available in more accessible locations.

6.26 Pin Green is in the north-east of Stevenage. It was developed as an employment area through the late 1960s and early 1970s to provide additional jobs for a growing population. Today, Pin Green is the second largest employment area in Stevenage. It is of fairly low density with a mix of uses including small warehousing, light industrial and some offices. Since the adoption of the last Local Plan in 2004, approximately nine hectares of Pin Green have been redeveloped for housing, or have a resolution to do so. The employment area boundary has been redrawn to reflect this.

6.27 There are limited opportunities for new development in Pin Green. There are no undeveloped plots and reasonable levels of occupancy. However, there may be windfall opportunities for sites to change their use or be redeveloped.

6.28 New development at Pin Green must be for employment uses. A range of employment uses will be allowed. However, office uses are better located near to the Town Centre and main transport hub and will not normally be permitted⁷⁴. Notwithstanding this point, established office premises will continue to be supported.

6.29 With the exception of some larger premises fronting Wedgwood Way and Cartwright Road, the units at Pin Green are generally aimed at small to medium sized businesses, with an active market in this sector. Areas such as the Parsons Green Estate and Wedgewood Gate provide predominantly small business uses.

⁷⁴ The National Planning Policy Framework defines offices as a main town centre use and requires a sequential test for proposals outside of designated centres and not in accordance with an up-to-date plan.

Intermediate units of up to 1,000m² are available across much of the employment area. These are complemented by developments such as the Stevenage Business and Industrial Park providing larger unit sizes of up to 3,000m². This is the model we wish to see continue at Pin Green. Where sites become available for (re)development, new units will be expected to maintain a broad balance of provision.

6.30 We will encourage any development to improve upon the fabric of the existing buildings. The introduction of modernised facilities for employees and the improvement of energy efficiency in the building stock will be supported where they do not adversely impact the amenities of neighbouring residents.

Employment development on unallocated sites

Policy EC7: Employment development on unallocated sites

New major employment development will not be permitted outside of allocated areas and centres. Planning permission for employment uses on sites not allocated for any specific purpose will be granted where proposals:

- a. Are on previously developed land; and
- b. For offices, are accompanied by a sequential test;

Planning permission for the loss of employment land on sites not allocated for any specific purpose will be granted where;

- i. There is sufficient suitable and employment land available elsewhere;
- ii. The proposals provide overriding benefits against other objectives or policies in the plan; or
- iii. It can be demonstrated that a unit has been unsuccessfully marketed for its existing use or has remained vacant for at least six months.

6.31 The significant majority of existing and future employment supply lies within the sites, areas and centres allocated in this plan. These areas rightly provide the focus for the provision of employment uses in Stevenage. As a planned new town, major new employment proposals should be sited here.

6.32 However, employment uses outside of these areas also play an important role in the local economy. They can help to create mixed-use localities that provide jobs for, and services to, residents in line with sustainability objectives. The Old Town area in particular contains an additional supply of small workshops and office buildings.

6.33 New, or replacement, small premises that meet the criteria above will be granted planning permission.

6.34 At the same time, this plan recognises that future opportunities in the Borough are likely to be insufficient to meet identified requirements. These requirements already incorporate some allowance for the loss of existing premises. However, it is important to ensure that this situation is not unnecessarily exacerbated. The loss of existing premises outside of designated areas will be permitted where this has been taken into account.

7 A vital Town Centre

Stevenage Town Centre

7.1 Retailing is an important part of the national and local economy. In line with national policy, the intention of this plan is to retain, protect and - where possible - enhance retailing and the retail hierarchy within the Borough.

7.2 The retailing sector has been particularly badly hit by the recession that has affected the national economy since 2008. The sector has experienced the outright closure of many household names, many retailers have restructured and, temporarily at least, rethought their business models. Town centres have experienced higher shop vacancy rates and longer void periods.

7.3 Generally, Stevenage Town Centre has experienced a lower rate of vacancies than many other centres. The recent closure of the large Marks and Spencer unit in Queensway North is atypical in that regard.

7.4 As the focal point of the Borough, the Town Centre is crucial to the overall image and perception of Stevenage.

Town Centre

7.5 Stevenage Town Centre was the UK's first wholly pedestrianised shopping centre and this unique heritage has shaped a distinctive town centre. It continues to influence the character and sense of place today. It has retained the majority of its overall character: the original Phase I of the Town Centre development now forms the core of the Town Square Conservation Area. But in many respects the centre has not aged well. The wholly non-vehicular concept now appears dated and the overall impression is of a centre that is tired and in need of rejuvenation. The architectural style is out of tune with modern tastes, being modern but not of today. The buildings generally require investment in basic maintenance and this is evident in many places. A programme of investment in the public realm across the shopping streets was begun in 2015, but this needs to be matched by private sector investment in the buildings.

7.6 Many of the shop units are now considered too small for national retail chain stores but are too large for independent retailers. There is a limited stock of shop units, many are not well located and there is a lack of quality retailing. The mix of uses and the lack of traffic in the pedestrian precinct mean that, after the shops close, there is no activity and no impetus to the delivery of a night-time economy. The Town Centre provides a value retail offer that serves the needs of its core catchment well. But it fails to appeal to a broader, and more prosperous, catchment which is, today, highly mobile and travels to rival centres including St Albans, Milton Keynes and Luton. The retail parks in Stevenage also provide significant competition for the Town Centre.

7.7 Our evidence suggests that, thus, the Town Centre is under-performing, uses land inefficiently and by creating a poor first impression of Stevenage, is suppressing

investor interest in Stevenage more broadly. There have been a number of attempts to regenerate the Town Centre in the last twenty years; the most recent being a retail-led scheme that collapsed, due to the recession, in 2012.

7.8 In 2015, the Stevenage First partnership (primarily the Borough and County Councils in collaboration with the Hertfordshire LEP) commissioned a new vision for the Town Centre from master-planning consultants David Lock Associates.

7.9 Securing the buy-in of stakeholders, a new framework has been created that will steer and direct the regeneration of the Town Centre for the next thirty years. The framework covers an area larger than what is traditionally thought of as being the Town Centre - the area within the ring road - it stretches westwards to encompass the train station and the Stevenage Leisure Park. This area is now collectively known as Stevenage Central.

7.10 The Borough Council is seeking to attract major public and private sector investment in Stevenage Central. This will secure the transformation of the central area, making it fit for purpose in the 21st Century and enabling it to regain its former role within northern Hertfordshire and the surrounding area.

7.11 Three of the Major Opportunity Areas (MOAs) (Central Core, Marshgate and Southgate Park) border the Town Square Conservation Area. Development here will need to be carefully considered. The Conservation Area and its setting will be protected and enhanced, whilst recognising that carefully managed change will make a positive contribution.

7.12 Our evidence⁷⁵ identifies that the Town Centre is in need of investment, both in a physical and an economic sense. There is a need for it to evolve and change, keeping up with market demands if it is to survive. Retaining the town centre exactly as it is today and limiting opportunities for change, will result in damage or even the loss of the heritage assets in the long term. A lack of investment will limit its economic function and reduce its importance as a retail area. In this regard, it should be noted that, in recent years (but not currently), the Town Square Conservation Area appeared on Historic England's "at risk" register.

7.13 Our evidence identifies⁷⁶ means whereby key features that provide the setting of the Conservation Area will be protected. In particular, the Town Square Conservation Area Management Plan SPD recognises that the replication of existing architectural styles is not necessarily appropriate and that opportunities for innovative design should not be closed off.

7.14 Schemes within the MOAs are encouraged to incorporate taller, higher-density buildings, with innovative, modern design. A carefully managed transition between old and new will be required in order to ensure the proposals are appropriate. The Heritage Plan identifies the need for further heritage assessment and design work to be completed prior to any specific development scheme being

⁷⁵ Stevenage Retail and Leisure Capacity Study (CACI, March 2013)

⁷⁶ Stevenage Central Town Centre Framework (David Lock Associates - July 2015): which includes a Heritage Delivery Plan, which considers development within all of the MOAs.

approved; this is reflected in the policies for the three affected MOAs. Developers should seek advice from the Borough Council at an early stage in the evolution of their proposals.

Policy TC1: Town Centre

The extent of the Town Centre is defined on the policies map.

7.15 The extent of the Town Centre for the purposes of paragraph 23 of the NPPF is defined as being:

- The Town Centre Shopping Area (TCSA);
- The Southgate Park, Central Core and Station Gateway MOAs in their entirety; and
- That part of the Northgate MOA south of Fairlands Way and that part of the Marshgate and Gardens MOA west of St George's Way.

The Major Opportunity Areas

7.16 Six Major Opportunity Areas have been identified within the Stevenage Central area. These, for the most part, sit outside the shopping streets (now designated as the TCSA). Individual policies have been created for each of these areas. Mixed use developments will be encouraged in each area, to deliver significant new high-density flatted housing; new office accommodation; retail floorspace; hotel and conference accommodation; an extended and regenerated train station; leisure, cultural and civic uses; new multi-storey car parking; an improved public realm and a new green park. These MOAs are based on a number of key design principles and strategic components. Development proposals will be assessed against the contribution that they make to the delivery of those principles.

7.17 Stevenage will again become a destination town centre with an 'extended day offer' that meets the needs and aspirations of its catchment. The retail base will focus on meeting modern and emerging demands; new leisure uses will be supported by a growing central residential community; and new office sites will be created to exploit the enhanced accessibility of Stevenage Central to Central London and Cambridge by train.

7.18 A new central library and NHS clinic will be accessibly located in an integrated public sector hub, which may also include the Borough Council's own Customer Service Centre.

7.19 The ring road collar around the Town Centre will be broken by radically altering the function of Lytton Way between Fairlands Way and Six Hills Way. This will enable a significantly regenerated and enlarged train station to be developed in close proximity to a replacement bus station; new office buildings to be provided, new multi-storey car parks to be built and new surface-level pedestrian connections to be made between the station and Town Square. This change will allow better connectivity for pedestrians within Stevenage Central and to the Gunnels Wood Employment Area.

7.20 Legible public transport, walking and cycling links will be created between the retail streets of the Town Centre and the complementary retail and leisure offers available in the High Street and the retail warehouse parks, principally Roaring Meg.

7.21 New high quality public spaces - including green spaces - will be created at junctions and arrival points. A new linear park parallel to Southgate will be created. Existing routes and public spaces will be refurbished, high quality street furniture will be installed and new architectural lighting will be introduced to revitalise the quality of the original New Town buildings.

7.22 High design standards will be expected throughout. The design of new development must respect and respond to the Town Square Conservation Area. When not in immediate proximity to the Town Square Conservation Area, tall buildings are likely to be acceptable. Exceptionally tall buildings may be affected by the eastern flight path to London Luton Airport, which passes directly over Stevenage Town Centre; developers are advised to make contact with the London Luton Airport Consultative Committee at the earliest opportunity.

Policy TC2: Southgate Park Major Opportunity Area

Within the Southgate Park Major Opportunity Area, as defined on the Policies Map, planning permission will be granted for:

- a. High-density Use Class C3 residential units;
- b. New multi-storey or basement car parking;
- c. New Use F.1/F.2 [public services](#) hub;
- d. A linear park running east-west parallel to Six Hills Way; and
- e. A new primary school on the Eastgate car park

Applications should address the following design and land use principles:

- i. Landmark buildings should be created in prominent locations;
- ii. New residential development on the south side of Southgate Park should have habitable rooms orientated to face southwards over the new linear park;
- iii. Pedestrian linkages southwards to North Hertfordshire College should be improved;
- iv. Southgate should be re-opened as a trafficked street in the form of a shared surface;
- v. Danesgate should be widened along its length from Lytton Way to Danestrete, and the corner with Danestrete eased to allow buses to negotiate the corner more easily;
- vi. Tower Road should be removed;
- vii. The Plaza site should be redeveloped into the new public sector hub, fronting onto Town Square; and
- viii. Heritage assessment and design work to preserve and enhance the significance of the Town Square Conservation Area and the contribution made by its setting.

7.23 Stevenage's original police station, The Towers residential block and its associated car parking, the Southgate Health Centre, NHS Southgate West, the central library, the Borough Council's Southgate surface car park, Matalan and The Plaza are the current principal uses in this area. [The planning application for the SG1 development references a public services hub.](#)

7.24 The NHS and the central library are expected to be relocated into a new public sector hub within the redeveloped Plaza site. This clustering of public sector services in a modern, fit-for-purpose building will improve the quality of service that can be offered. The removal of the NHS and the central library from their current buildings will release them for residential redevelopment.

7.25 The new residential opportunity should aim to create a high density residential community with a southward facing aspect, overlooking the new linear Southgate Park. A new development site will be created by the removal of the Lytton Way/Six Hills Way roundabout, as a part of the reconfiguration of Lytton Way. This would be south of the current McCarthy and Stone scheme. We anticipate that this would be a suitable site for a high-density development of either residential or offices. Car parking for these developments may be in multi-storey and/or basement format. Alternatively, the Borough Council is open to proposals for car-free provision.

7.26 A new primary school, in a suitable urban (as opposed to edge-of-town) form, will be located on the Borough Council's current Southgate car park to serve the needs not only of the new Southgate Park residents but also of the larger new residential community proposed in and around Stevenage Central.

7.27 There is a 2015 resolution to grant outline planning permission for a major redevelopment of the Matalan site and adjacent land, comprising over 500 high-density residential units, ground floor retail and leisure uses, supporting semi-basement car parking and a landscaped central area. When detailed planning permission is being negotiated, the Borough Council will seek the transfer to it of sufficient land on the Danesgate boundary to allow for two-way traffic along the whole of this section of road, and the easing of the Danesgate/Danestrete junction to allow buses to negotiate this corner in both directions more easily.

7.28 The Southgate Park MOA lies adjacent to the Town Square Conservation Area. Developments in the vicinity of the conservation area will need to preserve and enhance the surroundings and the setting of the conservation area.

7.29 The key to delivering this site successfully will be the successful re-provision of the central library and NHS clinics onto a redeveloped Plaza site.

Policy TC3: Centre West Major Opportunity Area

Within the Centre West Major Opportunity Area, as defined on the Policies Map, planning permission will be granted for:

- [a.](#) High-density Use Class C3 residential units;
- [a-b.](#) [Appropriate uses for main town centres as defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF.](#)

- ~~b. Replacement Use Class E(b) restaurant and cafe, E(d) indoor sport and recreation, and sui generis leisure, bar and entertainment uses;~~
- ~~c. New multi-storey or basement car parking;~~
- ~~d. New Use Class E(g)(i) office premises;~~
- ~~e. New de minimis (by volume) Use Class E(a) shop units sufficient to serve the day-to-day convenience retail needs of the residents of Centre West;~~
- ~~f. A new Use Class C1 hotel, with ancillary conference facilities, close to the train station;~~
- g-c. A taxi rank; and
- h-d. A series of interlinked public squares and open spaces;

Applications should address the following design and land use principles:

- i. Redevelopment of the large surface-level car park and the creation in its place of a new urban street form;
- ii. High quality place-defining buildings should be located in appropriate, prominent locations;
- iii. The creation of an attractive new east-west pedestrian link from a significant new public square in the heart of the site through the train station precinct towards Town Square;
- iv. Commercial and leisure uses to be focused to the east of the site, close to the train station;
- v. Residential uses to the east of the site will only be permitted above first floor level and will require appropriate noise mitigation due to its proximity to the East Coast Main Line;
- vi. Provision for a taxi rank in proximity to the train station;
- vii. Traffic calmed car/pedestrian shared surfaces; and
- viii. Reservation for additional pedestrian/cycle routes in the longer term to allow greater, and more direct, access through to Gunnels Wood Road and the wider Gunnels Wood Employment Area.

7.30A For the purposes of Policy TC3, “Main Town Centre Uses” has the meaning given in Annex 2 to the NPPF December 2023.

7.30 Centre West is currently the site of the Stevenage Leisure Park, which comprises a large surface car park and a mixture of Use Class E and sui generis food, drink, leisure and entertainment uses. To ensure that such facilities continue to meet local shopping needs we will consider removing Permitted Development rights and / or using legal agreements under Policy SP4 to retain any new units in E(a) use.

7.31 Initial discussions have already been held with the current owners of the Leisure Park, Legal and General Property. The redevelopment of the existing, dated, out-of-centre style, large-format units into a much more mixed-use, high density scheme will create an altogether more appropriate urban form for such a central site. This means that its high-profile location alongside the railway line will form an important part of the first impression that visitors arriving by train will get of

Stevenage. Consequently, high urban design standards, including new streets and public squares, will be expected.

7.32 It is anticipated that the replacement commercial and leisure uses will be focused to the east of the site, close to the train station, along with the new hotel and office buildings. The residential uses are best focused to the west and south of the site, away from the noise of the East Coast Main Line. Any residential use to the east will require noise mitigation.

7.33 A part of the eastern edge of the Centre West site is likely to be needed for the planned new fifth, terminating, platform at the train station. This will bring the western face of the station further into the development site than at present and should provide an opportunity to put a better facade onto the station that can be well integrated with the new mixed-use development. As a part of the intention to create a train station that genuinely has two faces, it is intended to provide a taxi rank on the Centre West site.

7.34 New shops will be limited to a de minimis scale, meeting the day-to-day convenience retail needs of the residents of Centre West. No larger-scale facilities will be permitted in order to protect the important role of the adjacent Town Centre shopping streets in the retail hierarchy.

7.35 The keys to delivering this site successfully will be its integration with the adjacent Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area, creating a new westward facing frontage to the train station and establishing a more urban built-form.

Policy TC4: Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area

Within the Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area, as defined on the Policies Map, planning permission will be granted for:

- a. A regenerated train station;
- b. High-density Use Class C3 residential units;
- c. New Use Class E(g)(i) office premises;
- d. A new Use Class C1 hotel;
- e. New Use Class E(a) retail and Use Class E(b) restaurant and cafe uses; and
- f. New Use Class E(g)(ii) research and development.

f.g. ~~New a~~ Appropriate uses for a main town centre (as referenced in Annex 2 of the NPPF December 2023), including and not limited to, F1 Use Class.

A comprehensive and deliverable developer led Strategic Masterplan for the entire allocation is to be prepared and agreed between the landowner/developer and the Council which should address the following design and land use principles ~~Applications should address the following design and land use principles:~~

- i. High-quality gateway and arrival experience to create a positive image of Stevenage for all visitors.

- ~~i.ii.~~ Major reconfiguration of Lytton Way between Fairlands Way and Six Hills Way to incorporate sustainable travel and improved connectivity in all forms of travel;

~~ii.—~~

- iii. The creation of ~~Creating~~ an exemplar, low carbon “urban village” with climate change consideration in all developments;
- iv. Demolition of the Arts & Leisure Centre to facilitate better east-west integration and create new development sites in the environs of the train station;
- v. The provision of replacement sports and theatre facilities elsewhere within Stevenage Central;
- vi. A significantly regenerated and enlarged high quality dual-frontage train station with associated facilities;
- vii. New public squares and the inclusion of green infrastructure on the eastern and western frontages of the train station;
- viii. High-quality, mixed-use developments within ~~close to the a short walking distance of the~~ train station to unlock economic and employment opportunities;
- ix. Improved cycle connectivity and ~~short stay~~ parking ~~plus drop-off space~~ to specifically serve train customers;
- x. Celebrate the heritage of the town in the fabric, layout and design of the Station Gateway;
- xi. Establishment of an attractive east - west pedestrian route across the East Coast Main Line; ~~and~~
- xii. ~~High-quality gateway and arrival experience to create a positive image of Stevenage for all rail visitors.~~

Any application as part of the site will be assessed against its contribution to the Strategic Masterplan and must not prejudice the implementation of the site as a whole.

For clarity, the following terms are defined as they are used in this policy.

<u>Term</u>	<u>Definition</u>
<u>Regenerated</u>	<u>This term refers to how the station will be modernised in line with the regeneration of the town centre (Policies TC1 to TC7).</u>
<u>Urban Village</u>	<u>“Urban village” refers to creating a mixed-use neighbourhood around the railway station — combining homes, workspaces, shops, leisure, and public spaces in a walkable, community focused environment.</u>
<u>Stevenage Central</u>	<u>Is defined as the primary town centre area — the shopping precincts, civic buildings, and surrounding public spaces.</u>

<u>Dual Frontage</u>	<u>A dual frontage train station means a station that has two main entrances or “front doors”, each facing different sides of the surrounding urban area. In the context of Policy TC4, this principle is about ensuring the station is not just enlarged and modernised, but also designed to connect both the town centre side and the opposite side of the railway tracks.</u>
<u>New Public Square</u>	<u>This term is used to describe an open, accessible urban space designed for people to gather, move through, and enjoy in terms of the station and beyond.</u> <u>Purpose:</u> <u>— Acts as a focal point for community life, events, and social interaction.</u> <u>Examples (and not limited to):</u> <u>— Paved areas, seating, lighting, landscaping, and sometimes fountains or public art.</u> <u>Function in Station Gateway:</u> <u>— Creates welcoming entrances on both sides of the station.</u> <u>— Provides space for people to meet, wait, or host community activities.</u> <u>— Improves the station’s identity as a civic landmark, not just a transport hub.</u>
<u>Green Infrastructure</u>	<u>Purpose:</u> <u>Improves sustainability, biodiversity, and climate resilience.</u> <u>Examples, but not limited to:</u> <u>— Street trees and planting beds.</u> <u>— Green roofs and walls.</u> <u>— Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) such as rain gardens and permeable pavements.</u> <u>— Pocket parks and landscaped walkways.</u> <u>Function in Station Gateway:</u> <u>— Softens the urban environment around the station.</u> <u>— Provides shade, cleaner air, and better stormwater management.</u> <u>— Enhances the attractiveness of the eastern and western frontages, encouraging people to linger and use the space.</u> <u>— Helps to provide habitats for wildlife.</u>
<u>Short stay parking</u>	<u>This could include a drop-off and pick up space for all train users through cars, buses and other modes of travel.</u>

7.36A Any application as part of the site will be assessed against its contribution to the Strategic Masterplan and must not prejudice the implementation of the site as a whole.

7.36B For clarity, the following terms are defined as they are used in this policy:

- Urban Village: “Urban village” refers to creating a mixed-use neighbourhood around the railway station — combining homes, workspaces, shops, leisure, and public spaces in a walkable, community focused environment.
- Stevenage Central: Is defined as the *primary town centre area* — the shopping precincts, civic buildings, and surrounding public spaces.
- Dual Frontage: A dual frontage train station means a station that has two main entrances or “front doors”, each facing different sides of the surrounding urban area. In the context of Policy TC4, this principle is about ensuring the station is not just enlarged and modernised, but also designed to connect both the town centre side and the opposite side of the railway tracks.
- New Public Square: This term is used to describe an open, accessible urban space designed for people to gather, move through, and enjoy in terms of the station and beyond. Its purpose acts as a focal point for community life, events, and social interaction; examples include (and are not limited to) paved areas, seating, lighting, landscaping, and sometimes fountains or public art; the function in the Station Gateway is to create welcoming entrances on both sides of the station; provide space for people to meet, wait, or host community activities; and improve the station’s identity as a civic landmark, not just a transport hub.

7.36C. Creating an attractive, healthy and memorable Station Gateway area will lay the foundation for high-quality mixed-use development that maximises the station’s potential and benefits the wider town.

~~7.36 Creating an attractive, healthy, memorable and enjoyable place in the Station Gateway area will provide the seeds for high quality mixed-use development to come forward and make the most of the station area and contribute widely across the town.~~

7.36 The Station Gateway area currently comprises the 1970s train station, the Arts and Leisure Centre (including the Gordon Craig Theatre), a series of surface level car parks and the southern section of Lytton Way. The train station is one of the top three busiest stations in Hertfordshire, alongside St Albans and Watford Junction. To ensure that such facilities continue to meet local shopping needs we will consider removing Permitted Development rights and / or using legal agreements under Policy SP4 to retain any new units in E(a) retail use.

7.37 The redevelopment of this area offers the opportunity for a step change in the perception of Stevenage, whether people are getting on or off trains whilst visiting Stevenage, transitioning between trains or merely passing at speed by train through the station. This is a high-profile area, a major re-shaping of which will have far-reaching implications for this key gateway to the town.

7.38 Stevenage train station, whilst relatively modern (1973), is struggling to cope with the volumes of users that it experiences. There are issues over the width of the concourse, the gate line, the platform capacity and the stairs. The booking hall is cramped and waiting facilities are quite basic. The small-scale nature of the retail offer makes the station a relatively unattractive place to wait. Connectivity to the station from all forms of travel needs to comply with modern standards and drop-off and taxi facilities are not designed for the current capacity.

7.38A Redevelopment in the Opportunity Area since the adoption of the 2019 Local Plan includes the opening of a fifth platform at the railway station in 2020, a new bus interchange located on Lytton Way and a multi storey car park located north of the train station with secure cycle parking.

7.38B Since 2019, ongoing work has been commissioned to review the needs of the area. The Stevenage Station Gateway Area Action Plan (AAP) resulted from a holding direction placed on the Stevenage Borough Local Plan in 2017. This led to two rounds of consultation in 2021 and 2023 to review the vision and proposals for the area. Work is now ongoing to prepare a masterplan for the opportunity area. This will provide a clear, long-term vision that guides regeneration, sets development principles, and coordinates investment in housing, jobs, infrastructure, and public spaces. It will act as both a design framework and a delivery tool, ensuring that growth is sustainable, inclusive, and well-integrated.

7.38C Within this policy context, high-level policy principles objectives were developed which align with the Local Plan and national policy. ~~direction for the AAP to respond to.~~ These include:

- A new gateway and arrival experience;
- Creating an exemplar, low carbon “urban village”;
- Sustainable travel considered throughout;
- Mixed-use development to unlock economic opportunity;
- Blue-green infrastructure in the public realm;
- Climate change consideration in all development decisions;
- Design of the highest architectural standards;
- Celebrating the heritage of the town; and
- Making the most of digital connectivity and high-speed broadband.

7.38D Climate change is one of the most important objectives ~~for the AAP~~ to respond to. The Council declared a climate emergency in June 2019 and reconfirmed a commitment to tackling climate change and its impacts by setting a target to ensure that Stevenage has net zero carbon emissions by 2030. Added to this, the Government has strategic targets to have net zero emissions by 2050. The Council has been proactive in producing a Climate Change Strategy and outlined a Climate Change Action Plan. Both the Strategy and Action Plan are being updated to

ensure that the Council's commitment to battling climate change is kept at the top of its priorities.

~~7.38E The high level, strategic options proposed for the area included within the AAP will be strongly influenced by the masterplan for the SG1 development, which lies to the east and within the town centre. Connections to this development and connections through into the town square and central area will form the emerging physical context within which the AAP sits.~~

~~7.38EF~~ The Station Gateway area of Stevenage is a key location for economic competitiveness. Other locations which are a similar time distance away from London terminals are seeing considerable commercial growth, for example Reading, Slough, Milton Keynes and Croydon. Stevenage is perfectly placed in terms of mobility, and already hosts major international companies in the Gunnels Wood Industrial Area as well as GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) to the south, a major pharmaceutical company.

7.39 A high quality major mixed-use redevelopment around the train station that addresses these concerns is necessary to meet the growing expectations of a rising population and the international business community located in the Borough. Such schemes will enable the station to have an improved concourse and booking facilities, easy and improved accessibility for all pedestrians, introduce a customer-focused retail offer of an appropriate scale, create two passenger-friendly faces (to the Central Core and to Centre West MOAs) and to have active ground floor frontages. Taxi and ~~short stay parking drop-off facilities~~ should be ~~considered designed with the proposals set out in the AAP~~ and provide connectivity with the bus station and multi-storey car park to meet the growing needs of train passengers.

~~7.39A The Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area will serve as a catalyst for the transformation of Stevenage, delivering a modern, dual frontage station, high quality public realm, and a balanced mix of homes, jobs, and cultural facilities. Development proposals should demonstrate how they contribute to an exemplar low carbon "urban village," integrate sustainable travel, and celebrate the heritage of the town. By aligning with the Council's Strategies, schemes brought forward under this policy will not only meet the immediate needs of rail users and residents but also secure long-term economic competitiveness, resilience, and a renewed identity for Stevenage as a thriving regional centre.~~

~~7.39A The AAP, through two rounds of consultation, has set out 4 "high-level" options or scenarios for the area adjacent to Stevenage Railway Station incorporating the section of Lytton Way, between Swingate and Danesgate:~~

- ~~• Option 0 — Do nothing.~~
- ~~• Option 1 — All traffic modes: reduces the central area of Lytton Way between Swingate and Danesgate to a single carriageway suitable for all modes of traffic.~~
- ~~• Option 2 — Bus and Taxi only: reduces the central area of Lytton Way between Swingate and Danesgate to a single carriageway and restricts movement to buses and taxis only.~~

- ~~Option 3 – Pedestrianised Plaza: removes regular vehicle movement from the front of the station and Lytton Way ceases to be a through-route. An access through-route is retained for emergency vehicles needing to access and egress the station and immediate environs.~~

~~7.39B There were two proposed cycle path options in the AAP. Potential Layout 1 retains the existing cycle route, running alongside the railway line and at the extreme western edge of the AAP site boundary and adds a cycle route alongside Lytton Way. Potential Layout 2 removes the existing cycle route and replaces it with a cycle route alongside Lytton Way.~~

~~7.39C The proposed reconfiguration of Lytton Way is a bold idea but the options look to flexibility. The Preferred Options AAP presented the preferred approach as Option 2, but with flexibility to progress to Option 1 or Option 3 as and when circumstances developed. Potential Layout 1 for the cycle path option was taken forward in the Preferred Options AAP, as the preferred cycle layout.~~

~~7.39D All proposed options for the reconfiguration of Lytton Way have a set of core enhancements, primarily in the northern and southern zones of the AAP area, north of Swingate and south of Danesgate. Further details can be viewed within the Stevenage Station Gateway Area Action Plan: Preferred Options Report (2023)⁷⁷.~~

~~7.39E Creating an attractive, healthy, memorable and enjoyable place in the Station Gateway area will provide the seeds for high quality mixed-use development to come forward and make the most of the station area and contribute widely across the town.~~

Policy TC5: Central Core Major Opportunity Area

Within the Central Core Major Opportunity Area, as defined on the Policies Map, planning permission will be granted for:

- High-density Use Class C3 residential units;
- New Use Class E(a), E(b) as within Main Town Centres Uses as defined by the NPPF; and sui generis which will be assessed on a case-by-case for their impact on vitality, amenity, and sustainability. shop, bar, restaurant and cafe uses;
- New multi-storey or basement car parking;
- New Use Class E(g)(i) office premises;
- New Use Class F.1 and E(d) leisure, cultural and civic uses, including a replacement theatre and museum; and
- Signature public spaces

Applications should address the following design and land use principles:

- A replacement bus station, closer to the train station;

⁷⁷ <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/planning-policy/consultation-documents/stevenage-station-gateway-aap-preferred-options-report.pdf>

- ii. A southern extension to the Westgate Centre, containing in the order of 4,700m² additional comparison floorspace, facing onto an enlarged Town Square;
- iii. A continuation of the east - west pedestrian route linking Town Square with the train station;
- iv. Continuing preservation and enhancement of the Town Square Conservation Area;
- v. Provision will be made for new green space within an enlarged Town Square;
- vi. A new municipal theatre and art gallery on the north-eastern edge of the enlarged Town Square;
- vii. New development should include active ground floor frontages to principal streets;
- viii. The layout of new streets and squares should facilitate east-west pedestrian access and create sequential views and vistas between the train station and Town Square;
- ix. High quality development with landmark buildings in appropriate locations, including fronting onto Town Square;
- x. High-rise buildings; and
- xi. Heritage assessment and design work to preserve and enhance the significance of the Town Square Conservation Area and the contribution made by its setting.

7.43A For the purposes of Policy TC5, "Main Town Centre Uses" has the meaning given in Annex 2 to the NPPF December 2023.

7.43 The Central Core currently comprises the buildings surrounding Town Square, the Borough Council's Danestrete and Swingate offices, Mecca bingo, the magistrates courts, surface car parking and Use Class E(a) retail shops, E(c)(i) financial services and E(c)(ii) professional services uses. To ensure that such facilities continue to meet local shopping needs we will consider removing Permitted Development rights and / or using legal agreements under Policy SP4 to retain any new units in E(a) use.

7.44 It is proposed to create a replacement bus station at the western end of a widened Danesgate, served by a one-way circulatory bus route from Six Hills Way. Through this relocation, the bus facilities will move closer to the train station. The intention is to both facilitate better public transport integration and create the opportunity to extend Town Square into a radically enlarged space with a strong green element. This will allow a better physical transition from the pedestrianised retail streets and the Town Square Conservation Area into the new developments in Station Gateway and at Centre West.

7.45 The Central Core offers the opportunity to deliver one or more major green public spaces at the heart of Stevenage Central. It forms the eastern end of the new surface-level pedestrian route to the train station. The layout of new streets and squares should create sequential views and vistas between the train station and Town Square. Retail frontages should be used to maintain active ground floors along this route.

7.46 A potential southern extension to the Westgate Centre offers the opportunity for the creation of large new shop units that will be attractive to multiple retailers. A larger extension, or additional floorspace elsewhere within the Central Core MOA, may be justified by the enlarged local resident population being planned for across Stevenage Central. Our evidence also identifies a need for a qualitative improvement to town centre retailing in Stevenage. New floorspace, or alterations to the size and/or layout of existing units, may provide opportunities to address these qualitative issues.

7.47 This area also offers significant opportunities for high density residential uses (with shops and restaurants underneath), replacement council offices and replacement theatre, museum and art gallery facilities. These latter, cultural elements (subject to the out-turn of detailed studies now underway) will be co-located with cafes, restaurant and bars to hopefully bring some much needed nightlife into the heart of the town.

7.48 Whilst only a small part of the Central Core lies within the Town Square Conservation Area, developments within, and in the vicinity of the conservation area will need to preserve and enhance the surroundings and the setting of the conservation area.

7.49 The keys to the successful delivery of this area are moving the bus station; and creating a high quality ground-level pedestrian route between Town Square and the train station.

Policy TC6: Northgate Major Opportunity Area

Within the Northgate Major Opportunity Area, as defined on the Policies Map, planning permission will be granted for:

- a. High-density Use Class C3 residential units;
- b. New Use Class E(g)(i) office premises;
- c. New Use Class E(a), E(b) as within Main Town Centres Uses as defined by the NPPF and sui generis-which will be assessed on a case-by-case for their impact on vitality, amenity, and sustainability. shop, bar, restaurant and cafe uses;
- d. Replacement Use Class E(a) major foodstore;
- e. New multi-storey or basement car parking;
- f. Replacement cycle and pedestrian footbridge between Ditchmore Lane and Swingate; and
- g. Signature public spaces.

Applications should address the following design and land use principles:

- i. A continuation of the north - south pedestrian route linking old North Road with Ditchmore Lane;
- ii. New development should include active ground floor frontages;
- iii. New landmark buildings on the Lytton Way/Fairlands Way junction;

- iv. The layout of new streets and squares should facilitate both north-south and east-west pedestrian access and create sequential views and vistas between the old North Road and Swingate;
- v. Pedestrian priority at an at-grade crossing on Swingate.

7.50A For the purposes of Policy TC6, “Main Town Centre Uses” has the meaning given in Annex 2 to the NPPF December 2023.

7.50 Northgate currently includes the Tesco Extra store and its associated large surface car park, servicing and filling station, together with the Saffron Ground office building. To ensure that such facilities continue to meet local shopping needs we will consider removing Permitted Development rights and / or using legal agreements under Policy SP4 to retain any new units in E(a) retail use.

7.51 The Tesco Extra store is now quite dated in terms of its external appearance and does not best meet the operator's current format expectations. Redevelopment, perhaps towards the end of the plan period, into a smaller store with other uses above is a possibility. The redevelopment of this land-hungry site into a more mixed use, intensive, high density style would transform this north-western quarter of the Town Centre. It would also allow for a better quality townscape transition between the Old Town and the principal retail streets of the Town Centre. Any redevelopment would be likely to require the repositioning of the Tesco unit through 90o from its current east-west orientation into a north-south orientation, with multi-storey parking and/or residential uses above.

7.52 The site is sufficiently large as to permit a variety of additional uses, including one or more of shop, bar, cafe, restaurant and office uses in a more high-density urban format. Consequently, high urban design standards, including new streets and public squares, will be expected. A new pedestrian route incorporating a 'green bridge' northwards to Ditchmore Lane and southwards to a pedestrian-priority crossing of Swingate is a must in order to create a new spine for this quarter of the Town Centre.

7.53 Initial 'in principle' discussions with Tesco suggest that this site is unlikely to come forward until the end of the plan period, transitioning into the post-2031 period. Notwithstanding, it is important that the plan should provide certainty and encouragement to investors whilst also setting out a framework for the determination of planning applications. It is important that other elements of the Stevenage Central regeneration programme come forward, perhaps particularly the creation of a sizeable new residential community providing additional walk-in trade, before there is sufficient confidence for investors to believe that investment in the Northgate area is a desirable and deliverable prospect. The key to unlocking this site is the reconfiguration of the Tesco Extra store.

Policy TC7: Marshgate Major Opportunity Area

Within the Marshgate Major Opportunity Area, as defined on the Policies Map, planning permission will be granted for:

- a. High-density Use Class C3 residential units;
- b. New Use Class F.1 and E(d) leisure, cultural and civic uses;
- c. New Use Class E(a), E(b) as within Main Town Centres Uses as defined by the NPPF and sui generis which will be assessed on a case-by-case for their impact on vitality, amenity, and sustainability. shop, bar, restaurant and cafe uses; and
- d. New multi-storey or basement car parking.

Applications should address the following design and land use principles:

- i. Rejuvenation through new retail units and public realm improvements, including the northern underpass to Town Centre Gardens;
- ii. Replacement retail units at the eastern end of The Forum connecting to a new surface-level pedestrian crossing of St George's Way to link with the new leisure complex and Town Centre Gardens;
- iii. Active retail frontages along St George's Way to redefine the eastern edge of the Town
- iv. Centre;
- v. New high-density residential development along St George's Way, orientated to have views over Town Centre Gardens;
- vi. A new sports/swimming complex with an interactive frontage onto Town Centre Gardens;
- vii. Creation of a critical mass of uses and activities to stimulate greater day-to-day and event use of Town Centre Gardens; and
- viii. Heritage assessment and design work to preserve and enhance the significance of the Town Square Conservation Area and the contribution made by its setting.

7.54A For the purposes of Policy TC7, "Main Town Centre Uses" has the meaning given in Annex 2 to the NPPF December 2023.

7.54 This Major Opportunity Area currently includes the parkland of Town Centre Gardens, the Borough Council's Marshgate car park, Park Place shop units, Hertfordshire County Council's Bowes-Lyon House youth centre and the Borough Council's Swimming Centre. To ensure that such facilities continue to meet local shopping needs we will consider removing Permitted Development rights and / or using legal agreements under Policy SP4 to retain any new units in E(a) use.

7.55 The demolition of the Arts and Leisure Centre necessitates the relocation of the sports facilities. The co-location of these facilities with the existing Swimming Centre makes excellent sense for the users of both facilities and allows the creation of a sizeable municipal sports facility. (The Gordon Craig Theatre is to be re-located within the Central Core Major Opportunity Area). Any enhanced youth facilities at Bowes-Lyon House should allow for the creation of a multi-purpose community and arts facility with a large hall overlooking the lake in Town Centre Gardens.

7.56 There is significant untapped potential in the Marshgate and Park Place area for new high density residential development above ground floor shops, bars and

restaurants. Providing new residential units with an eastwards facing aspect, overlooking the park, should make these units an attractive commercial prospect. Breaking the ring road collar in this area, by the improvement of subway crossings and the creation of a new surface-level crossing, is important to making better use of Town Centre Gardens. This major Green Flag award-winning public space represents a significant asset for the Town Centre.

7.57 A part of the Marshgate MOA lies adjacent to the Town Square Conservation Area. Developments in the vicinity of the conservation area will need to preserve or enhance the surrounding and the setting of the conservation area

7.58 The keys to delivering this site are two-fold: the relocation of the sports facilities from the Arts and Leisure Centre; and opening up Town Centre Gardens to make it a more widely used, accessible and appreciated space.

Policy TC8: Town Centre Shopping Area

The spatial extent of the Town Centre Shopping Area (TCSA) is defined on the policies map. Within the TCSA, uses appropriate to a town centre falling with the definition of 'main town centre uses' in will be permitted at ground floor level, and assessed in line with national policy definitions on 'main town centre uses' (NPPF Annex 2 glossary will be permitted), including Use Classes E and C1, as well as some other sui generis uses.

7.59 The Major Opportunity Areas and the Town Centre Shopping Area are largely mutually exclusive, with the exception of a small area on the north side of the bus station (which lies within the Central Core MOA), Park Place (which lies in the Marshgate MOA) and the Tesco Extra store (which lies in the Northgate MOA). Within the existing shopping streets, the Council intends to protect the principal comparison shopping areas, whilst allowing greater freedom and flexibility in secondary and tertiary areas. Consequently, the retail streets are broadly protected by the Town Centre Shopping Area designation. The Council is keen to offer the opportunity for the Town Centre to become an all-day destination - by permitting cafes, bars, restaurants and public houses in appropriate locations.

7.60 Shopping is now a leisure activity and Stevenage needs to respond to that change. Consumers have a choice of shopping destinations and experiences available to them and are often prepared to travel considerable distances to enjoy a new or distinctive experience. Our evidence suggests that people from within Stevenage's catchment are travelling to enjoy centres such as St Albans, Milton Keynes and Luton. The retail parks in Stevenage also provide significant competition for the Town Centre. Stevenage Town Centre once again - as it did in the 1960s - needs to become a centre of choice for people from a wide catchment.

7.61 It is hoped that the significant numbers of people living in the new residential community proposed in the Major Opportunity Areas will stimulate a change in the retail offer available in the Town Centre. This is what happened at the southern end of the High Street when a number of new medium to high density residential schemes were permitted in that vicinity. Private-sector investment in new restaurants, bars and shops - responding to the presence of significant numbers of

people living locally - led to a significant regeneration of the southern part of the High Street without the need for public-sector investment. The Borough Council intends to create a set of circumstances in the Town Centre whereby a similar market-led regeneration of the retail offer can occur. A more open and permissive attitude will generally be taken to stimulate positive change, whilst retaining sufficient control within a planned framework to regulate negative changes.

7.61A The Town Square Conservation Area, which falls within Stevenage's Town Centre Shopping Area (TCSA) — is located around the Clock Tower and Town Square. Heritage assets are worthy of protection in all cases where they would be affected by development, regardless of their location or the nature of the proposal. This is reflected in national policy and in Local Plan policies SP13 and (specifically for Conservation Areas) Policy NH10.

Old Town High Street

Policy TC9: High Street Shopping Area

The spatial extent of the High Street Shopping Area (HSSA) is defined on the policies map.

Within the HSSA, planning permission for development of a scale appropriate to the High Street's location in the retail hierarchy and falling within the definition of 'main town centre use' in the NPPF Annex 2 except for hot food takeaway uses in accordance with national policy definitions on 'main town centre uses' (NPPF Annex 2 glossary), which falls into Use Classes E, C1, C3, F.1 or F.2 will be granted where it:

- a. Would not take land or premises allocated or identified for other, specific uses.

Within the HSSA, further hot food takeaway uses will not be permitted.

The amalgamation of existing premises to create larger units or the conversion of upper floors to provide additional floorspace in the same use class will not be permitted.

7.62 The High Street is the former A1/Roman road linking London to the North of England. From medieval times onwards, it became a focus for both farmers taking their livestock to market and travellers heading into and out of London. This led to the establishment of a number of coaching inns, a market and shops. Today, its role as a trunk route has been superseded by the A1(M), whilst its local role as a distributor road has been taken by Lytton Way. This has freed up the road to fulfil an altogether different function.

7.63 Today, the High Street forms the spine of the Major Centre, as designated within this plan's retail hierarchy. It contains a broad mix of uses but 27% of the floorspace is convenience (food) shopping (primarily Waitrose and a Tesco Express) whilst 23% is comparison shopping. The High Street also has a larger than usual proportion of bars and restaurants, emphasising its important role in the Borough's leisure offer. It is a busy, well used and popular centre, but one that fulfils both a mixed town-wide and purely local function. The Council wishes to maintain that flexibility of uses, but also wishes to provide a clear framework of acceptable uses.

7.64 Virtually all of the High Street lies within a Conservation Area and there are a number of Listed Buildings, together with buildings of local significance. Consequently, development will be expected to preserve and enhance these heritage assets.

7.64A Given the already strong mix of cafes, sandwich shops, supermarkets, newsagents and take-aways (often offering food of limited nutritional value), coupled with the location of two large secondary schools at the northern end of the High Street, the Borough Council has determined not to permit any further hot food

takeaway uses within the High Street Shopping Area as a part of its commitment to providing opportunities for healthy lifestyles, especially amongst young people.

Generic retail policies

Policy TC11: New convenience retail provision

New Class E(a) convenience retail floorspace provision will be expected to follow the sequential test and the Borough's retail hierarchy.

1,500m² floorspace is reserved to be provided as extensions to existing stores in the retail hierarchy, then other stores in accordance with the sequential test.

New convenience retail floorspace provision, of an appropriate scale and in an appropriate accessible location, will be made in the new neighbourhoods at Stevenage West, North of Stevenage and South East Stevenage.

New Local Centres will be permitted in each of the Stevenage West and North of Stevenage new neighbourhoods, each in the order of 500m², to meet the day-to-day needs of the residents of the respective new developments.

A Neighbourhood Centre will be permitted in the South-East of Stevenage development of no more than 500m² with a convenience store and other related small-scale Use Class E(a) shops, sufficient to meet the day-to-day needs of the residents of the new neighbourhood.

These new Local Centres and the Neighbourhood Centre will become a part of the Borough's retail hierarchy. They should, wherever possible, be co-located with other community uses such as schools and/or health or community facilities, where such facilities are being provided.

A site for a major new food store of up to 4,600m² net convenience goods floorspace and 920m² net comparison goods floorspace to serve Borough-wide needs post-2023 is identified on the policies map at Graveley Road. A retail impact assessment will be required, particularly focusing upon the impact on Local Centres and Neighbourhood Centres.

7.68 Our evidence suggests that there is currently a small need for convenience floorspace in the Borough. Only towards the middle of the plan period will a significant need for additional floorspace arise. This projected Borough-wide need is 7,600m² net of convenience trading floorspace. The Council is under an obligation to plan positively for this need, which requires a policy setting out how this floorspace should be distributed and any necessary allocations made.

7.69 1,500m² of the total need is reserved to allow for extensions to existing centres in the retail hierarchy, then other stores in accordance with the sequential test. A further 1,500m² is reserved to the new Local Centres at Stevenage West and North of Stevenage, and the new Neighbourhood Centre at South East Stevenage. An allocation for a large new store post 2023 will address the remaining 4,600m² net of identified need for convenience floorspace. Allowing for up to 20% (920m²) of additional net floorspace within the store to be devoted to ancillary comparison goods, the total floorspace increases to 5,520m². Assuming a 70% gross to net

floorspace ratio, the maximum floorspace of the new superstore would be 7,900m² gross.

7.70 A site on Graveley Road, currently already in Class E(a) use as a garden centre, is identified to accommodate such a large store. The northern tip of the garden centre site lies in North Hertfordshire District: as it is outside of the Borough, this local plan cannot allocate that part of the site. Given the fact that there is no immediate need for additional floorspace, and allowing for construction and trading establishment, we will entertain a planning application for this store from 2018 onwards. This new store should not be trading before 2023. Although on the northern edge of the Borough, this store will be well located in respect of the new neighbourhood North of Stevenage (see Policy HO3). Also, there are no alternative sites capable of accommodating a store of the required size. ~~In order to avoid potential adverse impacts upon the existing retail demand, this site will be re-examined at a full review to ensure existing and future need for convenience has been updated to reflect changes since the plan was adopted.~~

7.71 The impact of this new store, given that it will essentially draw its trade from existing stores, will need to be assessed by the applicants and included with any planning application. To ensure that such facilities continue to meet local shopping needs we will consider removing Permitted Development rights and / or using legal agreements under Policy SP4 to retain any new units in E(a) use.

Policy TC12: New comparison retail provision

Planning permission will be granted for additional comparison retail floorspace of the order of 4,700m² within one or more of the Town Centre Shopping Area, the Marshgate MOA, the Central Core MOA, the Station Gateway MOA or the Northgate MOA.

Proposals for out-of-centre comparison goods floorspace will be refused, unless they are an ancillary element to a major convenience store proposed under Policy TC11.

Proposals to relax or remove conditions on the type of goods that can be sold from existing out-of-centre comparison retail units will be refused.

7.72 Our evidence studies show that there is a projected need for 4,700m² of additional comparison retail floorspace during the lifetime of this plan. In accordance with the retail hierarchy, and to support the regeneration of the Town Centre, this floorspace will be directed to the Town Centre. This is most likely to take the form of a major extension to the existing Westgate Centre, but may, alternatively, come in a series of smaller-scale proposals.

7.73 The projected significant increase in the resident population in and around the Town Centre may support some further growth in comparison floorspace; in which case, this will be directed towards the creation of additional floorspace in appropriate locations within the Stevenage Central area.

7.74 Stevenage already has a very well developed out-of-centre comparison goods offer (the size of the offer is approximately that of the Town Centre). In order to support the retail hierarchy and, in particular, the much needed regeneration of the Town Centre, we believe that there is no need to allow for any additional out-of-centre comparison goods floorspace, other than as an ancillary element to a major convenience store.

7.75 Because of the very significant quantum of out-of-centre comparison floorspace, and its adverse impact upon the vitality and viability of the Town Centre Shopping Area, the Borough Council will also resist any proposals to relax or remove conditions controlling the type of goods that can be sold from existing out-of-centre comparison units. ~~In order to avoid potential adverse impacts upon the existing retail demand, this policy will be re-examined at a full review to ensure existing and future need for convenience has been updated to reflect changes since the plan was adopted.~~

Policy TC13: Town centre retail impact assessments

Applications for main town centre uses should be located in the Town Centre, then in edge-of-centre locations and only if suitable sites are not available will out-of-centre sites be considered. When considering edge-of-centre and out-of-centre sites, preference will be given to accessible sites that are well connected (preferably by multi-modal means) to the Town Centre.

An impact assessment will be required for all proposals in excess of 300m² gross floorspace for main town centre uses outside the Town Centre. This should include an assessment of:

- i. The impact of the proposal on existing, committed and planned public and private investment in a centre or centres in the catchment area of the proposal; and
- ii. The impact of the proposal on town centre vitality and viability, including local consumer choice and trade in the town centre and the wider retail catchment (as applicable to the scale and nature of the scheme).

Proposals will be permitted unless they fail the sequential test, or are likely to have a significant adverse impact on one or both of the above factors.

7.76 We will follow the guidance in the NPPF (paragraphs 24 - 26) that we should apply a sequential test to planning applications for Town Centre uses (as defined in Annex 2 to the NPPF) that are outside of the Town Centre. We have set a local threshold for an impact assessment for proposals outside the Town Centre, as the alternative would be that applications are assessed against the national threshold (of 2,500m²), which our evidence suggests could be potentially harmful to centres. All proposals in excess of 300m² gross of floorspace for main town centre uses outside the Town Centre are required to produce an impact assessment as per the recommendation of the 2014 Retail Study.

7.77 This also applies to planning applications which seek to vary the type of goods which can be sold from existing premises. This is important given the effects that these types of Section 73 applications outside of defined centres are having on the vitality and viability of the Town Centre. Applications for main town centre uses should be located in the Town Centre (as defined above), then in edge-of-centre locations and only if suitable sites are not available will out-of-centre sites be considered. When considering edge-of-centre and out-of-centre sites, preference will be given to accessible sites that are well connected (by multi-modal means) to the Town Centre. Applicants should, in such circumstances, show flexibility on issues such as format and scale.

8 Infrastructure and transport

Infrastructure and developer requirements

Policy IT1: Strategic development access points

The preferred vehicular access points to strategic development sites from the existing road network are shown on the policies map:

- To land west of Stevenage via the existing road network at Bessemer Drive and Meadway; To land north of Stevenage from B197 North Road approximately 250 metres north of the junction with Granby Road;
- To land south-east of Stevenage from a new roundabout on the A602 approximately 200 metres east of the junction with Bragbury Lane;
- To Stevenage Leisure Park from Argyle Way and Six Hills Way; and
- To Stevenage town centre from reconfigured junctions between:
 - Fairlands Way and Lytton Way; and
 - Six Hills Way, Lytton Way and London Road

Planning permission will be granted where proposals demonstrate:

- a. That these preferred access points have been incorporated into the scheme design;
- b. That new junctions adequately consider the needs of all users, including bus priority, ~~and~~ This includes, but is not limited to, pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders, mobility scooter users, wheelchair users, and other groups requiring safe and accessible movement. Development proposals should ensure that infrastructure improvements and design standards support inclusivity across this broad spectrum of users; and
- ~~c.~~ For the development areas to the north and west of Stevenage, how they would integrate with any future phases of development beyond the Borough boundary.

Alternative access points and solutions will be permitted where they are demonstrably preferable in highway terms.

8.1 This plan relies upon a small number of strategic-scale schemes to deliver the majority of future new development within the Borough. It is vital that these are successfully integrated into the existing infrastructure of the town. Working with developers and the highway authority, a number of preferred vehicular access points for these sites have been identified.

8.2 A scheme of approximately 1,350 homes plus supporting uses to the west of Stevenage within the Borough boundary can be delivered using the existing access points underneath the A1(M) at Bessemer Drive and Meadway. The entrance to the site at Meadway will require enhancements to provide alternating one-way access. In

the long-term, it is our intention that this access point will be superseded for motorised traffic by a new route across the A1(M) to the north of the existing tunnel (see Policy IT2).

8.3 A primary access to the land to the north of Stevenage can be taken from the B197 North Road. A preferred point for this access has been identified, located broadly between the existing pylon lines.

8.4 The Borough Council and developers should continue to work closely with North Hertfordshire District Council to ensure the access arrangements for this site allow for integration with any subsequent schemes beyond the administrative boundary. The preferred long-term solution is a continuous link from the identified access point on North Road to a new or improved junction within North Hertfordshire at, or close to, the existing North Road / Graveley Road intersection approximately 150 metres north of the administrative boundary.

8.5 Pending agreement and delivery of this solution, a second point of vehicular access will be required within the Borough boundary. This will be needed for phases of development beyond 300 homes (or equivalent)⁷⁸. Secondary access might be provided from North Road, subject to acceptable clearance distances from the primary access point, or using Underwood Road where the existing carriageway extends to the boundary of the allocated land.

8.6 In the event of future development occurring in North Hertfordshire, any secondary access within the Borough boundary should be a short-term solution only. Any access point from Underwood Road, in particular, is not considered an appropriate long-term solution for private vehicular access and appropriate mechanisms will be used to ensure this.

8.7 Any outline scheme or masterplan for this land will be required to demonstrate that these issues have been fully taken into account.

8.8 A new roundabout on the A602 at the south-east of Stevenage has been identified as critical to the delivery of new housing in this area⁷⁹. The new junction should be of an appropriate design, in terms of capacity, to ensure the smooth flow of traffic on this key route into and out of the town. It should be complementary to the wider scheme to improve flows and key junctions between Stevenage and Ware that is a key priority of the Local Transport Board.

8.9 The regeneration framework for the Town Centre identifies a number of key access points. In particular, it supports the removal of the existing roundabouts where Lytton Way currently meets Six Hills Way and Fairlands Way and replacing them with signalised junctions.

8.10 It is expected that these access points will be sustainable and will form the basis of any submitted schemes. Alternative proposals will be considered where they are robustly demonstrated to be preferable in terms of:

⁷⁸ This is the maximum that the Highway Authority will permit from a single point of access. Roads in Hertfordshire: Highway Design Guide 3rd edition (HCC, 2011)

⁷⁹ Infrastructure Delivery Plan (SBC, 2015)

- Traffic flows to / from the development;
- Traffic flows across the wider highway network;
- Emergency access; and / or
- Highway safety.

Policy IT2: West of Stevenage safeguarded corridors

The areas around Meadway and south of Todd's Green, as shown on the policies map, are safeguarded.

Planning permission will only be granted for any development proposals which would not physically inhibit or otherwise prejudice comprehensive development of land to the west of Stevenage within North Hertfordshire District in the period beyond 2026.

8.11 This plan sets challenging development targets for the Borough over the period to 2031. However, this approach requires the Council to make use of almost all major opportunities within the Borough. Beyond this plan period, it will be increasingly challenging to continue finding new sites for development. North Hertfordshire District Council have recognised this and their emerging plan safeguards land to the west of Stevenage to meet the long-term needs of the town.

8.12 This site could provide around 3,000 new homes. It would be connected to, and integrated with, the scheme proposed for the land within the Borough over the current plan period. However, development on this scale will not be able to simply rely upon the access points identified in Policy IT1. A major new access road will be needed to link this site to the town's road network.

8.13 A route from Gunnels Wood Road across the Meadway playing fields has long been identified as the preferred means of achieving this. However, this will require major investment to be delivered. The Borough Council will continue to work with landowners and developers, North Hertfordshire District Council, Highways England and the Hertfordshire LEP to develop a funding package and scheme to 'unlock' land in North Hertfordshire for development. In the interim, an access corridor is safeguarded to ensure this long-term project is not compromised by short-term decisions.

8.14 In the event that a new crossing is provided, it is anticipated that the existing Meadway tunnel would be closed to private vehicular traffic but would be retained to allow access to the site by more sustainable modes of transport.

8.15 A second area, to the south of Todd's Green is also recognised. Although the existing road network in this area will not support a significant access point, it could be suitable for a sustainable transport corridor. Previous plans for a comprehensive development scheme identified this area for supporting playing pitch provision. This could, in part, be used to offset the loss of any facilities at Meadway.

Policy IT3: Infrastructure

Planning permission for sites of 200 dwellings or more, including smaller sites being brought forward in phases that will cumulatively exceed this threshold, will be granted where applicants satisfactorily demonstrate how infrastructure needs arising from their proposals will be met. This should be demonstrated through:

- a. An infrastructure assessment at outline application stage; and / or
- b. A detailed infrastructure phasing and delivery plan at reserved matters or full application stage.

Where appropriate, conditions, legal agreements or other mechanisms will be used to ensure that development is phased to coincide with the delivery of infrastructure.

8.16 Requirements for specific infrastructure projects - such as schools, local facilities and transport - are set out in the relevant policies of this plan. However, the Council retains an overarching expectation that new development will not place an unacceptable burden on supporting services.

8.17 On schemes providing more than 200 homes⁸⁰, we will require applicants to demonstrate that their scheme will provide, or can be accommodated within the limits of, supporting infrastructure. Assessments will be required to demonstrate consideration of (but not necessarily be limited to) transport, education, health, green infrastructure & open space, sports and leisure and utilities provision.

8.18 The Council's evidence base provides a robust starting point for the consideration of infrastructure issues⁸¹. However, this makes certain assumptions about the nature and timing of development and the availability of funding while service providers' requirements also change over time. Where analysis shows that schemes are likely to exceed infrastructure capacity, steps will be taken to ensure that new provision is made or development is phased so as to operate within the limits of existing provision until such time as additional capacity is realised.

8.19 Our environmental appraisals recognise that it will be necessary to take a precautionary approach to avoid causing harm to the Lee Valley SPA, which surrounds the Rye Meads wastewater treatment works⁸². Where it cannot be demonstrated that proposals can be accommodated within the limits of existing or planned wastewater infrastructure, Grampian conditions or other appropriate mechanisms will be used.

8.20 To prevent unnecessary duplication or delays in the planning process, the Council will retain the discretion to discharge this policy requirement (in whole or in part) through the submission of other strategies and assessments that are required as part of the planning process, such as Transport Assessments and Design & Access Statements.

⁸⁰ Including smaller developments being brought forward in phases that will cumulatively exceed this threshold

⁸¹ Infrastructure Delivery Plan (SBC, 2017)

⁸² Appropriate Assessment Screening Opinion (SBC, 2015).

Sustainable travel

Policy IT4: Transport assessments and travel plans

Planning permission will be granted where:

- a. Development would not have an unacceptable adverse impact upon highway safety;
- b. Development reflects the principles of the Stevenage Mobility Strategy;
- c. Schemes exceeding the relevant thresholds are accompanied by a satisfactory Transport Statement or Assessment, which demonstrates that the residual cumulative impacts of development are not severe; and
- d. Developments exceeding the relevant thresholds are accompanied by an acceptable (green) travel plan.

8.21 The Stevenage Borough Council strategy is to support and encourage increasing Mobility by sustainable and inclusive modes. It is to support a mode shift over time from car driver to more space efficient, socially inclusive and less polluting forms of Mobility, and not simply to supply extra road capacity for the benefit of car borne commuters in peak periods.

8.22 Stevenage is a Sustainable Travel Town and the Mobility Strategy focuses on reducing the need to travel overall and increasing the proportion of journeys made by sustainable modes (on foot, by bicycle, by public transport, or via schemes such as cycle hire and car clubs). The initiatives include walking, cycling and shared mobility infrastructure and enhancements, together with behaviour schemes.

8.23 The Strategy expects a step change in uptake of sustainable modes. It also advises that it is likely that some highway capacity would need to be reallocated for use by pedestrians, cyclists and bus users.

8.24 A Mobility Steering Group formed of Hertfordshire County Council, Stevenage Borough Council and invited stakeholders will monitor progress of the delivery of the Stevenage Mobility Strategy.

8.25 Maintaining safe and effective access to homes, facilities, jobs and schools is essential to ensuring good quality of life and a prosperous economy. Development proposals will not be supported where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe.

8.26 The County Council, as highway authority, support the use of Transport Statements and Transport Assessments to assess the impact of new development upon the wider network as well as being a means to ascertain internal infrastructure needs. Guidance sets out the thresholds at which these are presently required in Roads in Hertfordshire – A Guide for New Development (HCC, 2011)⁸³. Site-specific

⁸³ <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developer-information/development-management/highways-development-management.aspx#designguide>

circumstances might result in an assessment or statement being requested for developments below these:

	Transport Statement	Transport Assessment
Residential	More than 50 dwellings	More than 80 dwellings
Business (Use Class E(g))	More than 1,500m ² Gross Floor Area (GFA)	More than 2,500m ² GFA
Industrial (B2)	More than 2,500m ² GFA	More than 4,000m ² GFA
Warehousing (B8)	More than 3,000m ² GFA	More than 5,000m ² GFA
Non-food retail	More than 800m ² GFA	More than 1,500m ² GFA

Table 2 Thresholds for Transport Statements and Transport Assessments

8.27 Developers are encouraged to agree the most appropriate approach to transport modelling with the highway authority and Stevenage Borough Council.

8.28 Travel plans set out measures that will be adopted by developers or businesses to encourage residents or staff to use more sustainable modes of transport for their journeys. Initiatives can include, but are not limited to, car sharing, cycle storage, showers, dedicated bus services, homeworking, smart technology, cycle training, personalised travel planning and education and behavioural change measures.

Policy IT5: Parking and access

Planning permission will be granted where proposals comply with the requirements of the Parking Provision SPD. Major development proposals, including redevelopments and changes of use, must additionally:

- a. Demonstrate how the development will be served by passenger transport. Planning obligations will be sought to provide services and facilities where appropriate; and
- b. Make the following provisions for pedestrians and cyclists:
 - i. Safe, direct and convenient routes within the development;
 - ii. Links to existing cycleway and pedestrian networks;
 - iii. Appropriate means of crossing vehicle roads within, or adjacent to, the site;
 - iv. Adequate landscaping and lighting of routes both within the development and on any new external links;
 - v. Contributions towards improving cycleways and pedestrian routes serving the development site, where appropriate;
 - vi. Secure bicycle parking provision; and
 - vii. Ancillary facilities such as changing rooms, showers and lockers, where appropriate.

Planning permission for development proposals which result in the loss of off-street parking spaces (excluding public car parks) or formally defined on-street bays will be granted where:

- c. The parking lost is replaced as near as possible to the existing provision in an accessible location; or
- d. It can be demonstrated that the provision is not suitable or required.

8.29 The original masterplans for the New Town failed to anticipate the rise of the private car's popularity. The layouts of the 1960s and 1970s do not reflect contemporary car ownership (or car sizes), present-day perceptions of safety or how and where people generally prefer to store their car - within sight and easy reach of the front door. In parts of the town 'back-to-front' Radburn layouts result in underused garage courts with limited natural surveillance. In many areas, verges and small open spaces have been sacrificed to provide additional parking spaces.

8.30 As such, it is important to ensure that new development provides appropriate levels of car parking to prevent existing problems being exacerbated. This is particularly true of new residential development. Residential car parking standards are contained within the Parking Provision SPD. These include the discounts that will be applied in more accessible locations. Relevant applications will be required to meet these standards.

8.31 Recommended standards for other uses, and other types of parking, are also set out in this supplementary guidance⁸⁴. Proposals should have regard to these and demonstrate how they have been taken into account. These will be regularly reviewed over the plan period to ensure they are in conformity with relevant national or local guidance and reflect local patterns of car ownership.

8.32 Some schemes may propose undercroft, or gated parking provision to make appropriate provision. In these cases, the Council will take reasonable steps to ensure such provision is useable and to prevent parking from being displaced onto surrounding streets. This may include requiring any such provision is provided free of charge in perpetuity for residents or employees or using covenants (or other relevant mechanisms) to ensure car owners make use of provided spaces.

8.33 Existing parking provision in the town is a valuable asset. Even small schemes can have a big impact. The conversion or sub-division of a modest number of houses in a street can 'tip the balance' in terms of the number of cars versus the number of available spaces. Similarly, schemes which result in the physical loss of existing provision need to be closely monitored. Schemes which take these matters into account will be permitted. Where it can be demonstrated that appropriate replacement provision has been made, or that existing provision is simply no longer able to accommodate modern vehicles, the loss of spaces will be allowed.

8.34 As well as making appropriate provision for cars, it is important to ensure that new developments are easily accessible, especially for walkers, cyclists and passenger transport users. Proposals will be required to demonstrate how they integrate with and, where appropriate, enhance the existing networks around Stevenage. A number of priority schemes are identified in this plan (see Policy IT7) to aid consideration of this policy requirement.

⁸⁴ Parking Provision SPD (SBC, 2012)

Policy IT6: Sustainable transport

The following schemes are identified as priority new and improved sustainable transport schemes. Planning permission will be granted where proposals facilitate the creation or improvement of, reasonably provide or reasonably contribute towards these schemes:

1. The provision of a 5th platform at Stevenage station;
2. A significantly improved station building with entrances facing both the town centre and leisure park;
3. A new town centre bus station located to the west of the existing site and in close proximity to the station;
4. Public transport provision to and within the proposed strategic development sites to the west, north and south-east of Stevenage. This may be provided through the extension of existing, or creation of new bus routes;
5. Enhanced inter-urban bus provision including direct services to employment sites and locations outside of the Borough boundary;
6. New or improved bus services and facilities within 400 metres of major developments.

8.35 Stevenage is well served by public transport. The station is one of the busiest in Hertfordshire and is served by a variety of commuter, regional and long-distance services. It is a key asset and maximising its potential is essential to realising our strategy for the Town Centre. There is also a comprehensive bus network. Most parts of the town are within 400 metres of a bus stop and regular services.

8.36 In the short term, Network Rail have identified the provision of a fifth platform and turnback at Stevenage on the west side of the station⁸⁵. This will allow trains from the Hertford Loop to reach the station and return without needing to cross the East Coast Mainline. It is considered that the majority of this can be achieved within the existing railway boundary and will be classified as operational development. However, it is essential to ensure that any associated works, such as the (re-)provision of pedestrian and cycle access is compatible with future proposals for the Leisure Park site and Town Centre.

8.37 This scheme is being implemented primarily for operational purposes. It does not extend to wider environmental improvements of the station site. However, first impressions of Stevenage when travelling by train are poor. This is in terms of both the station environment itself and the routes to the Town Centre and Leisure Park. New station entrances, on both the east and west sides of the tracks are vital improvements and will catalyse further development in these key arrival spaces.

8.38 Beyond these schemes, the Council continues to support the concept of East-West Rail⁸⁶. Although this is not critical to the delivery of the plan itself, there are clear potential benefits that would arise from a route that improves rail accessibility to Stevenage.

⁸⁵ Network Specification: London North Eastern and East Midlands (Network Rail, 2015)

⁸⁶ <http://www.eastwestrail.org.uk/>

8.39 Alongside improvements to rail provision, enhancements to the bus network will be required. The removal of the existing bus station from the Town Centre will unlock development potential in this area. A preferred site for its replacement is identified in our masterplanning work⁸⁷. This is to the south of the existing Theatre building and would allow for better connectivity between rail and bus while retaining links to the retail core.

8.40 The new neighbourhoods to the west, north and south-east of Stevenage will need to demonstrate how bus provision will be made. This will be a key prerequisite of any schemes. Developers should work closely with the County Council's Passenger Transport Unit to identify the best solutions.

8.41 The Hertfordshire LEP have identified inter-urban bus travel as a key priority along the A1(M) corridor⁸⁸. This Local Plan recognises that it is simply not possible to physically accommodate all future housing and employment needs within the Borough. Direct and reliable services between Stevenage and employment areas in other nearby towns will be vital if they are to represent a genuine alternative to trips by car.

8.42 All major development proposals will be required to demonstrate how they will be served by public transport. Where appropriate, contributions towards new or improved services and facilities will be sought.

Policy IT7: New and improved links for pedestrians and cyclists

The following schemes are identified as priority new and improved links for pedestrians and cyclists. Planning permission will be granted where proposals maintain, enhance, reasonably provide or reasonably contribute towards:

Routes

The following schemes are identified as priority new and improved links for pedestrians and cyclists:

1. From Town Square to the Leisure Park via Stevenage Station;
2. From The Forum to Town Centre Gardens via a new surface-level crossing of St George's Way;
3. Along St Georges Way between the junctions with Fairlands Way and Six Hills Way;
4. From Ditchmore Lane to the town centre via an improved crossing over Fairlands Way;
5. From the junctions of Gunnels Wood Road and Bessemer Drive and / or Gunnels Wood Road and Six Hills Way to the new development west of Stevenage;
6. From Gunnels Wood Road via Meadway Ancient Lane to the new development west of Stevenage;

⁸⁷ Stevenage Central Town Centre Framework (DLA, 2015)

⁸⁸ Perfectly Placed for Business: Hertfordshire's Strategic Economic Plan (Hertfordshire LEP, 2014)

7. Along Gresley Way from Six Hills Way to Martins Way including a spur to Fairlands Way;
8. From the junction of Coreys Mill Lane and North Road and / or following the route of Bridleway 103 from Corey's Mill to new developments north of Stevenage;
9. From the junction of Broadhall Way and Bragbury Lane to new development south-east of Stevenage;
10. Along the principal interior roads of the strategic developments west, north and south-east of Stevenage.

Cycle Parking

The Stevenage Cycle Strategy identifies improvements to cycle parking provision available to the public in Stevenage in terms of gaps in provision at appropriate locations as well as the quality of existing cycle parking.

Wayfinding

The Stevenage Cycle Strategy identifies improvements to wayfinding for pedestrians and cyclists in and around Stevenage, which includes signage and maps.

8.43 The segregated pedestrian and cycle network is one of the finest engineering achievements of the New Town. Wide and clearly defined routes are provided alongside the main roads of the town. A number of junctions are grade-separated allowing free flowing access across main routes.

8.44 However, the role of walking and cycling in the town has declined. The proportion of journeys to work by these modes in Stevenage has fallen by more than 60% over the last forty years. This is reflected in the state of the network with some stretches showing signs of poor maintenance and under-investment. However, cycling in particular is experiencing a renaissance in many towns and cities. It is important that Stevenage capitalises on this and promotes its ground-breaking heritage in this regard. This will deliver wider benefits in terms of health and wellbeing and also helps prevent a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby a lack of suitable provision results in a (perceived) lack of demand.

8.45 To help deliver the requirements of Policy IT5 a number of priority schemes for pedestrians and cyclists have been identified. These will be implemented over the plan period to integrate new areas of development into this network and to address known gaps in provision. The nature and scale of contribution that sites will be required to make will vary. Smaller sites may contribute through CIL or other pooled funding sources. The largest sites will be required to make direct on-site provision as well as contributions to connecting routes.

8.46 Significantly enhanced provision for pedestrians and cyclists is a key element of our masterplan for the Town Centre. We will break down the key barriers to movement that exist. In particular, connectivity from east to west will be improved. In the longer-term, the provision of an improved link between the Town Centre and Old

Town High Street, including the provision of a replacement bridge across Fairlands Way, is envisaged.

8.47 On new strategic developments to the west, north and south-east, clearly segregated routes should be provided along principal interior roads to encourage safe walking and cycling journeys and reflect New Town design principles. These should connect to lower order streets where safe, on-carriageway cycling can be supported. Connections to the existing network will be delivered through a number of identified extensions and improvements.

8.48 For the development west of Stevenage, it would be preferable for connections to / from the development to run alongside the preferred vehicular access routes. However it is recognised that this may not be possible along Bessemer Drive without the use of third party land. In this event, upgrades and improvements to the existing route and underpass from Six Hills Way via Chadwell Road will be considered as an alternative.

8.49 The Stevenage Cycle Strategy will be regularly reviewed and updated over the plan period to ensure that it is up to date in terms of the infrastructure needs for active travel.

Policy IT8: Public parking provision

Planning permission resulting in the loss of existing public car or cycle parking provision will be granted where:

- i. Existing spaces are replaced within or adjacent to the new development;
- ii. Replacement car and cycle-parking provision are made within 200 and 80 metres walk respectively of the key attractors currently served; or
- iii. It can be robustly evidenced that the parking is no longer required.

Applications for new public car or cycle provision will be supported in principle where they respond to a demonstrated need and do not take land specifically allocated or otherwise protected for other uses.

8.50 There are a number of public car parking facilities across the town. These serve important destinations such as the railway station, Town Centre and Old Town. It is important to ensure sufficient levels of parking are provided at these locations to ensure their long term viability and vibrancy. There will be a general presumption against the loss of existing spaces unless the criteria of Policy IT8 are satisfied.

8.51 Transport planning often uses a 80 metres per minute standard for measuring walking speeds and distances⁸⁹. Cycle parking should be provided in as close proximity to the destination as possible to encourage use while car parking should be provided in close proximity.

⁸⁹ Such as the Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) method employed for Transport for London

8.52 The redevelopment of the town centre will require the rationalisation of existing car parking provision. The peripheral areas of the Town Centre are dominated by large, surface car parks and it will be vital to make more efficient use of this land. Similarly, the large surface car parks to the rear of the Old Town High Street provide opportunities for more development. New facilities will be supported in these areas to facilitate change.

9 High quality homes

Housing allocations

Policy HO1: Housing allocations

The following sites, as shown on the proposals map, are allocated for housing to meet our development needs:

Reference	Sites	Dwelling capacity (net)
HO1/1	Bedwell Crescent neighbourhood centre	45
HO1/2	Bragbury End sports ground car park	8
HO1/3	Burwell Road neighbourhood centre	20
HO1/4	Dunn Close garage court	5
HO1/5	Ex-play centre, Scarborough Avenue	15
HO1/6	Former Pin Green school playing field	42
HO1/7	Fry Road day nursery	6
HO1/8	Ken Brown car showroom	36
HO1/9	Kenilworth neighbourhood centre	65
HO1/10	Land at Eliot Road	16
HO1/11	Land West of North Road (Rugby Club)	149
HO1/12	Marymead neighbourhood centre	60
HO1/13	Scout hut, Drakes Drive	18
HO1/14	Shephall Centre and adj. amenity land	34
HO1/15	Shephall View	25
HO1/16	The Glebe neighbourhood centre	35
HO1/17	The Hyde neighbourhood centre	50
HO1/18	The Oval neighbourhood centre	275
	Town Centre (Policies TC01 to TC13)	2,000
	New neighbourhoods (Policies HO2 to HO4)	2,700
	Windfall sites (after 2021)	200 (20 per year)
	TOTAL	5,804

Sites should be developed at an overall capacity which generally accords with the dwelling capacity given for that site.

Planning permission for residential development on these sites will be granted where the proposed development satisfactorily demonstrates how any site-specific considerations have been properly addressed and / or incorporated into the proposal.

Proposals on these sites which do not include housing will be refused.

9.1 Identifying sites and locations for new housing is one of the main roles of the Local Plan. When the plan was originally adopted in 2019, our target was for at least 7,600 homes to be built within the area covered by the plan between 2011-2031.

9.2 At that time, we had already made significant progress towards that target. At 1 October 2015, around 2,350 homes had been completed or granted planning permission. This left us with a residual requirement of 5,429 new homes to be developed.

~~9.2A The partial review and update of the local plan identifies a requirement for 4,956 homes to be built from 2024 to the end of the plan period in 2031. This figure represents the overall plan period target of 7,600 homes minus the net housing completions from 2011 to 2024.~~

9.3 Policy HO1 ~~includes~~continues to include sufficient sites to meet the target, whilst also allowing for some flexibility if any of these sites do not come forward. Sites have been allocated where we think at least five homes can be built. ~~A technical paper explains why this is this case~~⁹⁰.

9.4 Our evidence⁹¹ shows that we have exhausted all potential brownfield sites before greenfield or Green Belt sites were considered for allocation in this plan. The main opportunities for brownfield development come from the redevelopment of the neighbourhood centres and the regeneration of the Town Centre.

9.5 The housing numbers in this policy are indicative. Schemes on these sites should aim to achieve the highest possible net density appropriate to the character of the area, passenger transport accessibility and other relevant plan policies.

9.6 Many of the allocated sites have particular site-specific considerations to take into account. These might be environmental, social or local infrastructure issues. The table on the following page sets out the criteria that should be considered for each site. All of the sites have been assessed within our SA. The appraisal results have been used to help identify the site-specific considerations for developers.

9.7 The information set out against each proposal allocation is not a formal development brief. Any proposals coming forward on these sites will be assessed against all Local Plan policies and other material considerations relevant at the time of application. We may require developers to provide more information or include measures that are not specifically identified in the table below.

9.8 Policies HO2 to HO4 will provide the basis for developing the new neighbourhoods and detailed policies to guide town centre development are located in Section 7 of this plan.

9.9 The homes that are delivered from the sites identified in this Policy will be supplemented by windfalls. These are the sites that are brought forward which have not been specifically identified for development. They will be supported in principle

⁹⁰ ~~Housing Technical Paper (SBC, 2024)~~

⁹¹ Housing Technical Paper (SBC, 2015)

where they help maintain our supply of deliverable sites and will not have an adverse impact. Policy HO5 sets out the criteria against which applications on windfall sites will be assessed.

Site Name	Site specific considerations
Bedwell Crescent neighbourhood centre	- Flood Risk Assessment required for any development of 1 hectare or more. - Community facilities to be retained or reprovided, or their loss justified. - Garages to be retained or reprovided, unless it can be demonstrated that they are no longer required to meet resident needs or others are available nearby, or they no longer meet operational requirements. - No loss in overall levels of parking provision, unless it can be demonstrated that a lower level will still meet the needs of the centre.
Bragbury End sports ground car park	- Within Area of Archaeological Significance - assessment will be required. Flood Risk Assessment required - within flood risk area. - Preserve or enhance the setting of adjacent listed buildings. - Emphasis on high quality landscaping within and / or around the development to reduce impact of greenfield development and create transition to Green Belt beyond. - Satisfactory vehicular access will need to be ensured. - Special consideration to sustainable transport measures due to edge-of-town location. - An Ancient Lane runs along the site boundary. - Suitable location to provide aspirational housing.
Burwell Road neighbourhood centre	- Community facilities to be retained or reprovided, or their loss justified. Garages to be retained or reprovided, unless it can be demonstrated that they are no longer required to meet resident needs or others are available nearby, or they no longer meet operational requirements. - No loss in overall levels of parking provision, unless it can be demonstrated that a lower level will still meet the needs of the centre.
Dunn Close garage court	- No specific measures identified. - Garages to be retained or reprovided, unless it can be demonstrated that they are no longer required to meet resident needs or others are available nearby, or they no longer meet operational requirements.
Ex-play centre, Scarborough Avenue	Community facility to be retained or reprovided, or its loss justified.
Former Pin Green school playing field	The loss of sports facilities will need to be mitigated.
Fry Road day nursery	Community facility to be retained or reprovided, or its loss justified.
Ken Brown car showroom	Investigate whether previous uses have led to any contamination of site.
Kenilworth neighbourhood centre	- Community facilities to be retained or reprovided, or their loss justified. Potential relocation of sub station and underground power cables. - No loss in overall levels of parking provision, unless it can be demonstrated that a lower level will still meet the needs of the centre.
Land at Eliot Road	Preserve or enhance the adjacent Green Link to ensure minimal impact.
Land West of North Road	Flood Risk Assessment required for any development of 1 hectare or more. Replacement sports facilities in a suitable

(Rugby Club)	location, and of equivalent, or better, quantity and quality will be required, prior to development. • Special consideration to sustainable transport measures due to edge-of-town location. • Public Rights of Way run along the boundaries of the site.
Marymead neighbourhood centre	• Preserve or enhance the conservation area • Community facilities to be retained or reprovided, or their loss justified. Existing employment provision should be reprovided. • No loss in overall levels of parking provision, unless it can be demonstrated that a lower level will still meet the needs of the centre. • Garages to be retained or reprovided, unless it can be demonstrated that they are no longer required to meet resident needs or others are available nearby, or they no longer meet operational requirements.
Scout hut, Drakes Drive	• Community facility to be reprovided or its loss satisfactorily justified.
Shephall Centre and adj. amenity land	• Within Area of Archaeological Significance - assessment will be required. Preserve or enhance the conservation area • Community facility to be reprovided or its loss satisfactorily justified. • Suitable location to provide aspirational housing.
Shephall View	• Satisfactory vehicular access will need to be ensured.
The Glebe neighbourhood centre	• Flood Risk Assessment required for any development of 1 hectare or more. An archaeological assessment will be required. • Investigate whether previous uses have led to any contamination of site. Community facilities to be retained or reprovided, or their loss justified. Garages to be retained or reprovided, unless it can be demonstrated that they are no longer required to meet resident needs or others are available nearby, or they no longer meet operational requirements. • Existing employment provision should be reprovided. • No loss in overall levels of parking provision, unless it can be demonstrated that a lower level will still meet the needs of the centre.
The Hyde neighbourhood centre	• An archaeological assessment will be required. • Flood Risk Assessment required for any development of 1 hectare or more. Investigate whether previous uses have led to any contamination of site. Community facilities to be retained or reprovided, or their loss justified. • No loss in overall levels of parking provision, unless it can be demonstrated that a lower level will still meet the needs of the centre.
The Oval neighbourhood centre	• Archaeological and transport assessments will be required. • Flood Risk Assessment required for any development of 1 hectare or more. Investigate whether previous uses have led to any contamination of site. Community facilities to be retained or reprovided, or their loss justified. Open space, including the children's playground, should be retained or reprovided. • No loss in overall levels of parking provision, unless it can be demonstrated that a lower level will still meet the needs of the centre.

Table 3 Site specific considerations for housing allocations identified in Policy HO1

Policy HO2: Stevenage West

Land to the west of Stevenage, as defined by the policies map, is allocated for the development of approximately 1,350 dwellings.

A Masterplan for the whole site will be required as part of any planning application. The Masterplan must be approved prior to the submission of detailed development proposals for the site.

Development proposals will be permitted where the following criteria are met:

- a. The applicant can demonstrate that development can be expanded beyond the Borough boundary in the future, into safeguarded land within North Hertfordshire;
- b. The development incorporates employment floorspace of 10,000m², in accordance with Policy EC1;
- c. Improvements to existing access routes across the A1(M), via Bessemer Drive and Meadway, are provided, which link effectively into the existing road, cycleway and pedestrian networks;
- d. The scheme is designed to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport;
- e. An appropriate buffer to mitigate against noise impacts from A1(M) is included;
- f. At least 5% aspirational homes are provided in line with Policy HO9;
- g. Plots to accommodate at least 1% new homes are made available for self-build purposes;
- h. ~~43~~0% affordable housing is provided in accordance with Policy HO7*;
- i. Provision for supported or sheltered housing is made in line with Policy HO10;
- j. A primary school is provided in line with the most up-to-date evidence of need;
- k. Local facilities to serve the community are incorporated, including a GP surgery, subject to demand;
- l. Sports facilities are provided on-site, in line with Policy HC8, including, but not limited to:
 - i. A skate park or MUGA for children; and
 - ii. Land to accommodate a new cricket facility;
- m. A full archaeological assessment is undertaken;
- n. A full flood risk assessment is undertaken;
- o. The scheme incorporates a network of green infrastructure, with an emphasis on high quality landscaping within and around the development to reduce the impact of the development on the surrounding greenfield / Green Belt land;
- p. Existing Public Rights of Way retained and incorporated, where possible;
- q. The impact of noise pollution from London Luton Airport is mitigated; and

- r. Electric car charging points are provided at an easily accessible location within the site.

It is recognised that the site may be delivered by a number of different developers. In this case, any phase of development would be required to demonstrate that it would enable the delivery of the policy objectives for the development as a whole and those relevant to that phase, and enable an expanded scheme within North Hertfordshire District Council. Community facilities should be provided in a location that allows them to be expanded to meet the needs of the site as a whole.

9.10 The development site known as Stevenage West was originally released from the Green Belt in the District Plan⁹² to allow for a large-scale residential-led scheme. This formed part of a wider cross-boundary allocation, which extended into North Hertfordshire. However, the land within North Hertfordshire was never released from the Green Belt.

9.11 Development on this site has been subject to a long planning history, resulting in the most recent application being withdrawn in 2013. Notwithstanding this, Stevenage West still provides a significant opportunity for development within both Stevenage and North Hertfordshire.

9.12 The allocation of Stevenage West provides the only opportunity within the Borough to accommodate a new urban extension, without compromising Green Belt land. As such it is crucial in terms of meeting our housing target.

9.13 The site's close proximity to Gunnels Wood Employment Area also means it offers an ideal opportunity to meet some of our employment needs. A mixed use scheme will be required, incorporating around 10,000m² of new employment land. This should be located towards the eastern edge of the site, adjacent to the main access point at Bessemer Drive.

9.14 A scheme is now being pursued to bring forward this part of the site within the Borough boundary independently from the North Hertfordshire land. This will allow it to be developed at an earlier stage within the plan period and using the existing access points across the A1(M). Further land is likely to be safeguarded by North Hertfordshire to enable the scheme to be expanded beyond the Borough boundary, to provide another 3,000 homes after 2026. Any development proposal will be required to demonstrate that it can be fully integrated with this wider scheme in the future. The approval of a Masterplan will be required prior to the submission of detailed development proposals for the site.

9.15 Two access points already exist to serve the site, allowing movement under the A1(M) at Meadway and Bessemer Drive. The entrance to the site at Meadway will require enhancements to provide satisfactory vehicular access, but no additional access points will be required at this stage. The developer will need to work with the

⁹² District Plan Second Review, 1991 - 2011 (as amended)

Highways Authority to ensure any improvements required to the road network are provided. A major new access point will be required to serve the wider, cross-boundary scheme. Land to facilitate this is safeguarded by Policy IT2.

9.16 The NPPF is clear that significant development should be focused in locations which are or can be made sustainable⁹³. Part of this means ensuring that the residents of new developments have access to appropriate local facilities. The location of the site, to the west of the A1(M), means that new facilities will be required to ensure that residents can meet their day-to-day needs. This will also ensure that these significant developments broadly reflect the ethos and planning principles that underpin the existing neighbourhoods of the town. Facilities will include a primary school (exact requirements to be confirmed by Hertfordshire County Council), a doctors surgery and local convenience retail provision.

9.17 New facilities which meet the general parameters for local or neighbourhood centres will be treated as such. New facilities which do not will be treated as local shops. Any applications for subsequent development or changes of use will be considered against the criteria of the relevant policy.

9.18 Sports facilities will also be required, in line with policy HC8. As part of this requirement, our evidence identifies a need for an additional cricket facility to be provided within the town, towards the end of the plan period. It recommends Stevenage West as the preferred location for this provision to be made. Subject to an up-to-date assessment of demand, the masterplan will be expected to show how this facility can be accommodated within the site. It is likely that additional (external) sources of funding will be required to deliver this facility. This will require further discussion at pre-application stage. In the event that no demand is shown for the proposed facility by an operator, equivalent quantitative sports pitch provision will be required in accordance with Policy HC8. A skate park / alternative youth facilities will also be required.

9.19 The site also encompasses an Area of Archaeological Significance. A full assessment will be required, and advice should be sought from Hertfordshire County Council.

9.20 Our SHMA identifies the need for more larger homes to balance out our housing mix. Due to its location on the edge of town, and adjacent to surrounding Green Belt / Greenfield land, our evidence⁹⁴ identifies this site as being suitable for providing much-needed aspirational homes within the Borough. The study recommends around 5% aspirational homes are provided on our urban extension sites. This will ensure an appropriate level of provision, without flooding the market.

9.21 A small proportion of plots will be required to be made available for sale to people who want to build their own homes. This can be combined with the aspirational homes requirement, by reserving larger plots that meet both criteria. If self-build plots are not taken up by the public after being marketed for at least two years, we will allow these to revert to conventional build plots.

⁹³ As set out in Paragraph 17 'Core Planning Principles'.

⁹⁴ Aspirational Housing Research (SBC, 2010)

~~9.21A The partial review and update of the local plan introduces an uplift in the proportion of affordable houses required on greenfield sites. However, planning permission has already been granted for the Stevenage West site. For this reason, the affordable housing requirement for the Stevenage West site remains at the level set in the 2019 version of the plan i.e. 30%.~~

Policy HO3: North of Stevenage

Land to the North of Stevenage, as defined by the policies map, is allocated for the development of approximately 800 dwellings.

A Masterplan for the whole site will need to be submitted as part of an outline planning application. The Masterplan must be approved prior to the submission of detailed development proposals for the site.

Development proposals will be permitted where the following criteria are met:

- a. The applicant can demonstrate that development can be expanded beyond the Borough boundary, and fully integrated with a wider, cross-boundary scheme;
- b. Satisfactory vehicular access is provided. At least two access points to and from the site will be required, which link effectively into the existing road, cycleway and pedestrian networks;
- c. The scheme is designed to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport;
- d. At least 5% aspirational homes are provided in line with Policy HO9;
- e. Plots to accommodate at least 1% new homes are made available for self-build purposes;
- f. ~~430%~~ affordable housing is provided in accordance with Policy HO7^{*,*};
- g. Provision for supported or sheltered housing is made in line with Policy HO10;
- h. Local facilities to serve the community are incorporated, including a GP surgery, subject to demand;
- i. A primary school is provided in line with the most up-to-date evidence of need;
- j. A skate park or MUGA for children is provided on-site;
- k. A full archaeological assessment is undertaken;
- l. A full flood risk assessment is undertaken;
- m. The proposal seeks to preserve or enhance the conservation area, including the setting of adjacent listed buildings. The following mitigation measures should be incorporated;
 - i. As much of the requirement for aspirational homes (criteria d) as possible should be met on the part of the site that lies within the conservation area. Development within this area should also be heavily landscaped to reduce the visual impact of development;
 - ii. Existing hedgerows should be maintained and additional screening implemented to reduce the visual impact of the development;

- iii. Tall buildings will not be permitted. Building heights will be a maximum of two storeys within the eastern part of the site;
 - iv. No vehicular access to the site will be permitted from the east of the site, across the open fields;
 - v. Existing Public Rights of Way are retained and designed into the development, where possible, and diverted where necessary; and
 - vi. Building styles and layout within the conservation area to the east of the site should reflect the key features of the conservation area.
- n. The scheme incorporates a network of green infrastructure, with an emphasis on high quality landscaping within and around the development to reduce the impact of the development on the surrounding greenfield / Green Belt land;
 - o. An appropriate buffer around existing power lines is incorporated; and
 - p. Electric car charging points are provided at an easily accessible location within the site

As part of any development proposal, we will require the open space to the east of the boundary to be retained as such, either via a Legal Agreement or through the transfer of land to the Borough Council.

9.22 Land to the north of Stevenage, east of the B197 North Road, has been removed from the Green Belt to enable the development of around 800 new homes. The large, relatively unconstrained site offers the opportunity to create an urban extension north of the existing urban area.

9.23 This site forms part of a wider potential development opportunity which stretches beyond the Borough boundary. North Hertfordshire have consulted on delivering a further 1,000 homes to the north of Stevenage. Any prospective developer should liaise with North Hertfordshire and adjacent landowners / developers to ensure that proposals on this site can be fully integrated with a wider scheme in the future. The approval of a Masterplan will be required prior to the submission of detailed development proposals for the site.

9.24 There is currently no vehicular access to the site. The primary access route can be taken from North Road. An additional access point is likely to be required for phases of development beyond 300 units (or equivalent traffic generating uses). The developer will need to work with the Highways Authority to ensure any required improvements to the road network are undertaken.

9.25 As with Stevenage West, the location of the site, on the edge of the town, means that new facilities will be required to ensure that residents can meet their day-to-day needs. This will also ensure that these significant developments broadly reflect the ethos and planning principles that underpin the existing neighbourhoods of the town. Facilities will include a primary school (exact requirement to be confirmed by Hertfordshire County Council), a doctors surgery and local convenience retail provision.

9.26 New facilities which meet the general parameters for local or neighbourhood centres will be treated as such. New facilities which do not will be treated as local shops. Any applications for subsequent development or changes of use will be considered against the criteria of the relevant policy.

9.27 Sports facilities will also be required, in line with policy HC8. Our evidence identifies a need for a skate park / alternative youth facilities to be provided on site.

9.28 Our evidence⁹⁵ identifies the need for more larger homes to balance out our housing mix. Due to its edge of town location, and its proximity to surrounding Green Belt / Greenfield land, our evidence⁹⁶ identifies this site as being suitable for providing much-needed aspirational homes within the Borough. The study recommends around 5% aspirational homes are provided on our urban extension sites. This will ensure an appropriate level of provision, without flooding the market.

9.29 A small proportion of plots will be required to be made available for sale to people who want to build their own homes. This can be combined with the aspirational homes requirement, by reserving larger plots that meet both criteria. If self-build plots are not taken up by the public after being marketed for at least two years, we will allow these to revert to conventional build plots.

9.30 The site lies partly within the St. Nicholas and Rectory Lane Conservation Area. Our evidence⁹⁷ shows that the development of this area will have some degree of impact on the character and appearance of the conservation. However, this will not be significant, and will be outweighed by the social and economic benefits that would be provided by the development of the land for residential use. A number of mitigation measures are identified that should help to minimise any negative aspects of development.

9.31 In particular, it recommends that larger, aspirational homes are provided within the part of the site that lies within the Conservation Area, and that these are heavily landscaped to enable more effective transition from the new housing to the adjacent open spaces. Existing screening is currently provided by the hedgerow, but this could be increased to make it more effective. This has worked successfully for the adjacent development of Chancellors Road, which also directly adjoins the conservation area. Building styles, massing and layout will require careful consideration.

9.32 The site is also adjacent to an Area of Archaeological Significance. A full archaeological assessment will be required and guidance should be sought from Hertfordshire County Council.

9.33 In accordance with our Open Space Strategy, and the findings of the Heritage Assessment, we will seek to protect the openness of the countryside closest to St. Nicholas Church and within Rectory Lane Conservation Area, known locally as Forster Country. The protection will recognise the literary connection of the land to

⁹⁵ Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SBC, 2015)

⁹⁶ Aspirational Housing Research (SBC, 2010)

⁹⁷ Heritage Impact Assessment - North Stevenage (SBC, 2015)

E.M. Forster and Rooks Nest House⁹⁸. As part of any development proposal, we will require the remaining open space to be retained as such, either via a Legal Agreement or through the transfer of land to the Borough Council. This will be as part of / in lieu of on-site open space provision. Policy NH8 supports proposals which aim to enhance this site and to create a country park.

9.34 Pylons and overhead power cables run east/west through the centre of the site. Development will need to be carefully planned to ensure that a suitable buffer is provided. National guidance will be used to assess the minimum width requirements.

~~9.34A The partial review and update of the local plan introduces an uplift in the proportion of affordable houses required on greenfield sites. However, planning permission has already been granted for the North of Stevenage site. For this reason, the affordable housing requirement for the North of Stevenage site remains at the level set in the 2019 version of the plan i.e. 30%.~~

Policy HO4: South East of Stevenage

Land to the South East of Stevenage, as defined by the policies map, is allocated for the development of approximately 550 dwellings. The site will be developed as two separate parcels:

- North of the A602 (150 dwellings)
- South of the A602 (400 dwellings)

Development proposals will be permitted where the following criteria are met:

- a. Satisfactory vehicular access to both sites is provided from a single point of access off the A602, in line with Highways Authority requirements;
- b. The schemes are designed to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport;
- c. At least 5% aspirational homes are provided in line with Policy HO9;
- d. Plots to accommodate at least 1% new homes are made available for self-build purposes;
- e. 40% affordable housing is provided in line with ~~p~~Policy HO7*;
- f. Provision for supported or sheltered housing is made in line with Policy HO10;
- g. Existing Public Rights of Way are incorporated, where possible;
- h. The Ancient Lane along Aston Lane will be preserved or enhanced;
- i. A full archaeological assessment is undertaken;
- j. A full flood risk assessment is undertaken;
- k. The proposals seek to preserve or enhance the setting of adjacent listed buildings;
- l. The schemes incorporate a network of green infrastructure, with an emphasis on high quality landscaping within and around the development to reduce the impact of the development on the surrounding greenfield / Green Belt land;

⁹⁸ Open Space Strategy (SBC, 2015)

- m. The tree boundary on the site to the North of the A602 is retained as far as possible; and
- n. Electric car charging points are provided at an easily accessible location within the site.

The following will also be required to be provided within the parcel south of A602, unless demonstrated that these facilities are more satisfactorily accommodated on the northern part of the site:

- i. Local facilities to serve the community, including a GP surgery, subject to demand; and
- ii. On-site sports facilities in line with Policy HC8, including, but not limited to, the provision of a MUGA or Skate Park for children.

9.35 Land to the south east of Stevenage, at Bragbury End, has been removed from the Green Belt to enable the development of around 550 new homes. The site is split into two parts. The land to the south of the A602 is the larger of the two sites, and is relatively unconstrained. This site will accommodate around 400 of the new dwellings. The site to the north will accommodate the remaining 150 homes.

9.36 There is currently no vehicular access to either of the sites. The Highways Authority has previously confirmed that a new roundabout on the A602 to serve both sites is critical to the delivery of new housing in this area⁹⁹.

9.37 Applicants for planning permission will need to address the requirements of the Development Plan as a whole. In this instance, this will include the Hertfordshire Minerals Plan which contains these sites within the Sand and Gravel Belt. Further advice can be obtained from either the Borough or County Councils on the practical implications of this designation.

9.38 Land to the north of the A602 is currently designated as outdoor sports provision and was previously used as playing fields. Our Sports Strategy¹⁰⁰ recognises that these facilities no longer have community use and have been redundant for some years. The assessment shows that we have an over-supply of playing fields across the town and that sufficient space will still remain even with the growth set out within this plan. As such, the sports provision does not require replacement. However, developers' contributions will be required towards improvements to existing public playing field sites in Stevenage, as part of the requirement for sports provision arising from Policy HC8. A skate park or MUGA for children will also be required.

9.39 The location of the site, on the edge of the town, means that new facilities will be required to ensure that residents can meet their day-to-day needs. This will also ensure that these significant developments broadly reflect the ethos and planning principles that underpin the existing neighbourhoods of the town. Facilities will include a doctors surgery and local convenience retail provision.

⁹⁹ Infrastructure Delivery Plan (SBC, 2015)

¹⁰⁰ Stevenage Sports and Facilities Strategy (Nortoft, 2015)

9.40 New facilities which meet the general parameters for local or neighbourhood centres will be treated as such. New facilities which do not will be treated as local shops. Any applications for subsequent development or changes of use will be considered against the criteria of the relevant policy.

9.41 Our SHMA identifies the need for more larger homes to balance out our housing mix. Due to the edge of town location of these sites, and their proximity to surrounding Green Belt / greenfield land, our evidence¹⁰¹ identifies them as being suitable for providing much-needed aspirational homes within the Borough. The study recommends around 5% aspirational homes are provided on our urban extension sites. This will ensure an appropriate level of provision, without flooding the market.

9.42 A small proportion of plots will be required to be made available for sale to people who want to build their own homes. This can be combined with the aspirational homes requirement, by reserving larger plots that meet both criteria. If self-build plots are not taken up by the public after being marketed for at least two years, we will allow these to revert to conventional build plots.

9.43 The northern site currently benefits from a mature tree boundary to the south. It is acknowledged that an access route will need to break through these trees, but apart from this, the boundary should be retained as far as possible, to minimise the visual impact of development.

¹⁰¹ Aspirational Housing Research (SBC, 2010)

Windfall sites

Policy HO5: Windfall sites

Windfall sites

Planning permission for residential development on unallocated sites will be granted where:

- a. The site is on previously developed land or is an underused urban site; and
- b. Proposals will not prejudice our ability to deliver residential development on allocated sites.

9.44 Windfall sites are proposals that come forward on sites that have not been formally allocated for housing. Windfall development can make a valuable contribution towards housing supply, but we need to ensure that it is appropriate development. Proposals for housing development that meet the above criteria (and other relevant policies) will be granted permission.

9.45 This plan has made substantial efforts to identify the sites required to meet its housing target. Site owners have had multiple opportunities to present sites for consideration through the plan-making process. Further sites that arise should be generally be small-scale infill or intensification opportunities. Opportunities may arise on larger, previously developed sites where there are genuine changes in circumstances that precluded their identification at the time of this plan's writing. Windfall greenfield sites should generally be less than 0.5 hectares in size to be considered acceptable.

9.46 The conversion of larger houses into smaller homes or flats or shared accommodation can be a useful means of providing additional dwelling stock, which meets the small property demand. However, an increase in residents can result in a need for additional parking and open space provision, can increase traffic, and can add to pressures on existing services and facilities. The conversion of larger houses will be permitted where any negative impacts can be successfully mitigated against.

9.47 Applications will only be permitted for schemes that are sustainable and will not have a negative impact on the surrounding area. Good access to local facilities will be required. Proposals should be within walking distance of primary school provision and other community facilities. In assessing applications, regard should be had to other relevant policies including (but not necessarily limited to) parking and design policies.

Policy HO6: Redevelopment of existing homes

Planning permission for schemes resulting in the change of use or redevelopment of existing homes for non-residential purposes will be granted where:

- a. It would provide a small-scale social, health, community or leisure facility or a small-scale extension to an existing business use in the same building; and
- b. A suitable, alternative non-residential site is not available for the proposed use.

Planning permission for residential schemes resulting in a net loss of housing will be granted where it provides demonstrable benefits against the relevant housing policies of this plan.

9.48 Due to the constrained nature of the Borough, and the associated challenge of meeting our housing target, it is important that existing housing stock is retained wherever possible. However, it is recognised there can be exceptions to this.

9.49 The conversion, or redevelopment, of individual properties can provide local services, such as dental surgeries or GPs. These can contribute toward sustainability objectives by providing facilities close to where people live.

9.50 In parts of the town, existing stock may be ageing or otherwise unfit for purpose. The most viable replacement schemes may, on occasion, result in a net loss of housing stock. Where a scheme is providing demonstrable benefits against the overarching housing policy aims of this plan, and meets other relevant requirements, permission will be granted.

Homes for all

Policy HO7: Affordable housing targets

Planning permission will be granted for residential developments that maximise affordable housing provision. The following target levels of affordable housing provision will apply to schemes that meet the thresholds set out in the NPPF:

- 25% of new homes on previously developed sites; and
- 40% of new homes elsewhere.

Planning permission will only be granted where these targets are not at least achieved if:

- a. Developers robustly demonstrate that the target cannot be achieved due to site-specific constraints resulting in higher than normal costs, which affect its viability; or
- b. Meeting the requirements would demonstrably and significantly compromise other policy objectives.

Where a development is phased or a site is either divided into separate parts or otherwise regarded as part of a larger development, it will be considered as a whole and the appropriate target will apply.

Residential or mixed-use schemes that are not compliant with the above targets must be accompanied by a financial appraisal based on agreed costs and development values at the time of the application. Where an appraisal shows that affordable housing provision in excess of the relevant target level can be supported, a higher level of provision will be encouraged.

9.51 Affordable housing is a pressing issue in Stevenage. In common with most areas of the country, house prices have risen substantially since the turn of the century. Housing Needs surveys consistently record high numbers of households that require assistance¹⁰². The provision of new affordable homes is a key priority for the Council and we will seek the provision of affordable housing on all sites where we are able to do so.

9.52 It is recognised that affordable housing requirements should not place an unacceptable burden upon willing landowners or developers¹⁰³. The targets in this policy have been informed by viability evidence. This demonstrates that the target levels were broadly achievable at the time of the plan's writing¹⁰⁴.

9.52A The partial ~~review and~~ update of the local plan introduces an uplift to the proportion of affordable housing required on greenfield sites, from 30% to 40%. This revised target has been subject to further viability testing, which shows that it is

¹⁰² Housing Technical Paper (SBC, 2015)

¹⁰³ NPPF Paragraph 173

¹⁰⁴ Whole Plan Viability Study including Community Infrastructure Levy (HDH Planning & Development, 2015)

broadly achievable in combination with the other policies in the revised plan and the CIL rates proposed in the concurrent CIL review.¹⁰⁵

9.53 It is our expectation that these targets will be met and, where possible, exceeded. House prices in Stevenage are low compared to surrounding towns. This plan sets a strategy for a transformational change of the town. This will significantly affect perceptions of Stevenage and its desirability as a place to live. In turn, this means there is scope for house prices to rise, relative to construction costs and other relevant values, positively affecting viability over the plan period. This is already being seen in certain schemes in and around the Town Centre.

9.54 Residential or mixed use schemes, that are not target compliant or fail to meet other key Local Plan Policies (those that were inputs into the whole plan viability assessment), must be accompanied by a financial appraisal, based on current costs and development values at the time of the application. All appraisals will be subject to scrutiny and review by the Council's Housing team. It is our expectation that affordable housing provision will be maximised once reasonable costs and returns and other policy requirements have been taken into account. Where an appraisal shows that affordable housing provision in excess of the relevant target level can be supported, a higher level of provision will be encouraged.

9.55 In all cases, the Council will consider the use of review mechanisms, clawback clauses or other relevant forms of agreement to capture any uplift in values that benefit scheme viability between the point of permission and the point of sale. Where necessary, these will be incorporated into any agreement secured under Policy SP5 of this plan.

9.56 If applicants consider that target levels cannot be achieved, the appraisal must set out the particular circumstances and costs relevant to that scheme.

9.57 In the event of a significant rise in house prices, or any other changes which will materially affect the costs of development over an extended period of time, our viability evidence will be updated to determine whether the target levels of affordable housing remain appropriate. Where justified, the targets will be amended through a single issue or partial update review of this plan.

9.58 The NPPG sets thresholds for sites on which affordable housing provision can be required. Currently, affordable housing can only be sought on sites of over 10 dwellings. Should these thresholds be withdrawn in the future, the targets set out in Policy HO7 will apply to all schemes.

9.59 The Council will issue supporting guidance and advice as necessary to provide additional information to prospective applicants.

Policy HO8: Affordable housing tenure, mix and design

¹⁰⁵ Local Plan & CIL Review Viability Assessment (Aspinall Verdi, 2024)

Where affordable housing is secured through Policy HO7, planning permission will be granted where those dwellings:

- a. Are provided by the developer on site with at least 70% of the units being for rent and the remainder consisting of other tenures to be agreed with the Council's Housing team;
- b. Meet the requirements of Policy HO9;
- c. Are physically indistinguishable from other types of homes and are distributed across the site to avoid over-concentration in any particular area; and
- d. Will remain at an affordable price for future eligible households.

Exceptions to criterion a. will only be considered where it would result in the delivery of new affordable housing within a similar timescale and

- i. It would be demonstrably preferable for planning or management reasons to secure land, off-site provision or a financial contribution; or
- ii. The proposed affordable housing units respond to a specific, identified need that justifies a departure from the normal tenure requirements.

9.60 As well as maximising the overall levels of affordable housing provision, it is equally important to ensure that the appropriate mix of homes are provided. The Council will seek the majority of new homes for rent, with the remainder in other appropriate tenures.

9.61 Our presumption is strongly in favour of on-site provision. However, the provision of land, off-site units or financial contributions will be considered in reasonable circumstances and where it will deliver comparable outcomes - in terms of the timing of housing delivery and number of dwellings. In exceptional circumstances, schemes may be able to contribute towards specific needs or tenure types that would justify a departure from the normal approach.

9.62 Commuted provision is most likely to be acceptable where:

- The application of the targets in Policy HO7 would result in particularly low numbers of affordable units, including on schemes of less than four homes;
- The provision of on-site units would result in specific and demonstrable management issues, which might include abnormal management costs or the provision of units in a leasehold scheme; or
- It could assist in the delivery of priority housing and regeneration schemes.

9.63 To provide mixed communities, new affordable homes should be distributed across development sites.

9.64 Affordable housing is usually secured in perpetuity, making sure that the benefits are passed on to future generations of occupiers. There can be exceptions to this. Many affordable homes have been sold through Right to Buy while some shared equity schemes provide the opportunity to gain 100% ownership of the

property by 'staircasing' over time. The sale of high-value units, in line with Government requirements, may allow for greater than 1:1 re-provision off-site. We will not unreasonably interfere with statutory requirements and rights in our application of criterion d.

Policy HO9: Housing types and sizes

Planning permission for residential schemes will be granted where:

- a. An appropriate range of market and affordable housing types and sizes are provided taking into account:
 - i. Structural imbalances in the existing housing stock;
 - ii. The housing needs of the Borough, as informed by up-to-date and relevant evidence;
 - iii. The location and accessibility of the application site; and
 - iv. Recent completions, existing permissions and sites in the five-year land supply;
- b. The resultant scheme would provide a density and character of development appropriate to its location and surroundings. Significantly higher densities should be achieved in easily accessible locations; and
- c. Aspirational homes are provided in appropriate locations including, but not necessarily limited to:
 - i. New neighbourhoods to the north, west and south-east of the town;
 - ii. Suitable suburban, edge-of-town sites;
 - iii. The town centre, Old Town and other highly accessible locations; and
 - iv. Other appropriate sites where aspirational homes would complement the prevailing character

9.65 Providing an appropriate mix of homes that meet the requirements of all sectors of society is an integral element of sustainable development. New development should deliver an appropriate range of house types and sizes.

9.66 The overriding ambition of this policy is to address longstanding structural issues with the town's housing offer. The original masterplans for Stevenage did not incorporate a balanced mix of housing. As a result, Stevenage has a high proportion of terraced and, in particular, three-bed housing. These dominate the market¹⁰⁶.

9.67 Alongside this, the requirements suggested by up-to-date housing and population projections and other relevant demographic evidence will be taken into account. Recent trends suggest a significant need for houses over flats. Particularly,

¹⁰⁶ Only four of the 326 local planning authorities (LPAs) in England have a higher proportion of terraced housing stock. Almost nine in ten LPAs have a lower proportion of three-bed homes (Census 2011, Tables KS401EW & LC1402EW / SBC analysis)

there are very few large family homes. Only 1 in 100 homes in Stevenage are in the highest Council Tax brackets¹⁰⁷.

9.68 The original masterplan for Stevenage involved building at relatively low densities of 25-30 dwellings per hectare. However, where sites are easily accessible, substantially higher densities will be required to ensure the most efficient use of land. Higher densities can also help to support local amenities and the viability of passenger transport.

9.69 We will address the large home shortage by ensuring a modest proportion of 'aspirational' homes are provided in suitable locations. Any aspirational houses are to be counted within the general requirements for large and / or market units rather than separate to them. Policies HO1 to HO4 identify those allocated sites where the provision of aspirational homes will be supported.

9.70 Previous evidence suggests that, to qualify as aspirational, houses should be:

- Built in small groups in suitable suburban and edge-of-town locations; Low density, typically between 8 and 15 dwellings per hectare; Detached with at least four bedrooms and two bathrooms;
- Sited on large plots with a built footprint generally in excess of 100m² and rear gardens of at least 200m²; and
- Set back from the road and provided with at least two off-street parking spaces.

9.71 To qualify as aspirational, flats should be:

- Located close to the Town Centre and railway station; On the upper floor(s) of multi-storey developments;
- Provide significantly larger than average accommodation. This may include the provision of private outdoor space or 'penthouse'-style units¹⁰⁸; and
- Internally finished to a high specification¹⁰⁹.

9.72 These are generally considered to be minimum criteria. It may be appropriate to exceed these guidelines. On suitable sites of 0.5ha or more, around 10% of dwellings can be delivered as aspirational homes without prejudicing the efficient use of land. We will use this figure as a starting point for negotiation recognising that:

- On large sites this could require a significant number of aspirational homes that might not be desirable in a single location. A lower proportion of homes will be acceptable in these instances;
- On some smaller, windfall sites it may be appropriate to permit up to 100% aspirational homes. These would be an exception to general guidance and will only be allowed where they meet other relevant policy requirements and

¹⁰⁷ Properties in Council Tax Bands G and H. Data from Valuation Office website, <http://cti.voa.gov.uk/cti/>, October 2015.

¹⁰⁸ Average market 2-bed flats provide around 55-75m². Aspirational flats should provide in excess of 85m² of accommodation. Units in excess of 100m² will be considered acceptable in penthouse-style accommodation.

¹⁰⁹ Aspirational Housing Research (SBC, 2010)

complement the prevailing character, diversify existing stock or otherwise lead to the best solution for the site; while

- In accessible locations where purely flatted developments are proposed, the proportion of aspirational homes that can be achieved will largely be determined by the proposed building height(s) and footprint(s).

9.73 Affordable housing unit mix will be agreed by negotiation with the Council's Housing team having regard to evidence of need. The range of market accommodation being proposed will also be taken into account to ensure a coherent development scheme is delivered.

Policy HO10: Sheltered and supported housing

Planning permission for sheltered and supported housing schemes will be ~~granted where they comply with other relevant policies in this plan~~supported.

On large developments in excess of 200 units, an element of sheltered or supported accommodation within use classes C3 should be provided where practicable as part of the general housing mix requirements of Policy HO9. The new neighbourhoods to the north and west of Stevenage should additionally include an element of accommodation in use class C2 as part of a comprehensive offer.

Schemes that would result in a net loss of sheltered or supported housing will not normally be permitted.

9.74 Over the lifetime of this plan, there will be a significant increase in the number and proportion of older residents in Stevenage. The housing needs of this age group will vary considerably depending on circumstances. Many will be able to continue living in their own homes with minimal, or no, adaptation or support. Others will require some degree of care or assistance.

9.75 Other groups will also have specific support needs, including people of all ages with physical or learning disabilities or the homeless.

9.76 A number of different models exist to meet the housing needs that this creates:

- Housing with care can include extra care, sheltered housing and assisted living. This is normally delivered in the form of self-contained accommodation that is provided within a purpose-built block or small estate where all residents have similar support needs. Care is provided for those who cannot live completely on their own, or would like the comfort of knowing assistance is available, but do not need significant levels of personal care. An example might include self-contained sheltered accommodation with an on-site warden.
- Care or nursing homes provide a higher degree of personal care and / or long-term medical treatment for those who cannot live independently.

9.77 Self-contained accommodation with a modest level of care, or single dwellings providing care for up to six people, will normally fall within Use Class C3.

Accommodation with greater levels of communal facilities, support and / or care will normally fall within Use Class C2. The distinction between these uses can be a fine one. A number of court and appeal decisions have considered this issue at length and have considered indicators including the presence of individual front doors, or the weekly level of care received in coming to a view.

9.78 The population and household projections which underpin this plan suggest that around 200 people will require C2-style accommodation over the plan period. This is in addition to the requirement for 7,300 homes recognised in that work. It is similarly recognised that this approach assumes a fixed proportion of those aged 75 or over will require such accommodation¹¹⁰.

9.79 This statistical approach needs to be balanced against 'real world' views. People are living longer, and living in their own homes for longer. Assuming that the same proportion of over-75's will require more advanced levels of care in 2031 as in 2011 may not hold true. At the same time, the ways in which care is delivered are changing. There is an increasing focus upon adaptation of dwellings and home support.

9.80 The housing target set in Policy SP7 already includes a modest uplift over our objectively assessed needs. The potential to meet a greater proportion of the forecast needs for use-class C2 accommodation within the mainstream housing stock is one influence on this decision.

9.81 Future sheltered and supported housing schemes will be delivered in several ways. A number of units will be delivered by the market in response to perceived demand. Several schemes providing supported and assisted living for older residents have been built in Stevenage in recent years. Accommodation held by registered providers will continue to form an important component of the housing offer. Standalone and windfall schemes to (re-)provide sheltered or supported housing over the plan period will be considered on their merits having regard to the criteria above and other relevant policies.

9.82 These approaches will be supplemented by a policy-led requirement. On the largest housing sites, we will expect an element of sheltered and / or supported housing to be provided. This requirement will be applied pragmatically having regard to:

- The nature of the proposal;
- Up-to-date information, including demographic data and the relevant plans or strategies of service providers; and
- Monitoring of completed schemes and permitted supply of market and affordable units that meet these definitions.

¹¹⁰ This is a standard statistical assumption derived from the approach used in Government forecasts. Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Housing Market Assessment Update (ORS, 2015)

9.83 Where it is not practicable to secure provision on-site, for example in high-intensity flatted schemes or less accessible locations, the need to secure alternate contributions will be considered in line with Policy SP5.

9.84 Our presumption is that, on a Borough-wide basis, the quantity of sheltered and supported accommodation will increase over the plan period. The loss of existing sheltered and supported accommodation will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:

- Adequate and appropriate replacement provision is or will be made; or
- That existing units are no longer fit-for-purpose.

9.85 Replacement provision may be on the same site or in an alternate location.

9.85A The council will apply Policy HO10 to decisions on planning applications flexibly. This will include instances where doing so would not be technically feasible, would not be financially viable, or would otherwise compromise the delivery of sustainable development.

Policy HO11: Accessible and adaptable housing

~~Where appropriate, At least 10% of dwellings within major residential developments to which Part M of the Building Regulations applies should comply with optional standard M4(3)(2)(b) for wheelchair user dwellings, with a further 40% complying with optional standard M4(2) for accessible and adaptable dwellings.~~

The Council will apply Policy HO11 to decisions on planning applications flexibly, in recognition of the fact that it may not always be appropriate to provide M4(2) or M4(3) dwellings

Minor residential developments which meet these standards will be strongly supported.

9.86 Over the lifetime of this plan, there will be a significant increase in the aged population and the national trend is for a greater proportion of elderly and disabled residents to stay in their own home, rather than live in a residential institution or retirement home. As a result, there needs to be an increase in the overall percentage of new homes built over the plan period that will be required to meet accessible and adaptable dwellings standards.

9.87 The Government's requirements for the access to and use of dwellings are set out in Part M4 of Schedule 1 to the Building Regulations 2010 (as amended), which contains three categories:

- M4(1) - visitable dwellings
- M4(2) - accessible and adaptable dwellings
- M4(3) - wheelchair user dwellings

9.87A Building Regulation M4(1) is mandatory for all new dwellings unless a planning condition requires compliance with one of the optional requirements M4(2) or M4(3). Where requirement M4(3) applies, a dwelling may either be designed to be readily adapted to the needs of a wheelchair user or designed to meet the needs of a wheelchair user from the outset. The former is known as a 'wheelchair adaptable' dwelling and conforms to requirement M4(3)(2)(a), while the latter is known as a 'wheelchair accessible' dwelling and conforms to requirement M4(3)(2)(b). Where no specific requirement is specified, the requirement defaults to a M4(3)(2)(a) wheelchair adaptable dwelling.

9.87B Our most up-to-date evidence¹¹¹ shows a need for approximately 5% of new market dwellings and 20% of new affordable dwellings in Stevenage to be wheelchair accessible. However, the need for accessible and adaptable dwellings was not assessed because of Government plans to make this a mandatory standard for all new homes¹¹². These plans have yet to come forward.

9.87C In contrast, our previous evidence¹¹³ showed a need for 50% of new dwellings in Stevenage to be accessible and adaptable. A need for 12% of dwellings to be wheelchair adaptable was included in this figure.

9.87D Taking all of this evidence into account, Policy HO11 requires at least 10% of new dwellings within major residential developments to comply with optional requirement M4(3)(2)(b) and a further 40% to comply with optional requirement M4(2), where appropriate. This applies to major developments which are entirely residential and major mixed-use developments which include a residential component.

9.87E The council will apply Policy HO11 to decisions on planning applications flexibly, in recognition of the fact that it may not always be appropriate to provide M4(2) or M4(3) dwellings. This will include instances where providing step-free access would not be technically feasible, would not be financially viable, or would otherwise compromise the delivery of sustainable development. All such developments should ensure the targets set by Policy HO11 are met unless there are clear and convincing reasons as to why it would be inappropriate. This may include practical difficulties, for example in converting existing buildings, or instances where compliance with the targets would compromise other Local Plan objectives, for example the delivery of affordable housing. In these circumstances, a revised requirement will be negotiated having regard to site-specific circumstances.

9.89 — Compliance with the standard will ultimately be assessed through the Building Regulations process. However, any preceding planning application should clearly set out the extent of intended compliance.

¹¹¹ Strategic Housing Market Assessment (Opinion Research Services, 2023)

¹¹² Raising accessibility standards for new homes: summary of consultation responses and government response (DLUHC, 2022)

¹¹³ Housing Technical Paper (SBC, 2015)

Gypsies and Travellers

Policy HO12: Gypsy and Traveller provision

The following site, as shown on the policies map, is allocated for permanent accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers (including those who have ceased to travel permanently):

Site	Capacity
HO12/1 Land north of Graveley Road	11-16 pitches

Planning permission for the allocated use will be granted where:

- i. An identified need continues to exist at the time of any application; and
- ii. The site-specific considerations are properly addressed and / or incorporated into the proposal.

Planning permission for any other uses will be refused. The council is willing, if necessary, to consider using its Compulsory Purchase Order powers under section 226 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, if it appears that the site is not otherwise going to be delivered.

Site name	Site considerations
Land north of Graveley Road	• Consider phased development and release of site to meet future needs across the plan period; • Investigate need for removal, relocation or incorporation of adjacent bus stop to facilitate site access; • Mitigation of any surface water flood risk through use of SuDS or other appropriate mechanisms; • Retention and / or enhancement of screening to create a strong boundary, particularly along the northern edge of the site; • Appropriate internal layout including: • Demonstrating that appropriate guidance and standards have been taken into account • Ensuring an appropriate balance between privacy of individual pitches and natural surveillance across the site as a whole • Room for vehicular circulation, including the movement of caravans; Minimise risk of conflict between vehicles and people; • Consideration of health and safety including: ○ appropriate separation distances; and ○ safe areas for play • Appropriately scaled amenity (or other) buildings; • Maximise the use of trees, hedgerows or other appropriate soft landscaping to define site boundaries and, where practicable, to demarcate internal areas. The extensive use of high walls or close-board fencing will not be considered appropriate.

Site specific considerations for Gypsy and Traveller allocation identified in Policy HO12

9.90 Gypsies and Travellers are people who have a nomadic way of life. Some groups travel more than others. Our evidence suggests a requirement for between 11 and 16 additional permanent pitches over the plan period to 2031¹¹⁴. This is reflected in the requirements of Policy SP7. Once a target has been set, local plans should identify the sites that will be used to meet requirements for at least the first five years. Where possible, sites or broad locations should be identified for the whole of the plan period.

9.91 A site search was carried out in 2014¹¹⁵. This identified a number of sites which might be suitable for future Gypsy and Traveller use. Since completion of that study, further investigations have taken place. These have led to the conclusion that the land to the north of Graveley Road, adjacent to the Borough boundary, would be the best location to meet future Gypsy and Traveller accommodation requirements¹¹⁶.

9.92 The Green Belt boundary has been amended in this location to accommodate the proposed site as part of the review under Policy SP10. It is considered that the site is well contained and screened and can be accommodated without significant harm to the wider purposes of Green Belt. Notwithstanding this point, the site is located at the edge of the Borough, beyond the existing and proposed limits of built-up development. The use of hard, urbanising features should not exceed what is reasonably required.

9.93 Because of the low pitch requirement identified, our evidence recognises the need for on-going monitoring and review. In particular it notes that the small level of need may be able to be addressed by transit provision to cover the combined county area. Any application to develop the site for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation must be supported by up-to-date evidence that takes these issues into account. Until the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Study is reviewed (anticipated in 2018), in assessing the need for additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches the Council will define Gypsies and Travellers as: Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin including persons who, on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependent's educational or health needs or old age, have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently.

9.94 In developing proposals for this site, the site-specific criteria set out above should be met. The site is large enough to meet all of the identified requirements for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation over the plan period. It may be appropriate to phase the release of the site (broadly) in-line with anticipated need. Subject to the caveats in paragraph 9.95, our current evidence suggests a requirement for:

- Five or six pitches over the period to 2021;
- A further three to five pitches between 2021 and 2026; and
- A further three to five pitches by 2031.

Policy HO13: Gypsy and Traveller provision on unallocated sites

¹¹⁴ Stevenage Borough Council Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Study (DCA, 2013)

¹¹⁵ Gypsy and Traveller Site Search (SBC, 2014)

¹¹⁶ Housing Technical Paper (SBC, 2015)

Planning permission for accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers (including those who have ceased to travel permanently) or Travelling Showpeople on unallocated sites will only be granted where the proposal:

- a. Satisfies a demonstrated need for accommodation and follows a sequential approach to site identification;
- b. Is located within
 - i. a reasonable distance of existing services and community facilities including shops, schools, health facilities and passenger transport;
 - ii. close proximity to the primary road network with good access to the major road network; and
 - iii. connectable distance of essential utilities infrastructure
- c. Provides, or is capable of providing, an appropriate buffer between any adjacent uses to safeguard the amenity of both residents and neighbours;
- d. Satisfies any other of the site-specific criteria identified under Policy HO12 insofar as they reasonably relate to the proposed site; and
- e. Complies with any other relevant policies of this plan

9.95 It is considered that the site allocated by Policy HO12 is sufficient to meet all permanent Gypsy and Traveller needs arising within the plan period. However, circumstances do change and unforeseen applications for Gypsy and Traveller provision in alternate locations may arise over the plan period.

9.96 Such applications will need to be accompanied by up-to-date evidence of need. In demonstrating a sequential approach, applicants should give priority to sites on previously developed land, followed by undeveloped sites not in the Green Belt. Sites in the Green Belt will be regarded as inappropriate development, in line with national guidance, and will only be permitted where very special circumstances can be demonstrated. Until the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Study is reviewed (anticipated in 2018), in assessing the need for additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches the Council will define Gypsies and Travellers as: Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin including persons who, on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependent's educational or health needs or old age, have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently.

9.97 In undertaking a sequential test, it will be necessary to consider potential sites and areas beyond the Borough boundary. This takes into account the tightly bounded nature of Stevenage.

9.98 Any sites should have reasonable accessibility¹¹⁷. A number of the site considerations in Policy HO12 would be equally applicable to any applications on alternate sites or land and should be taken into account. In considering any proposals, and as with any application for development, this plan should be read as

¹¹⁷ Recognising our site search concluded that, in relative terms, sites around the town will generally be quite close to key services

a whole. Sites will not be permitted where they would conflict with other policies, objectives or allocations.

Houses in multiple occupation

Policy HO14: Houses in Multiple Occupation

Proposals for new HMOs and extensions to existing HMOs that require planning permission (C4 or sui generis) will be supported where effective measures are proposed to mitigate any significant adverse effect on the living or working conditions of those living or working nearby or on highway safety. To achieve this, developers are expected to ensure:

- a. Off street parking and manoeuvring space is provided to meet the Council's Standards or, if on-street parking is necessary, it would not result in unacceptable congestion in the surrounding area, would not prejudice highway safety; and does not materially reduce the availability of existing on-street parking.
- b. Appropriate provision for secure cycle parking is made in accordance with the Council's Standards;
- c. Sufficient space is made available for storage provision for waste / recycling appropriate to the number of occupants in a suitable enclosure within the curtilage of the property.
- d. Any external alterations or physical extensions to HMO's meet the requirements of Policy GD1 and the Council's Design Standards. As contained within the Stevenage Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document.

~~Proposals for HMOs that require planning permission (C4 or sui generis) will be supported where:~~

~~Planning permission will be granted for new smaller (use class C4) and larger (sui generis) houses in multiple occupation where the proposed scheme would have an acceptable impact on housing supply and comply with other relevant policies in this plan.~~

9.98A Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) can serve an important purpose within the housing market, fulfilling a need for low-cost accommodation when self-contained affordable houses or flats are unavailable. A house in multiple occupation (HMO) is a house occupied by two or more separate households who share basic amenities such as cooking and washing facilities. For planning purposes, there are two types of HMO: 'smaller HMOs', which house up to and including six residents and fall within use class C4; and 'larger HMOs', which house more than six residents and are sui generis.

9.98B Ordinarily, the conversion of a single family dwellinghouse to a smaller HMO would constitute permitted development. However, the Council issued an [Article 4 Direction](#) in 2017 to remove these rights. Since that time, all new HMOs in Stevenage have required an application for planning permission to be made to the Council and approximately 50 such applications have been received to date.

9.98C Under the Housing Act 2004, HMOs which house more than five people also usually require a licence. There are currently 228 HMOs licenced by the Council, a number which broadly corresponds with the 183 households living in HMOs reported by the 2021 census. HMOs therefore make up a relatively small proportion of the roughly 37,000 total households in Stevenage.

9.98D HMOs can serve an important purpose within the housing market, fulfilling a need for low-cost accommodation when self-contained affordable houses or flats are unavailable. However, widespread conversion of other forms of accommodation to HMOs (whether across the borough as a whole or concentrated within a particular area) could conflict with the council's strategic objective of providing an appropriate mix of homes.

9.98E Policy HO14 reflects these considerations by supporting the creation of new HMOs where the impact on housing supply would be acceptable. This applies to both entirely new buildings and conversions of existing buildings.

9.98F It is recognised that HMOs can sometimes have a disproportionate impact on issues such as noise, parking availability and antisocial behaviour. These and other potential material considerations are covered by policies elsewhere in this plan. Proposals for HMOs will be expected to comply with those policies in the same way that proposals for other forms of accommodation would.

10 Good design

Design

Policy GD1: High quality design

Planning permission will be granted where the proposed scheme (as applicable):

- a. Respects and makes a positive contribution to its location and surrounds;
- b. Improves the overall ease of movement within an area for all users;
- c. Creates a safe environment that designs out crime;
- d. Creates, enhances, or improves access to, areas of public open space, green infrastructure, biodiversity and other public realm assets;
- e. Does not lead to an unacceptable adverse impact on the amenity of future occupiers, neighbouring uses or the surrounding area;
- f. Complies with the separation distances for dwellings set out in this plan;
- g. Minimises the impact of light pollution on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation;
- h. Incorporates high quality boundary treatments when located on the street frontage;
- i. Complies with other relevant policies and has regard to guidance which may influence site layout and design, including (but not necessarily limited to):
 - i. Requirements relating to active frontages in Policy EC5;
 - ii. The parking and access standards in Policy IT5 and the Parking Provision SPD;
 - iii. Site-specific considerations identified in Policies HO1, HO2, HO3 and HO4;
 - iv. Housing mix requirements in Policies HO8, HO9 and H10;
 - v. Accessibility requirements in Policy HO11;
 - vi. SuDs and flood risk considerations in policies FP1 and FP2
 - vii. Open space standards in Policy NH7; and
 - viii. Conservation area guidance in Policy NH10;
- j. Meets the nationally described space standards;
- k. Makes adequate provision for the collection of waste; and
- l. Has regard to the Stevenage Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document and any other appropriate guidance.

10.1 High quality design is an important component of the NPPF. The NPPF is clear that good design should form an integral part of any development proposal and permission be refused for any poorly designed developments.

10.2 Policy GD1 sets out the generic design requirements that will be applied to all development. Our expectation is that all development will make a positive contribution to the aims and aspirations of this plan.

10.3 Scheme design will be influenced by a range of factors, including other policy requirements set out in this plan. Proposals should demonstrate a holistic approach that has taken all these issues into account, with no requirements being added as an 'afterthought'. Design and Access statements will be scrutinised to understand how the chosen scheme has been developed. Specific standards relating to separation distances for new and existing dwellings (including extensions) are contained in Appendix C.

10.3A In particular, the council will expect the highest density development, including tall buildings, to be located in the most accessible areas of the town centre (as defined by Policy TC1). Proposals of this nature should pay close attention to the advice set out in the latest design guide SPD for the borough.

10.4 Nationally described space standards are an optional Government standard that local authorities can choose to implement¹¹⁸. They aim to ensure new developments provide adequate space for residents and families to live. A review shows that many permitted schemes in Stevenage already meet or exceed the levels at which the standards have been set. To ensure this continues to be the case, proposals for the creation of new dwellings will be assessed against the requirements, which are set out in Appendix C.

10.5 The design guide for Stevenage was first adopted as an SPD in 2009 and has remained under constant review since that time. All proposals should have regard to the advice the latest version of the document contains. Going forward, the council will consider the introduction of design codes and supplementary plans as a long-term replacement for this guidance.

Policy GD2: Design certification

The Council will support developments that are designed to achieve high levels of certification against nationally and internationally recognised sustainability standards. This includes but is not limited to:

Development proposals which demonstrate that they have been designed to achieve a rating of excellent or higher against the a relevant BREEAM standard; will be strongly supported.

Development proposals which demonstrate that they have been designed to achieve the Secured by Design silver award or higher; and will be strongly supported.

¹¹⁸ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/421515/150324_-_Nationally_Described_Space_StandardFinal_Web_version.pdf

~~Residential development proposals which demonstrate that they have been designed to achieve the BRE Home Quality Mark will also be strongly supported.~~

10.5A The Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) is a method of specifying and measuring the sustainability performance of buildings and development projects. Ratings are independently assessed, which allows for reliable comparison of schemes.

10.5B There are six BREEAM technical standards, which cater to different sorts of projects and different stages of the built environment lifecycle. Four of these standards are likely to be applicable to proposals submitted to the council:

- BREEAM Communities, which considers the masterplanning of new communities;
- BREEAM New construction, which considers new-build development;
- Home Quality Mark, which considers residential developments; and
- BREEAM Refurbishment and fit-out, which considers refurbishment projects.

10.5C Against the relevant standard, projects are assessed for their sustainability performance in the following categories:

- Management
- Water
- Energy
- Transport
- Health and wellbeing
- Resources
- Resilience
- Land use and ecology
- Pollution
- Materials
- Waste
- Innovation

10.5D Once independently assessed, the project will be given a rating. “Excellent” is the second highest rating and “Outstanding” is the highest rating.

10.5E Policy GD2 does not make BREEAM certification mandatory for development proposals within the borough. This is in recognition of the fact that it is a very rigorous method of assessment covering a broad range of issues and achieving the highest ratings will often demand more than is required to make a development acceptable in planning terms. However, if a proposal is designed to achieve either an excellent or outstanding rating, this will carry weight in favour of granting permission.

10.5F At the application stage, applicants can demonstrate how their proposal is likely to perform by using the BREEAM pre-assessment tools. Where these are accepted and planning permission is granted for the development, planning

conditions will be used to ensure that the proposed rating is achieved following construction.

11 Healthy communities

Neighbourhood centres and local shops

Policy HC1: District, local and neighbourhood centres

The following site, as shown on the policies map, is identified as a District Centre:

HC1/1 Poplars

The following sites, as shown on the policies map, are identified as Local Centres:

HC1/2 Bedwell Crescent

HC1/3 The Glebe

HC1/4 The Hyde

HC1/5 Marymead

HC1/6 Oaks Cross

HC1/7 The Oval

HC1/8 Roebuck

The following sites, as shown on the policies map, are identified as Neighbourhood Centres:

HC1/9 Canterbury Way

HC1/10 Chells Manor

HC1/11 Filey Close

HC1/12 Hydean Way

HC1/13 Mobbsbury Way

HC1/14 Popple Way

HC1/15 Rockingham Way

Planning permission for development proposals in these centres will be granted where:

- a. The proposal is in keeping with the size and role of the centre;
- b. District and Local Centres would continue to provide a range of retail, light industrial (use class E(g)(ii)), health, social, community, leisure, cultural and / or residential uses and retain at least 50% of ground-floor units and floorspace in the main retail area as Class E(a) (retailshops) use;
- c. Neighbourhood centres would continue to provide a range of small-scale retail, health, social, community, leisure, cultural and / or residential uses and maintain at least one unit in Class E(a) (retailshops) use;
- d. The proposal does not prejudice our ability to deliver a comprehensive redevelopment scheme; and
- e. An impact assessment has been provided, where required by Policy TC13, and it has been demonstrated that there will be no significant adverse impact.

Planning permission will be granted as an exception to the above criteria only where:

- i. Satisfactory on- or off-site provision is made to replace a loss of use(s) relevant to the status of the centre;
- ii. It can be demonstrated that there is no longer a need for a particular facility;
- iii. The particular facility, or any reasonable replacement is not, and will not, be viable on that site;
- iv. The proposals provide overriding benefits against other objectives or policies in the plan; or
- v. It can be demonstrated that a unit has been unsuccessfully marketed for its existing use, or has remained vacant, for at least six months.

11.1 Policy SP9 states that local and neighbourhood centres will be identified, protected and regenerated to provide a network of day-to-day shops alongside businesses, social facilities and homes.

11.2 Changes in lifestyles over the last 50 years, such as the increase in car ownership and the emergence of large superstores, mean that many people can now travel further and more easily to obtain food and services. However, local facilities continue to play an important role for day-to-day convenience and for those residents who have difficulty accessing superstores or the Town Centre. These centres also provide opportunities for more specialist retailers as well as other local facilities and services.

11.3 We recognise that a number of our centres are in need of investment and repair. The design and layout of some centres encourages anti-social behaviour and leads to a fear of crime. This stops some people from visiting them. Smaller-scale works have already been carried out at a number of centres to address these concerns, such as public realm improvements at The Glebe and The Hyde.

11.4 The regeneration of the centres is a high priority of the Council. Work is currently underway on the major redevelopment of Archer Road. This will provide much-needed new council housing, whilst re-providing the community facilities and services previously provided by the centre. A rolling programme of work will see at least seven more of these centres redeveloped within the plan period. These are identified as housing sites in Policy HO1.

11.5 Government guidance states that local authorities should develop a hierarchy of the shopping facilities in their area that is resilient to future economic changes¹¹⁹. This should include local centres that meet people's day-to-day needs.

11.6 Within Stevenage, 'neighbourhood centres' traditionally describes all of the locally available shopping facilities. The NPPF is clear that small parades of shops should not normally be designated as centres. However, our strategic policy recognises the important role played by these types of facilities in Stevenage and includes an extra category in the retail hierarchy to make sure they are protected.

¹¹⁹ Policy 23 of the NPPF

11.7 Based on the findings of our evidence studies, our own research, our aspirations for the future of these centres and government guidance, three types of centre are identified and designated.

11.8 Poplars is located on the east side of Stevenage. It is part of a neighbourhood which was developed in the 1980s and 1990s, after the Development Corporation had been wound up. It was privately developed and is anchored by a large supermarket.

11.9 This makes it significantly different to the town's other centres. However, unlike Stevenage's other large supermarkets, a number of complementary uses are also provided on-site. Poplars is therefore given its own designation, of a District Centre, in the retail hierarchy to reflect its unique composition. The general composition will be retained over the plan period.

11.10 Elsewhere in the town, larger centres provide a wider range of shops, services and community facilities. Examples include The Oval and The Hyde. These are "local centres" in accordance with Government advice. In determining planning permissions within local centres, we will expect them to operate within the following broad parameters:

- Between 500 and 4,000m² of Class E(a)-led floorspace in a parade or centre containing at least six units;
- Unit sizes of between 50 and 1,250m²;
- Residential accommodation in flats above the shops and / or additional free-standing residential blocks; and
- Two or more of the following:
 - a. Church or other place of worship;
 - b. Small employment workshops;
 - c. Pub;
 - d. Community Centre

11.11 Within the proposed local centres, at least 50% of floorspace and units in the main retail parade are currently in Class E(a) (retailshops) use¹²⁰. We will seek to maintain this share. Our baseline monitoring shows that only Marymead does not meet this figure¹²¹. In this local centre, we will allow applications where there would be no further fall in the percentage of units.

11.12 Permissions will only be granted as an exception to this where E(a) retail units have been actively marketed as such but remained vacant for a period of at least six months.

11.13 There are also a number of smaller centres. These do not necessarily meet the criteria above, but they provide valuable facilities for local residents. Examples

¹²⁰ Stevenage Retail Study (Applied Planning, 2014)

¹²¹ This is in terms of the number of units only: Five out of eleven (45%) units are in E(a) use. The proportion of floorspace in E(a) use exceeds the minimum threshold.

include Canterbury Way and Rockingham Way. These are "neighbourhood centres" and will typically provide:

- Between 250 and 1,000m² of Class E(a) (retailshops) - led floorspace in a parade containing between two and six units;
- Unit sizes of between 50 and 500m²;
- Residential accommodation in flats above the shops; and
- May include a pub and / or community centre.

11.14 These parameters allow for some increase in both overall floorspace and the size of individual shop units in our local and neighbourhood centres over the plan period. This is in line with the retail strategy set out in Policy SP4.

11.15 Some of the smaller parades fall outside of the scope of this policy. Any applications in areas not identified above will be considered under Policy HC2.

Policy HC2: Local shops

Freestanding shops and small parades will generally be retained. Planning permission for the redevelopment of existing sites to alternate uses or for the change of use of individual units from Class E(a) (retailshops) will be granted where:

- a. Satisfactory on- or off-site provision is made to replace a loss of use(s);
- b. It can be demonstrated that there is no longer a need for a particular facility or that alternate facilities are available locally;
- c. The particular facility, or any reasonable replacement is not, and will not, be viable on that site;
- d. The proposals provide overriding benefits against other objectives or policies in the plan; or
- e. It can be demonstrated that a unit has been unsuccessfully marketed for its existing use, or has remained vacant, for at least six months.

11.16 Beyond the centres identified in specific policies of this plan, there are a number of small parades or individual shop units¹²². There will be a general presumption in favour of these units being retained, or reprovided, to ensure the continued provision of local facilities.

11.17 To satisfy criterion (e), applicants will be expected to demonstrate that units have been actively marketed but remained vacant for a period of at least six months.

¹²² This includes, but is not necessarily limited to, the facilities at Archer Road, Austen Paths, Burwell Road, Fairview Road, Kenilworth Close, Lonsdale Road and Whitesmead Road which were all designated as centres in the 2004 District Plan.

Health, social and community facilities

Policy HC3: The Health Campus

The Health Campus is identified on the policies map.

Planning permission will be granted for appropriate Class E(e) or C2 healthcare uses. Other use classes will be permitted where they provide ancillary facilities which support the site's principal function.

Other uses will not be permitted unless it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that the land is no longer required to meet long-term healthcare needs.

11.18 The Lister Hospital provides the main focus of the Health Campus. It was opened in 1972 and offers general and specialist hospital services for people across Hertfordshire and south Bedfordshire. A number of services have been centralised onto the Lister Hospital site in the last few years. Many of these have moved from the Queen Elizabeth II Hospital in Welwyn Garden City. This includes accident and emergency, maternity, acute elderly and acute mental health units.

11.19 This has led to significant development, transforming the existing hospital site. Around £170 million has been invested. Improvements include: a new surgical unit (called the Treatment Centre), an expanded maternity unit, a new multi-storey car park and major changes to the emergency and inpatient services. The Lister Hospital is the town's largest employer, providing more than 2,700 jobs. Ensuring a successful future for the hospital is critical to the future of the town.

11.20 Policy HC3 safeguards the existing hospital site, including the main hospital buildings, residential accommodation for hospital employees to the east, offices, training facilities and parking provision. This will allow the Lister Hospital to operate successfully throughout the plan period to 2031.

11.21 The hospital is supplemented by additional healthcare facilities to the north, which provide specialist care homes and mental health services.

11.22 Planning permission for appropriate healthcare related uses within this area will be granted, including ancillary facilities (the definition of which includes residential accommodation for staff).

11.23 A small parcel of undeveloped land within this campus, adjacent to the A602, provides the opportunity for additional healthcare related uses, including the expansion of the Lister Hospital.

Policy HC4: Existing health, social and community facilities

Planning permission that results in the loss or reduction of any existing health, social or community facility will be granted where:

- a. The existing facility can be satisfactorily relocated within the development proposal, or replaced in an appropriate alternative location;
- b. It can be demonstrated that there is no longer a need for the particular facility; or
- c. The facility, or any reasonable replacement, is not, and will not, be viable on that site.

Policy HC5: New health, social and community facilities

The following site, as shown on the policies map, is designated for new healthcare facilities:

HC5/1: Land at Ridlins Playing Fields

Planning permission will be granted for appropriate E(e) healthcare uses. Other uses will only be accepted where they are required for ancillary facilities.

Planning permission for new health, social or community facilities, or to modernise, extend or re-provide existing facilities, on an unallocated site will be granted where:

- a. A need for the facility has been identified;
- b. The site is appropriate in terms of its location and accessibility; and
- c. The facility is integrated with existing health, social or community facilities, where appropriate.

Planning permission for play group provision within existing and proposed district, local and neighbourhood centres will be granted where it is integrated with other leisure and community uses, where practicable.

11.24 The definition of “health, social and community facilities” is provided in appendix D to this plan.

11.25 Communities should have access to an appropriate range of health, social and community facilities. The provision of these can be an important element in creating sustainable communities and improving the quality of life for existing and new residents.

11.26 As a key concept of the original masterplan for the town, health, social and community facilities in Stevenage were provided locally, within walking distance of residents. Policy HC1 seeks to protect this concept. Where a need still exists for these facilities, it is important that they are retained, or replaced, either within the development proposal or in a suitable alternative location.

11.27 In some instances, it may be appropriate to consolidate existing health, social or community facilities, in line with locational requirements, and where it can be demonstrated that this would provide an improved service for residents.

11.28 In terms of healthcare, it is recognised that some GP practices are already working at, or above capacity. To help address this, planning permission was granted in June 2014 for a replacement doctor's surgery in Shephall. This will be built at the western end of the Ridlins Playing Fields. Policy HC5 continues to safeguard this site for healthcare uses.

11.29 It is important to ensure that the standard of health, social and community provision is maintained in new developments, to provide for their own needs. It is recognised that facilities can only be reasonably expected to be provided where the development is of sufficient scale to support such facilities. Account will be taken of the level of existing services and an assessment made of the level of new services required as a result of the proposed development. The provision of on-site local facilities in the urban extension sites is required by the relevant site allocation policies.

11.30 New health, social or community facilities on appropriate sites, outside of these locations, will be permitted where a need has been identified. It is important that these facilities are easily accessible for all and, ideally, integrated with existing facilities.

Leisure and cultural facilities

Policy HC6: Existing leisure and cultural facilities

Development which results in the loss or reduction of any existing leisure or cultural facility will only be permitted if:

- a. The existing facility can be satisfactorily relocated within the development proposal, or replaced by a facility of equivalent or better quality and quantity, in an appropriate alternative location;
- b. Up-to-date evidence shows there is no longer a need for the particular facility; or
- c. The development is for alternative leisure or cultural provision, the needs of which clearly outweigh the loss.

Policy HC7: New and refurbished leisure and cultural facilities

Planning permission for new leisure facilities, or to modernise, extend or re-provide existing facilities, on an unallocated site will be granted where:

- a. A need for the facility has been identified;
- b. The site is appropriate in terms of its location and accessibility;
- c. With the exception of sports facilities, a sequential approach to site selection has been followed and it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that no suitable, available or viable sites exist in identified centres; and
- d. An impact assessment has been provided, where required by Policy TC13, and it has been demonstrated that there will be no significant adverse impact.

11.31 The definition of “leisure and cultural facilities” is provided in appendix D to this plan.

11.32 Opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. A network of facilities exist across the town, which offer residents a wide choice of activities within the local area.

11.33 The loss of any of these existing facilities can result in deficiencies which are difficult to address, particularly with the shortage of developable land that Stevenage experiences. Policy HC6 seeks to guard against any unnecessary losses.

11.34 Our evidence on sports facilities within the Borough¹²³ provides an up-to-date assessment of all existing facilities and assesses whether further facilities, or improvements to existing, are required to meet the needs of the current population and the additional demand for services created by the planned housing growth.

11.35 The Assessment recognises that many of the town's facilities are ageing and do not meet modern standards. Where there is still demand for these facilities, they

¹²³ Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy 2014-2031 (Nortoft, 2015)

should be modernised, improved, extended or replaced, rather than being removed to make way for other uses.

11.36 The Sports Strategy does not assess all facilities covered by these policies - for example the cinema, theatre, museum are not included. If proposals were to result in the loss of any facilities not included within the Strategy, or any updated evidence base, a full needs assessment will be required.

11.37 New leisure and cultural facilities on unallocated sites will be permitted where a need has been identified. It is important that these facilities are easily accessible for all and integrated with existing facilities, where possible.

Policy HC8: Sports facilities in new developments

Planning permission for residential development will be granted where on-site sports provision (in accordance with other plan policies), and / or a commuted sum, is made in accordance with the standards set out in the Council's Sports Facilities Assessment and Strategy.

11.38 It is important to ensure that levels of sports facilities are maintained and supported by new developments.

11.39 Our evidence¹²⁴ identifies the highest priority (in relation to providing for healthy communities) for the council as being the replacement of facilities within the Arts and Leisure Centre and Stevenage Swimming Centre. This facility has high refurbishment costs and it is not financially beneficial to retain the facility. It recommends a new wet and dry leisure facility is provided within the town centre area, which can accommodate a slightly larger swimming pool and replace and expand the other sports facilities, as required.

11.40 As the theatre is located within the Arts and Leisure Centre, this will also require re-provision. A site for this facility has been identified within Policy TC7.

11.41 A number of other new facilities are also recommended by the Sports Strategy. These include new sports hall provision, skate parks and/or youth facilities at each of the urban extensions and a new cricket ground at Stevenage West. Many of the existing facilities also require refurbishment or expansion to meet future needs. For playing pitches, in particular, although sufficient capacity exists to support future needs, many require improvement works, and pitches may need to be remarked to serve alternative age-ranges. There is also a need to secure Community Use Agreements on all school sites.

11.42 Due to their size and nature, sports facilities often cannot be provided on-site. However, money is still required to improve, expand and provide new facilities to meet the needs of new residents.

¹²⁴ Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy 2014-2031 (Nortoft, 2015)

11.43 The Council's sports facility standards are set out in the table below¹²⁵. The value of the contributions from housing developments across Stevenage will be the equivalent value of the area of sports facilities that would otherwise be provided by the development. This will be calculated using the latest Sport England facility cost information.

Facility type	Borough wide standard per 1,000 population
Sports halls	0.31 badminton courts
Swimming pools	11.55m ² water space
Athletics tracks	0.01 tracks
Fitness facilities	6.88 stations
Indoor bowls	0.08 rinks
Outdoor tennis courts	0.08 dedicated community outdoor courts
Outdoor bowls greens	0.03 greens
Youth facilities	0.08 open access MUGA
Artificial grass pitches	0.03 large size AGPs
Grass pitches	0.60 ha

11.44 Any commuted sum will be tied to a specific location and specific improvements, as identified within the most up-to-date assessment or delivery plan, to ensure that the additional demand upon sports facilities generated by the development are met. As detailed in paragraph 5.42, we are looking to implement CIL in Stevenage. Once implemented, standard charges will, instead, be collected to fund projects across the Borough.

¹²⁵ As established in the Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy 2014-2031 (Nortoft, 2015)

Education

Policy HC9: Former Barnwell East secondary school

The former Barnwell East school site, as shown on the policies map, is reserved to meet secondary school needs.

The development of this site for anything other than education will only be permitted if satisfactory evidence has been provided to show the school is not, and will not, be required to meet education needs.

The school will be required to provide a sports hall, at least 4 courts in size, which offers public access through a Community Use Agreement, or a similar arrangement.

11.45 Hertfordshire County Council, as Local Education Authority, are responsible for the planning of secondary schools places for Stevenage.

11.46 Stevenage is currently served by six secondary schools and a Studio School.

11.47 In the last few years, building schemes at The Nobel School and Marriotts School (which included the co-location of Lonsdale Special School) have seen both schools rebuilt or significantly refurbished and expanded. Barnwell School, which serves the south of the town, has also received capital investment from the County Council to expand its buildings. Its occupation of the Barnwell East site (formerly known as Collenswood School) ceased at the end of the 2013/14 academic year, and it now operates over its existing main site and its neighbouring site, formerly Heathcote School.

11.48 Additional capacity resulting from development within the Borough will be accommodated through the reoccupation of the existing facility at Barnwell East, and via the expansion of existing secondary schools. The Barnwell East site is reserved for education use.

11.49 Our Sports Strategy¹²⁶ identifies a requirement for at least two additional 4 court sports halls within the plan period. It is recommended that one of these is provided at the new secondary school, to meet identified need. Long term community access to this, and all secondary school sites, will be encouraged to ensure that valuable facilities remain available to the public.

Policy HC10: Redundant school sites

Planning permission for the use of any unallocated redundant or surplus school buildings will only be permitted where the buildings are currently used for community activities, unless:

- a. The buildings housing the community activity are retained;

¹²⁶ Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy 2014-2031 (SBC, 2015)

- b. The facilities can be satisfactorily relocated within the development proposal or replaced in an appropriate alternative location; or
- c. It can be demonstrated that there is no longer a need for such facilities.

School playing fields and their ancillary facilities will be required to be retained for open space use. Any loss of these facilities will be assessed against Policy NH1.

11.50 The dual use of some school buildings makes an important contribution to local social and community facilities in Stevenage; helping to address deficiencies in provision, improving access to local facilities and making better use of existing resources.

11.51 Where school buildings currently have a dual use, and the school facility is to be removed or replaced, any buildings which are currently used for community activities must be retained, or relocated in a satisfactory location. Buildings may only be developed where it can be demonstrated that there is no longer a need for the community facility.

11.52 School playing fields and their ancillary facilities should generally be retained for open space use, in line with Policy NH1.

11.53 One redundant playing field site, at the former Pin Green School, is allocated for residential development within this plan. The former school has already been redeveloped, and the playing fields do not have any community use or access. They were previously used for educational purposes only. The site is not designated as an area of open space¹²⁷.

¹²⁷ Open Space Strategy (SBC, 2015)

12 The Green Belt

Policy GB1: Green Belt

The following broad locations, as detailed on the policies map, are designated as Green Belt:

- Land bounded by Gresley Way, Broadwater Lane, the rear of properties at Goddard End, Broadhall Way, the A602 and Aston Lane;
- Land to the south east of the Borough, accommodating the Three Horseshoes public
- House and adjacent woodland.
- Land to the east of the Borough, bounded by Gresley Way;
- Land to the north of the Borough, bounded by Bury Cottages, Weston Road and the rear of properties at St Andrews Drive and St David Close;
- Land to the north west of the Borough, bounded by Graveley Road, the A1(M) and
- Stevenage Road;
- Land at Norton Green, bounded by the A1(M);
- Land at Junction 7 and to the south of this junction, bounded by the A1(M).

12.1 Much of the land around Stevenage forms a part of the Metropolitan Green Belt that surrounds London.

12.2 National guidance prevents most forms of development in the Green Belt unless there are 'very special circumstances'. This includes housing.

12.3 In many parts of the town, the built up area of Stevenage extends right up to the Borough boundary. We have not identified a Green Belt boundary in these locations because we cannot set policies or designations for land that is not in Stevenage Borough. It will be for the adjacent local authority to decide whether they think the Green Belt should come up to the edge of Stevenage. We are working with North and East Hertfordshire to create a connected Green Belt boundary all the way around the town that will meet our development and community needs beyond the plan period.

Policy GB2: Green Belt settlements

Planning permission for small-scale residential infilling, conversions and extensions within, or adjacent to, Norton Green and Todd's Green will be permitted subject to the following criteria:

- a. The development is on previously developed land or it does not create more than 5 additional dwellings;
- b. The development will be sympathetic to its surrounding environment (including the adjacent countryside) and will not negatively impact upon the character and appearance of the area;

- c. The development reflects surrounding properties in terms of size, scale and design; and
- d. No features essential to the character of the area will be adversely affected.

The partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, even if this goes beyond the strict definition of infilling, will also be permitted in these areas, subject to conditions b. to d. being met.

Elsewhere in the Green Belt, inappropriate development will not be permitted. Exceptions to this are defined in Paragraphs 89-91 of the NPPF.

12.4 The NPPF states that the construction of new buildings within the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate. However, it does set out some exceptions to this, one being limited infilling in villages, and limited affordable housing for local community needs, and another being the partial or complete redevelopment of brownfield sites.

12.5 The small settlements of Todd's Green and Norton Green are washed over by the Green Belt. These small village-like settlements are on the edge of the Borough, and are rural in character. Although great importance is placed on retaining the rural character of these areas, they do have some potential in terms of helping to meet our housing needs. Our evidence¹²⁸ identifies a need for larger, aspirational homes (4+ bedrooms). Our research on aspirational homes¹²⁹ identifies edge of town locations, particularly Todd's Green and Norton Green, as broad locations where aspirational homes would be appropriate. Carefully designed infilling, on a small scale, and redevelopment of brownfield sites could help to fulfil these objectives.

12.6 Elsewhere within the Green Belt, inappropriate development should not be approved except in very special circumstances. This includes the development of new homes. Applications will be assessed against the requirements of the NPPF.

¹²⁸ Strategic Housing Market Assessment, 2014

¹²⁹ Aspirational Homes Research, SBC, 2010

13 Flooding, drainage and pollution

Water management and flood risk

Policy FP1: Sustainable drainage

All major and minor development proposals should utilise ~~must incorporate~~ sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) ~~unless it is demonstrated that their use would be impracticable unless there are clear and convincing reasons for not doing so.~~ Development proposals involving SuDS should be supported by an appropriate SuDS strategy which demonstrates how principles a to e below will be complied with. Where relevant, this should include evidence of agreement to the proposed discharge rates with the appropriate statutory undertaker.

SuDS proposals should~~must~~:

- be designed to ensure that peak discharge rates from the site will not increase;
- on greenfield sites, achieve greenfield run-off rates;
- on brownfield sites, aim to achieve greenfield run-off rates;
- be designed in accordance with the surface water disposal hierarchy, as shown in Table 4; and
- be designed in accordance with the SuDS hierarchy, as shown in Table 5 below.

~~Proposals reliant on surface water discharge to the foul network will be refused unless it can be shown to be unavoidable.~~

~~Proposals reliant on underground attenuation features or impervious hard surfaces will be refused unless their use can be shown to be unavoidable.~~

~~At the application stage, development proposals involving SuDS must, as a minimum, be supported by a SuDS strategy which demonstrates how the above principles will be complied with. Where relevant, this must include evidence of agreement to the proposed discharge rates by the appropriate statutory undertaker.~~

~~Post-permission, conditions will be used to secure the final detailed design of the drainage system and measures for management and maintenance.~~

Most preferable	Rainwater use as a resource
↑	Infiltration to ground at or close to source
	Attenuation in green infrastructure for gradual release
	Discharge direct to a watercourse
↓	Discharge to a surface water sewer or drain
Least preferable	Discharge to a combined sewer

Table 4 – surface water disposal hierarchy

Most Sustainable	SUDS technique	Flood Reduction	Pollution Reduction	Landscape & Wildlife Benefit
↑	Living roofs	✓	✓	✓
	Basins and ponds - Constructed wetlands - Balancing ponds - Detention basins - Retention ponds	✓	✓	✓
	Filter strips and swales	✓	✓	✓
	Infiltration devices - soakaways - infiltration trenches and basins	✓	✓	✓
	Permeable surfaces and filter drains - gravelled areas - solid paving blocks - porous paviers	✓	✓	
	Tanked systems - over-sized pipes/tanks - storms cells	✓		
↓				
Least Sustainable				

Table 5 – SuDS hierarchy

13.1A A site can accommodate a wide range of different SuDS techniques. These can range from individual properties incorporating permeable paving in driveways, to larger developments incorporating ponds, wetlands and green roofs and/or walls. SuDS can also improve water quality and enhance the amenity and biodiversity value of the surrounding area.

13.1B Proposals should be informed by the surface water disposal hierarchy and the SuDS hierarchy. In instances where proposals do not comply, they will be refused unless it is demonstrated by the developer that there is no other possible alternative.

Policy FP2: Flood risk management

All development proposals will be assessed against national planning policies for flood risk must and should:

- ~~Ensure that flood risk, whether on-site or elsewhere, is not increased and is reduced where appropriate, taking into account the future impacts of climate change;~~
- ~~Where appropriate¹³⁰, be supported by a site-specific flood risk assessment at the application stage;~~
- ~~Pass the sequential and exception tests, as required¹³¹, and then apply the sequential approach to site layout;~~
- ~~Preserve the functional floodplain, also known as Flood Zone 3b;~~

¹³⁰ ~~In accordance with NPPF footnote 59.~~

¹³¹ ~~In accordance with NPPF paragraph 174 and footnotes 59 and 60.~~

- e-a. Appropriately ~~P~~protect the integrity of adjacent flood defences and allow sufficient space for access, maintenance, future upgrades and new flood defence schemes;
- ~~f. Provide an 8m~~ appropriate undeveloped buffer zone from the top of the bank of any adjacent main rivers or ordinary watercourses; and
- ~~g. Provide a 3m undeveloped buffer zone from the top of the bank of any adjacent ordinary watercourses;~~
- ~~h-b.~~ Unless impracticable, ~~P~~provide for the re-naturalisation of any on-site culverted watercourses;
- ~~i. Where appropriate, provide flood warning and evacuation plans; and~~
- ~~j. Be appropriately flood resistant and resilient.~~

13.7 Flooding is a natural process, which helps to shape the natural environment. However, it can also have significant negative impacts, causing damage to property and even loss of life. Flooding events are likely to increase in the future, both in number and in magnitude. This is in part due to climate change and we need to ensure that we can adapt to these changes and protect the town, as far as is reasonably practicable. It is important, therefore, that our planning policies take into account present and future flood risk.

13.8 National guidance requires us to preclude development in areas of flood risk and reduce the risk of flooding overall¹³². The Environment Agency has a statutory responsibility for flood management and flood defence in England and provides an advisory service to this end. Hertfordshire County Council, as the Lead Local Flood Authority, will be consulted on proposals in a flood risk area and for all sites over one hectare.

13.9 Groundwater flooding is not considered to pose a significant problem to Stevenage but any development should be mindful of the effects of deep foundations on shallow groundwater flows in fluvial sands and gravels in valley bottoms.

13.10 Our evidence¹³³ identifies different areas of flood risk in the town, categorised as:

- Flood Zone 3, which is further subdivided into
 - Flood Zone 3b - functional floodplain
 - Flood Zone 3a - high probability
- Flood Zone 2 - medium probability
- Flood Zone 1 - low probability

13.11 The latest flood risk maps should be referred to for detailed zone locations.

13.12 We will steer new development to areas of the lowest probability of flooding by applying the sequential approach identified in our Strategic Flood Risk

¹³² NPPF (2012)

¹³³ Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (AECOM, 2016)

Assessment. Preference will be given to development located in Flood Zone 1 (the area with the lowest risk of flooding).

13.12A Flood Zones 2 and 3 are not extensive in the town. Broadly speaking, they run along the Stevenage and Aston End Brook but only through the southern end of the town. Proposals for Flood Zone 2 or 3 will have to demonstrate that there is no other reasonably available site in a lower flood risk category in the Borough.

13.13 Proposals should avoid adding to the causes of flooding from all sources. The increase in impermeable surfaces through large scale development, such as that on sites over one hectare, can result in an increase in surface water runoff. A site-specific flood risk assessment will be required for proposals meeting the criteria set out in the NPPF.

13.13A Proposals must also ensure adequate buffers to watercourses. A developer wishing to build within eight metres of the top of the bank of a main river will require consent from the Environment Agency, while developers wishing to build within three metres of the bank of an ordinary watercourse will require consent from Hertfordshire County Council. This consent may not necessarily be granted.

13.23 Development proposals which do not involve deculverting or, indeed, propose culverting of watercourses, will have an adverse impact on the town's river corridors and water meadows. Such proposals will be refused. Opening up river corridors can help to improve the chemical and biological quality of a watercourse. This, in turn, improves habitats for biodiversity and also contributes to open space and health and wellbeing in the town.

13.24 River corridors and flood storage reservoirs (FSRs) play an important role in controlling the surface water runoff from the town, as they allow excess run off during storms to be temporarily stored. Protecting river corridors and FSRs from inappropriate development and culverting is therefore important so as not to increase flood risk in the town.

Policy FP4: Flood storage reservoirs and functional floodplain

The following sites, as shown on the policies map, are designated flood storage reservoirs and also form part of the functional floodplain (Flood Zone 3b) of Stevenage¹³⁴.

FP4/1 Aston Valley
FP4/2 Bragbury End
FP4/3 Broad Oak
FP4/4 Burymead
FP4/5 Camps Hill Park
FP4/6 Elder Way

FP4/7 Fairlands Valley Lakes
FP4/8 Meadway
FP4/9 Ridlins Wood
FP4/10 Sainsburys (Coreys Mill)
FP4/11 Wychdell

¹³⁴ Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (AECOM, 2016)

Planning permission will be refused for any development that would result in any of the flood storage reservoirs being removed, reduced, severed or their function compromised.

Where appropriate, we may require developments to contribute towards either a new flood storage reservoir, or towards the maintenance, improvement or extension of the existing flood storage reservoirs.

13.25 The FSRs found within and adjacent to the town attenuate storm runoff from impermeable areas and are integral to the drainage system of the town.

13.26 The Development Corporation planned to incorporate these numerous small FSRs to reflect their value as public open space in the urban environment.

13.27 The FSRs also form part of the towns Functional Floodplain. Functional Floodplain is defined as, but not restricted to, 'land which would flood with an annual probability of 1 in 20 (5%) or greater in any year, or is designed to flood in an extreme 1 in 1000 (0.1%) or greater in any year flood'¹³⁵

13.28 National guidance¹³⁶ notes that the only appropriate uses for land in Flood Zone 3b is water-compatible uses and essential infrastructure.

¹³⁵ NPPF: Technical Guidance (2012)

¹³⁶ NPPF: Technical Guidance (2012) - Table 2: Flood Risk vulnerability classification

Pollution

Policy FP5: Contaminated land

Planning permission will be granted for development on brownfield sites if an appropriate Preliminary Risk Assessment (PRA) is submitted which demonstrates that any necessary remediation and subsequent development poses no risk to the population, environment and groundwater bodies.

13.29 Pollution refers to the release of contaminants into the air, ground or water. It includes solids, liquids and gases as well as noise, vibration, heat and light.

13.30 The NPPF (para 109) sets out how we, as the local planning authority, should prevent both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability; and remediate and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

13.31 Much of the development that is proposed in Stevenage takes place on brownfield sites. Brownfield land is defined as land that has been previously developed. Development on brownfield land is encouraged as it eases the pressures on greenfield sites. However, previous land uses on brownfield sites could have resulted in the land becoming contaminated. In addition, given the history of the development of the New Town, some greenfield sites in and around the town may have been used as spoil heaps as the town was built. Such sites should be given due consideration when considering development in such areas.

13.32 Through the adoption of a precautionary approach, the possibility of contamination should be assumed in relation to all development sites on, or adjacent to, previous industrial land.

13.33 The PRA should be carried out with reference to the Contaminated Land Statutory Guidance (April 2012). This is not a onerous task and is, at its highest level, essentially a site history of the development site so that it can be established if, and what, further work is required. The PRA should include, as a minimum:

- Desk study;
- Site investigation; and
- Additional desk study and exploratory site investigation (if necessary)

13.34 The underlying geology of the town is a combination of impermeable clay overlaying areas of exposed permeable chalk. In instances where contamination is identified where clay underlies the site, the chalk below the clay is protected, to an extent. However, where contamination is found in areas directly above the chalk, pathways can be created which could result in any pollutants present being washed through the chalk into the groundwater system and then out into the river system.

13.35 The town also has a number of Source Protection Zones (SPZs) which give an indication of the time it takes for pollutants to travel from a given point to a potable water abstraction point. These zones are divided into:

- SPZ1 - inner zone;
- SPZ2 - outer zone; and
- SPZ3 - total catchment

13.36 SPZ1 is the area where contamination poses the most risk as it immediately surrounds a potable water abstraction point. The risk lessens as you pass through SPZ2 to SPZ3. It is important to address any contamination on sites in SPZs and to also steer development, that may involve contaminative installations, to areas of lowest risk.

13.37 Our evidence¹³⁷ shows that the chalk aquifer is predominantly unconfined and is therefore susceptible to groundwater contamination from the surface. The use of a chalk aquifer for public water supply purposes will necessitate the use of oil interceptors and/or the separation of roof drainage from the runoff from road surfaces and vehicle parking areas to reduce the risk of pollution. Whilst the permeable local geology makes the use of infiltration SuDS highly effective, it also increases the risk of contaminants entering the groundwater earlier than would necessarily be expected.

Policy FP6: Hazardous installations

Planning permission for development proposals involving the use, storage or movement of hazardous substances will be granted where:

- a. There are no additional health and safety risks to users of the site or the surrounding area;
- b. There are no additional threats to the local environment, particularly air quality, water and wildlife; and
- c. The proposal does not cause long-term land contamination.

Where any of these criteria are not met, planning permission will only be granted where steps can be taken to mitigate any adverse impacts to an acceptable level.

Planning permission for development proposals adjoining existing or proposed hazardous installations, or adjoining sites where hazardous substances are present, will only be granted where it can be demonstrated that there is not a health and safety risk to the users of the proposed development.

13.38 A hazardous installation is a development that involves using, storing or moving hazardous substances, which include, but is not limited to, substances (solid, liquid or gas) classified as toxic, very toxic, corrosive, harmful or irritant.

13.39 Pollution occurs when these or other hazardous substances contaminate the land or air.

¹³⁷ Water Cycle Strategy (Hyder, 2009)

13.40 Planning permission must be obtained for the storage or use of hazardous substances. The Borough Council will consider whether this use is appropriate in the proposed location, and how it would affect the land and human population nearby.

Policy FP7: Pollution

All development proposals should minimise, and where possible, reduce air, water, light and noise pollution. Applications for development where pollution is suspected must contain sufficient information for the Council to make a full assessment of potential hazards and impacts.

Planning permission will be granted when it can be demonstrated that the development will not have unacceptable impacts on:

- a. The natural environment, general amenity and the tranquillity of the wider area, including noise and light pollution;
- b. Health and safety of the public; and
- c. The compliance with statutory environmental quality standards.

13.41 Air, water, light and noise pollution arising from new development can individually and cumulatively have a significantly damaging impact on the countryside, on peoples' living environment and on wildlife. Whilst lighting is desirable for safety, recreation and the enhancement of some buildings, inappropriate lighting can cause sky glow, glare and light spill and represents energy waste.

13.42 We will seek to ensure that levels of pollution are kept to a minimum and are acceptable to human health and safety, the environment and the amenity of adjacent or nearby land users. Environmental Health legislation regulates many forms of pollution, but it is clearly preferable to prevent conflict from new development arising in the first place. The weight given to each criterion will depend on the particular circumstances and relevant control authorities will be consulted as necessary.

13.43 Careful consideration should be given to whether artificial lighting is needed. Light encroaching beyond the area in which it was intended can create a distracting glare and can have an adverse effect on the local environment, particularly wildlife, as their nocturnal patterns can be disturbed.

13.44 If artificial light is required, then it should be designed to ensure that only the necessary amount of light is provided for the required task and that it is properly controlled or mitigated, to avoid light pollution. Hours or days of use can be limited or the use of sensitive screening may be appropriate.

Policy FP8: Pollution sensitive uses

Planning permission for pollution sensitive uses will be granted where they will not be subjected to unacceptably high levels of pollution exposure from either existing, or proposed, pollution generating uses.

Planning permission in areas having the potential to be affected by unacceptable levels of aircraft noise will be subject to conditions or planning obligations to ensure an adequate level of protection against noise impacts.

13.45 Pollution sensitive uses, such as housing, schools and hospitals, should ideally be separated from pollution generating uses, such as industrial units and airports, wherever possible.

13.46 Stevenage is located in close proximity to London Luton Airport and is, therefore, affected by aircraft noise generated from it. The direction of the runway means that some planes fly over Stevenage to take off and land. However, national guidance defines the levels of noise experienced as being acceptable. An application has been granted for work to facilitate the growth of London Luton Airport. This would see the airport cater for up to 18 million passengers per annum before the end of our Local Plan period.

13.47 Noise contours identified in the London Luton Noise Action Plan, 2013 - 2018, extend in close proximity to the western extent of the proposed development west of Stevenage. Development in this area, particularly, will need to ensure that any noise impacts are mitigated.

14 The natural and historic environments

Green infrastructure

Policy NH1: Principal Open Spaces

The following sites, as defined on the policies map, are designated as Principal Open Spaces:

Principal Parks

NH1/1 Fairlands Valley Park*
NH1/2 Town Centre Gardens*
NH1/3 King George V*
NH1/4 Hampson Park*
NH1/5 Shephalbury Park*

NH1/6 Peartree Park*
NH1/7 Ridlins Park*
NH1/8 St. Nicholas Park*
NH1/9 Millennium Gardens
NH1/10 The Bowling Green

Principal Amenity Greenspaces

NH1/11 Chells District Park*

NH1/12 Canterbury Way*
NH1/13 Meadway*
NH1/14 Bandley Hill*
NH1/15 Burymead*
NH1/16 Campshill Park*
NH1/17 Blenheim Way /
Pembroke Gardens
NH1/18 York Road B & C*
NH1/19 Letchmore Road*
NH1/20 Trent Close
NH1/21 Bedwell Park*

NH1/22 Archer Road*
NH1/23 The Noke*
NH1/24 Ramsdell
NH1/25 Clovelly Way A
NH1/26 Chester Road /
Canterbury Way
NH1/27 Caernarvon Close /
Balmoral Close*
NH1/28 Chepstow Close*
NH1/29 Shephall Green
NH1/30 Blenheim Way / Stirling
Close*
NH1/31 Holly Copse

Principal Woodlands

NH1/32 Whomerley Wood
NH1/33 Monks Wood
NH1/34 Ridlins Wood
NH1/35 Lanterns Wood
NH1/36 Ashtree Wood
NH1/37 Wellfield Wood
NH1/38 Martins Wood*
NH1/39 Great Collens Wood
NH1/40 South Pestcotts Wood
NH1/41 Loves Wood
NH1/42 Abbot's Grove
NH1/43 Mobbsbury Park

NH1/44 Sishes Wood
NH1/45 Shackleton Spring
Woodland
NH1/46 Sinks Spring
NH1/47 Hanginghill Wood
NH1/48 Wiltshire Spring Wood
(west)
NH1/49 Hertford Road Wood
NH1/50 Almond Spring
NH1/51 Blacknells Spring Wood
NH1/52 Whitney Drive Wood

Planning permission will be granted where proposals:

- a. Would not result in the loss of any part of a Principal Open Space;
- b. Would not have an adverse impact upon any Principal Open Space within, or adjacent to, the application site; and
- c. Reasonably provide, or reasonably contribute towards the maintenance or improvement of, Principal Open Spaces and allotments.

Planning permission will be granted for small scale leisure and recreation developments within a Principal Open Space where they support its continued use and maintenance. New or replacement facilities that meet the general definitions of Principal Open Spaces will be afforded the same protections as the sites identified in this policy.

14.1 Principal Open Spaces are the destination parks, other parks and gardens, principal amenity greenspaces and principal woodlands along with the children's play areas within each¹³⁸. Based on our evidence, the most important open spaces in the Borough have been identified and allocated. These are the sites that:

- Have a significant draw within Stevenage or their neighbourhood;
- Are destinations in their own right, places where people would go to spend time with a specific purpose;
- Are not incidental open space;
- Are not principally defined by organised sports activities; and
- May contain a variety of facilities and attractions aimed at a wide demography.

14.2 In many cases, these open spaces will draw visitors from a relatively wide area. This is particularly true of the bigger spaces. However, it is likely that these same spaces will also perform a local amenity function.

14.3 Fairlands Valley Park is the largest area of open space in Stevenage. Retaining this area as undeveloped land was part of the original masterplan for the New Town. It provides a facility used by residents from all across the Borough (and beyond). It performs a regional role in providing recreational pursuits, but is just as likely to have people using it from neighbouring streets to meet everyday needs

14.4 The Town Centre Gardens provide valuable space in close proximity to both the main retail area and existing and proposed high-rise residential uses. The refurbishment of the gardens was completed in 2011, though there remains an aspiration to provide better connections across the dual carriageway of St George's Way (see Policy IT7).

14.5 The remaining Principal Parks serve a wider than local role within the town. They offer a variety of functions including play areas for a broad age range, trim trails, skate facilities, varied semi-natural environments and other features which make them attractive destinations.

¹³⁸ Sites in Policy NH1 denoted by an asterisk (*) contain childrens' play areas which are also protected under this policy

14.6 Amenity space refers to informal recreation spaces as well as green space in and around housing which enhances the appearance of the area. The Principal Amenity Greenspaces serve a neighbourhood purpose and often contain play spaces. They are all over 0.5ha in size. This category includes Chells Park, Meadway and Canterbury Park because, although they provide football pitches, people also use the sites for other uses such as dog walking or informal play.

14.7 This plan safeguards an access corridor across a substantial proportion of the Meadway Playing Fields (see Policy IT2). It is not presently anticipated that this access will be developed during the lifetime of this current plan. However, in the event that proposals are brought forward earlier than anticipated, the loss of Principal Open Space at Meadway would be permitted as an exception to this policy, subject to the re-provision of any lost facilities either within any development to the west of the A1(M) or another, appropriate and nearby location.

14.8 The Principal Woodlands are the major pieces of wooded land within the town boundary with access for the public. Many of them have additional designations such as local Wildlife Site status (see Policy NH2).

14.9 Applications for development which have an adverse impact upon the town's Principal Open Spaces will be refused.

14.10 Development will be expected to make reasonable contributions towards Principal Open Space. On the largest schemes this may take the form of new, on-site provision (see Policy NH7). Where this occurs, the provided space(s) will subsequently be afforded the same protections as the sites identified in this policy. However, in most instances, the Council will seek reasonable contributions towards the maintenance and enhancement of existing spaces.

14.11 No allotment sites are allocated under this policy. Although an important resource, they are subject to a separate regime when it comes to disposal which provides adequate protection¹³⁹. Notwithstanding this, we will require appropriate contributions towards allotment provision under this policy. Stevenage is currently well provided for and demand for plots is high. However, this popularity has been cyclical and the town's allotments will be subject to periodic review outside of the Local Plan process to ensure provision meets demand.

14.12 Sports pavilions, play areas and other small scale recreational developments can play an important part in sustaining the role and function of our Principal Open Spaces. The Council has been carrying out a programme of repairs, improvements and replacements to bring facilities up to standard. Planning permission will generally be granted where small-scale development is required to support the function and continued use of a Principal Open Space.

Policy NH2: Wildlife Sites

¹³⁹ The Council owns all allotment sites within the Borough. Legislation relating to the provision, safeguarding and disposal of allotments is set in a variety of acts

The following sites, as defined on the policies map, are designated as wildlife sites:

NH2/1 Abbot's Grove	NH2/20 Monks Wood West
NH2/2 Almond Spring	NH2/21 Pestcotts Spring & Wood
NH2/3 Ashtree Wood	NH2/22 Poplars Meadow and Pond South
NH2/4 Barnwell School and Rectory	NH2/23 Ridlins Mire
NH2/5 Blacknells Spring	NH2/24 Ridlins Wood
NH2/6 Broadwater Marsh West	NH2/25 Shackledell Grassland (2 sites)
NH2/7 Elder Way Flood Meadow	NH2/26 Sishes Wood
NH2/8 Elm Green Pastures	NH2/27 Six Hills Common
NH2/9 Exeter Close	NH2/28 St Nicholas Churchyard
NH2/10 Fishers Green Wood	NH2/29 Stevenage Brook Marsh
NH2/11 Garston Meadow	NH2/30 Symonds Green
NH2/12 Great Collens Wood	NH2/31 Valley Way Wood
NH2/13 Hanginghill Wood	NH2/32 Warren Springs
NH2/14 Kitching Green Lane	NH2/33 Wellfield Wood
NH2/15 Loves Wood	NH2/34 Whitney Drive Wood
NH2/16 Margaret's Wood & Spoil Bank Wood	NH2/35 Whitney Wood
NH2/17 Martins Way	NH2/36 Whomerley Woods Road Verge
NH2/18 Martins Wood	NH2/37 Wiltshire's Spring
NH2/19 Monks & Whomerley Woods	

Planning permission will be granted where proposals:

- a. Would not result in substantial loss or deterioration of a Wildlife Site; and
- b. Reasonably contribute towards the maintenance or enhancement of Wildlife Sites in the vicinity of the application site.

Any wildlife sites or Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS) that are ratified by the Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust (HMWT)¹⁴⁰ following adoption of this plan will be afforded the same protections as the sites identified in this policy. Any Wildlife Sites or RIGS (or parts thereof) which are subsequently deselected by HMWT will no longer be subject to the provisions of this policy.

14.13 There are no European or nationally designated sites, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) or National Nature Reserves (NNRs) in Stevenage. However, there are a significant number of locally important sites. A register of local wildlife sites is maintained and updated each year by the Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre. A comprehensive review of sites within the Borough was carried out in 2013¹⁴¹ and has been used to identify the sites that are protected through the Plan.

¹⁴⁰ Including any successor body

¹⁴¹ Stevenage Wildlife Sites Review (Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust, 2013)

14.14 Sites identified or designated as Wildlife Sites are afforded protection as sites of substantive nature conservation value. Development on or affecting these sites will be resisted, except where the primary objective is the conservation and / or diversification of any recognised biodiversity asset.

14.15 Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS) are considered regionally important for their educational or historical value and are given the same level of protection as wildlife sites. There are presently no RIGS in Stevenage.

14.16 Many of the woodland areas are recognised as ancient woodland sites. This is a nationally agreed definition and means that the land has been wooded since at least 1600 AD. The species of tree and the composition of the wood however are not necessarily natural, having been altered by management and new plantings over the centuries. Most of these were farm woodlands that were retained within the New Town as landscape features and areas for recreation. They were mainly composed of neglected hornbeam coppice with standard ash and oak trees.

14.17 Management of the Town's woodlands is carried out in line with a series of five-year plans which are drawn up and agreed with the Forestry Commission. The Town's woodlands will be managed in order to provide recreation and amenity for local residents and also to ensure their survival in a manner benefiting both the landscape of the Town and local wildlife. In recent years the value of the locally native hornbeam woodland to wildlife has been recognised. There is now a programme of re-coppicing and reinstatement.

Policy NH3: Green Corridors

The following routes, as defined on the policies map, are designated as Green Corridors:

Ancient Lanes

NH3/1 Aston Lane	NH3/10 Meadway
NH3/2 The Avenue	NH3/11 Narrowbox Lane
NH3/3 Botany Bay Lane	NH3/12 Old Walkern Road
NH3/4 Bragbury Lane	NH3/13 Sheafgreen Lane
NH3/5 Broadwater Lane	NH3/14 Shephall Lane
NH3/6 Chells Lane	NH3/15 Shephall Green Lane
NH3/7 Dene Lane	NH3/16 Shephards Lane
NH3/8 Fishers Green Lane	NH3/17 Watton Lane
NH3/9 Lanterns Lane	NH3/18 Weston Lane

Structurally Important Routes

NH3/19 Broadhall Way	NH3/23 Martins Way (Grace
NH3/20 Fairlands Way	Way to Gresley Way)
NH3/21 Grace Way	NH3/24 Monkswood Way
NH3/22 Gunnels Wood Road	

Other Green Corridors

NH3/25 Gresley Way
NH3/26 Martins Way (Hitchin
Road to Grace Way)

NH3/27 Six Hills Way

Planning permission will be granted where proposals:

- a. Would not have a substantial adverse effect upon a Green Corridor;
- b. Retain and sensitively integrate any Green Corridor which must be crossed or incorporated into the site layout;
- c. Provide replacement planting, preferably using locally native species, where hedgerow removal is unavoidable; and
- d. Reasonably contribute towards the improvement of Green Corridors in the vicinity of the application site

14.18 Green Corridors are protected as a means of linking and connecting to the town's open spaces as well as facilitating movement by pedestrians and cyclists. They differ in character and perform different roles, but are equally important in creating a network of green space throughout the Town. Green Corridors can promote the movement of people by more sustainable forms of transport, but also provide routes and networks to enable the diversification and sustenance of biodiversity.

14.19 When the New Town was built, many existing lanes and hedgerows in the areas of the countryside being developed were kept. A number of these now form part of the car-free cycle and pedestrian network of the town. These Ancient Lanes, and their associated hedgerows, need to be protected from future development as they cannot be replaced.

14.20 The Structurally Important Routes are major highways within the built up area of Stevenage that include significant areas within and alongside the highway that provide open space, landscaping and/or cycleways. They are primarily for human movement and are particularly conducive to cycling because of the segregated routes.

14.21 The Other Green Corridors are also road side areas, but they differ from the landscaped roads defined by the Structurally Important Routes. Gresley Way recognises the route between Six Hills Way and Broadhall Way, containing within it the Aston Brook and a well vegetated strip that runs towards Ridlins Mire. Six Hills Way is included following three successful experiments – at Six Hills Common, Monks Wood and Ashtree Wood – into grassland habitat creation conducted between HMWT and the Borough Council.

14.22 All three types of Corridor offer substantial opportunity to encourage alternative means of travel and healthier lifestyles. Work is being carried out within the Council to use them to develop shorter round routes and promote these to residents, and also to investigate the possibility of a connected route around the Town which would not only pursue these health and sustainability objectives but open up different parts of the Town to different people.

14.23 It may occasionally be necessary for a major development to cross, abut or incorporate a Green Corridor. Where this is necessary, disruption must be minimised and the remaining elements of the corridor sensitively integrated into the new development as a permanent feature. Contributions may also be appropriate, particularly in strategic (greenfield) developments, as a means of preserving existing lanes outside the urban area and enhancing and extending current routes into new areas of the town.

14.24 Beyond these defined routes, a number of public rights of way exist in the Borough. These are protected and controlled under a separate statutory regime. However, diversion applications to facilitate development are made to the Borough Council as the Local Planning Authority. The strategic development sites to the west and north of Stevenage, in particular, contain a number of existing rights of way. Any applications to modify or divert these routes will be dealt with separately to any planning application. However, it is our general expectation that existing public rights of way will be incorporated into the green infrastructure of any development proposals maintaining their existing route and alignment wherever possible.

14.25 This includes those footpaths and bridleways which link to the Stevenage Outer Orbital Path (StOOP). This is a 27-mile route which circles Stevenage using footpaths and other routes that are open to the public. All of StOOP lies outside of the Borough boundary. However, it is connected to Stevenage by eight 'link paths' which use public rights of way within our administrative area.

Policy NH4: Green Links

The following routes, as shown on the policies map, are designated as Green Links:

1. The Old Greens: Meadway to Fishers Green and Symonds Green;
2. The Avenue / Forster Country: Bury Mead to St. Nicholas Church;
3. Fairlands Valley: Hampson Park via Fairlands Valley Park to (a) Roebuck and (b) Shephall Green;
4. Chells: Gresley Way to Narrow Box Lane and Nobel School;
5. Collenswood: Gresley Way via Collenswood to Fairlands Valley Park / Chells Way;
6. Bandley Hill: Gresley Way via Ridlins Park and Bandley Hill to Collenswood;
7. Shephalbury: Gresley Way via Ridlins Wood and Loves Wood to Shephalbury Park;
8. Water meadows: Broadhall Way to Hertford Road;
9. Grace Way: Along the length of Grace Way between Fairlands Way and Martins Way; and
10. Great Ashby: From Wellfield Wood and St Nicholas Park through Great Ashby to the Borough boundary at Severn Way.

Planning permission will be granted where proposals:

- a. Would not create a substantive physical or visual break in a Green Link;
- b. Would not otherwise have a material adverse effect on the recreational, structural, amenity or wildlife value of a green link;
- c. Reasonably provide extensions of, or connections to, existing Green Links through the provision of on-site open space; and
- d. Reasonably contribute towards the maintenance, improvement or extension of Green Links.

14.26 Stevenage New Town was designed so that important features of the local landscape such as Fairlands Valley and areas of woodland were preserved as well as providing open spaces in each of the neighbourhoods. As the Town has developed, this has resulted in a network of open spaces, which connects the neighbourhoods of the town and the surrounding countryside.

14.27 The protection of the links between green spaces is as important as protecting the individual spaces in upholding the integrity of the new town as it was conceived.

14.28 Green Links are collections of spaces that, taken together, are worthy of protection for their connectivity and their recreation, amenity or wildlife value. The previous Local Plan defined eight Green Links throughout the Town that helped to define the urban structure of the Town by reference to adjacent green spaces. The spaces were connected, but not necessarily accessible or walkable, and in this sense they performed a different role to the Green Corridors and the individual treatment of open spaces within the hierarchy of spaces.

14.29 This Plan identifies ten Green Links. This includes the eight green links previously identified in the 2004 District Plan (subject to some minor changes) and two new links along Grace Way and through Great Ashby and St Nicholas which have been identified following the completion of the Green Space Strategy.

14.30 Where development at or near a Green Link significantly compromises the purpose of the link, permission will be refused. In other circumstances, the Council may seek contributions in order to compensate for, or mitigate against, any loss. This might include the way in which developments address the Green Link and capitalise on any open and green areas nearby, or use open spaces within development to give a wider sense of openness or structure.

Policy NH5a: Trees and woodland

Proposals which affect, or are likely to affect, existing trees, will require an arboricultural report. Existing trees must be protected and retained where possible, and sensitively incorporated into developments.

Planning permission for proposals where the loss of trees is demonstrated to be unavoidable will be granted where:

- a. Sufficient land is reserved for appropriate replacement planting and landscaping;

- b. Replacement trees or planting are provided which are;
 - i. Of equal or better quality than the trees which are lost
 - ii. Sensitively incorporated into the development; and
 - iii. Where appropriate, locally native species of similar maturity; and
- c. In the case of a loss of woodland:
 - i. It can be demonstrated that any adverse affects can be satisfactorily mitigated;
 - ii. The need for the use of the site outweighs the amenity of the woodland; or
 - iii. It can be demonstrated that there would be a net gain in the quality of any remaining woodland through the enhancement of the recreational, amenity, landscape and/or nature conservation value of the remaining woodland and that there would be provision for its improved long-term management.

14.31 Significant areas of woodland were retained by the masterplans for the New Town to help create an attractive environment within Stevenage. Many of these areas are protected, either in their own right as Principal Open Spaces and wildlife sites (see Policies NH1 and NH2) or as part of the network of Green Links and Green Corridors identified across the town (see Policies NH3 and NH4).

14.32 However, it is important that all woodlands and trees of amenity value are retained where this is practicable and desirable. An arboricultural report will be required where trees are to be affected. This should provide details about the location and characteristics of existing trees and clearly indicate which are to be removed or retained

14.33 Without sensitive planning, mature trees can be permanently damaged during construction or create long-term problems for the occupiers of new developments such as shade, storm damage and subsidence. Where new planting takes place, trees may not mature and achieve a similar canopy, ground cover or ecological value if inappropriate species or techniques are used.

14.34 Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) are used to protect important specimens. Consent is required to fell or carry out any tree surgery work on a TPO'd tree. Where individual trees, groups of trees or woodlands of particular value are under threat, the Council will consider making new TPOs. In considering TPO applications, the Council will have regard to expert advice, relevant British Standards and any other appropriate information

~~All development proposals which involve works to, or within the vicinity of, existing trees or woodland must be accompanied by an arboricultural impact assessment (AIA) at the application stage.~~

Individual trees

~~Development proposals resulting in harm to the health or longevity of existing individual trees which are worthy of retention¹⁴² will be refused unless:~~

- ~~a. The harm is demonstrated to be unavoidable;~~
- ~~b. Replacement trees would be planted in accordance with Table 6 below; and~~
- ~~c. Any replacement trees would be of an appropriate size and species, and planted in an appropriate location.~~

~~Post-permission, conditions will be used to secure any replacement planting and safeguard any retained trees.~~

~~Trees Felled~~		~~Replacements~~
~~Category~~	~~Diameter at Breast Height~~	
~~Small~~	~~Less than or equal to 30cm~~	~~2~~
~~Medium~~	~~Greater than 30cm and less than or equal to 60cm~~	~~5~~
~~Large~~	~~Greater than 60cm and less than or equal to 90cm~~	~~10~~
~~Very Large~~	~~Greater than 90cm~~	~~21~~

~~Table 6 – Individual tree replacement standard~~

Woodland

~~Development proposals resulting in the loss or deterioration of existing woodland¹⁴³ will be refused unless:~~

- ~~a. There are exceptional reasons which justify the loss or deterioration;~~
- ~~b. Replacement habitat would be provided in accordance with the statutory biodiversity metric;~~
- ~~c. Following replacement, there would be no net loss of woodland by area; and~~
- ~~d. Appropriate measures are proposed for the long-term management of any replacement woodland.~~

~~Post-permission, the planting and management of any replacement woodland will be secured by conditions or legal agreement.~~

Ancient and veteran trees

~~Development proposals resulting in the loss or deterioration of ancient or veteran trees will be refused unless:~~

- ~~a. There are wholly exceptional reasons which justify the loss or deterioration; and~~
- ~~b. A suitable compensation strategy exists.~~

¹⁴² ~~Defined as category C or above according to BS 5837:2012 or equivalent.~~

¹⁴³ ~~Defined as a contiguous area of 0.5 hectares or more under stands of trees with, or with the potential to achieve, tree crown cover of more than 20% of the ground.~~

~~Post-permission, any compensation will be secured by conditions or legal agreement.~~

Arboricultural offsetting

~~Replacement trees or woodland must be provided on-site unless there are clear and convincing reasons for not doing so. Where it is satisfactorily demonstrated that a development proposal cannot fully provide the necessary replacement planting on-site, any shortfall must be offset by either:~~

- ~~a. A cash in lieu contribution to the Council; or~~
- ~~b. An alternative off-site proposal, where this has already been identified and delivery is certain.~~

~~The acceptability of option (b) will be subject to agreement with the Council and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.~~

Policy NH5b: Tree-lined streets

~~Development proposals involving the creation of new streets must ensure that those streets are tree-lined unless there are clear, justifiable and compelling reasons why this would be inappropriate.~~

~~14.31 Significant areas of woodland were retained by the masterplans for the New Town to help create an attractive environment within Stevenage. Many of these areas are protected, either in their own right as Principal Open Spaces and wildlife sites (see Policies NH1 and NH2) or as part of the network of Green Links and Green Corridors identified across the town (see Policies NH3 and NH4).~~

~~14.32 However, it is important that all woodlands and trees of amenity value are retained where this is practicable and desirable. An arboricultural method statement will be required where trees are to be affected. This should provide details about the location and characteristics of existing trees and clearly indicate which are to be removed or retained.~~

~~14.32A — Where it is proposed to fell individual trees, they should be replaced in accordance with Table 6. This tree replacement standard has been informed by the statutory biodiversity net gain (BNG) provisions insofar as the value of the existing tree is determined by its diameter at breast height (1.3 metres above ground level) and the number of replacements is equal to the number of small replacement trees required to achieve a 10% net gain according to the statutory metric.~~

~~14.32B — For applications subject to the statutory BNG provisions, Policy NH5a will effectively act as an additional trading rule, requiring that individual trees be replaced by individual trees. In all other cases, the policy will operate as an independent standard.~~

~~14.32C — Where replacement planting takes place, trees may not mature and achieve a similar canopy, ground cover or ecological value if inappropriate species or~~

~~techniques are used. For these reasons, the acceptability of the size, species and location of replacement trees will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.~~

~~14.32D — The loss or deterioration of existing woodland should only take place where it is justified by exceptional reasons. In this context, “exceptional reasons” should be understood to mean instances where the proposed development is of an unusual nature, where the public benefits of the proposal would outweigh the harm caused by the loss of woodland, and where there is no reasonable and viable alternative to the loss or deterioration. Most residential development¹⁴⁴ will fail these tests and the council expects that the loss or deterioration of woodland will usually only be justified by proposals for public service infrastructure.~~

~~14.32E — The loss or deterioration of ancient or veteran trees should only take place where it is justified by wholly exceptional reasons. Here, “wholly exceptional reasons” should be understood to mean instances where refusal of the application would be very obviously contrary to the objectives of this plan when read as a whole.~~

~~14.34 Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) are used to protect important specimens. Consent is required to fell or carry out any tree surgery work on a TPO tree. Where individual trees, groups of trees or woodlands of particular value are under threat, the Council will consider making new TPOs. In considering TPO applications, the Council will have regard to expert advice, relevant British Standards and any other appropriate information.~~

~~14.34A — The NPPF requires new streets to be tree-lined unless there are clear, justifiable and compelling reasons why this would be inappropriate. This is reflected in Policy NH5b.~~

~~14.34B — In applying Policy NH5b, the council will be particularly mindful of the need to ensure that new trees are of an appropriate species and planted using appropriate techniques. When implemented poorly, tree-lined streets can discourage active travel and their other benefits (air quality, shelter, biodiversity, among others) can be significantly diminished.~~

~~14.34C — For these reasons, tree planting for new streets should be designed with regard to the width of the adjacent foot and cycleways, and the need to provide adequate cover whilst allowing pollution to disperse through the canopy. Trees that are fast growing, thorny, or with destructive root systems or delicate leaves should be avoided. In some instances, it may also be necessary to provide separate lighting for pedestrians and cyclists.~~

Policy NH6: General protection for open space

Planning permission for development of any existing, unallocated open space (or part of any open space) will be permitted where:

- a. The loss of the open space is justified having regard to:

¹⁴⁴ ~~With the exception of residential development falling within use classes C2 and C2A.~~

- i. The quality and accessibility of the open space;
- ii. The existence, or otherwise, of any interventions to improve quality or access;
- iii. Whether the open space is serving its function or purpose; and
- iv. Whether alternate space(s) would remain available for community use; and

b. Reasonable compensatory provision is made in the form of:

- i. Replacement provision of a similar type, size and quality;
- ii. The upgrade of other, existing open space; or
- iii. Exceptionally, a commuted sum to secure open space provision elsewhere.

14.35 It is inevitable that some open spaces will come under pressure from development proposals over the lifetime of this plan. Although many sites and areas are given specific protections under other policies of this plan, large amounts of open space remain that have no formal policy designation. It is important to ensure that the most valuable open spaces continue to be protected and open spaces only succumb to development where a positive outcome can be demonstrated.

14.36 The general presumption is that only those spaces which are of a poor or very poor quality will be considered for disposal. A number of sites of this nature are detailed in the evidence base. However, the circumstances around any site may change over time and all schemes that seek to utilise unallocated open space will be scrutinised.

14.37 Proper consideration will need to be given to the value of open spaces and the potential for improvement with some intervention. This will need to be balanced against the merits of any particular proposal. It is acknowledged that some development can act as a catalyst for the improvement of open spaces. Community engagement will be key in assessing the value of open space.

14.38 Some of the more peripheral parts of the urban area are more deficient in provision than other parts of the Town. Corey's Mill, Symonds Green and Chells fall into this category and the provision and loss of open spaces here over the plan period will be scrutinised with particular attention.

14.39 The Council will seek compensation for any losses of open space in the form of a like-for-like re-provision or an upgrade to another local space delivered by the developer or by way of a commuted payment. Commuted payments will be determined by the Council using a standard calculation. In determining the appropriateness of alternate open spaces, or locations for compensatory provision, a maximum distance threshold of 400m will apply.

Policy NH7: Open space standards

Planning permission for residential development will be granted where:

- a. On-site open space provision is made in accordance with the standards and thresholds set out in the Council's Green Space Strategy;
- b. Any such provision results in usable and coherent areas of an appropriate size; and
- c. Appropriate arrangements are made to ensure the long-term maintenance of the open space.

Where a development is phased, or a site is either divided into separate parts or otherwise regarded as part of a larger development, it will be considered as a whole and the appropriate standards will apply.

Where an applicant successfully demonstrates that (any element of) the required provision cannot reasonably be achieved on site, a commuted sum will be sought.

14.40 Open space standards have been a key part of planning for many years. However, in more recent times, reliance on them has diminished. Places have become more flexible in their use and application, rather than dogmatically meeting targets. This has resulted in wide variations in the application of standards across the country, even between similar places.

14.41 The Council will take a pragmatic approach to the provision of open space, sports and recreation typologies over the plan period. This will ensure that a balance is reached which meets future requirements on a town-wide basis whilst simultaneously respecting other policy objectives. There may be opportunities to 'trade' provision with certain schemes over-providing against certain typologies and under-providing against others.

14.42 That said, there remains a role for standards in providing a basis for the provision of open space in new developments. Having a standard provides some certainty for developers in terms of what the Council will expect and a basis for negotiation. It allows consideration of the future in a context of existing provision and availability.

14.43 The Council's current standards are set out in the table below¹⁴⁵. It is recognised that providing open space on small sites can lead to spaces that are not functional or valued in the communities they are intended to serve and difficult to maintain. As a result, and in an effort to encourage the better use of land (avoiding the prospect of having 'space left over after planning' adopted as open space), the Council will only require the on-site provision of formal open space above the defined thresholds.

	Borough-wide standard per	Minimum thresholds for on-site provision

¹⁴⁵ As established in the Green Space Strategy (SBC, 2015)

	1,000 population (ha)	Development population	Open space size¹⁴⁶
Parks and gardens	0.88ha	5,000	4.40ha
Amenity greenspace	0.92ha	240	0.22ha
Allotments	0.14ha	4,200	0.59ha
Natural and semi-natural greenspace	1.78ha	1,000	1.78ha
Children and young people	0.82 sites	900	1 site

14.44 Where provision cannot be made on site (including where only part of the provision can be made), the Council will seek alternative provision at a nearby location, a commuted sum to enable provision to be made nearby, or seek improvements to open space nearby. Any commuted sum will be tied to a specific location and specific improvements that ensure that the additional demand upon open spaces generated by the development are met.

14.45 Any new open spaces in excess of one hectare in size secured through this policy will thereafter be considered as Principal Open Spaces. Smaller areas of amenity space will be subject to the general protections afforded to open space.

14.46 Play areas constitute an important element of this provision. National Playing Field Association (NPFA) guidelines for play areas are expected to be met where the provision threshold is exceeded. This requires a minimum size of 400m² in order to create usable spaces. This may not be achievable in smaller or high-density developments. Where this can be proven, contributions in lieu may be acceptable.

14.47 It is important that any new open spaces, play areas and allotments are provided in a suitable location and are usable for all members of the community. Long-term management of these facilities must be arranged. Where sites are adopted by the Borough Council a sum sufficient to ensure maintenance for a period of at least ten years will be required.

14.48 Development populations will be calculated by reference to up-to-date statistics. Where large-scale developments are intended to be phased over a number of years, forward projections of the population and / or households may be considered. The following population rates will be used as a baseline, recognising that newer information will be made available over the lifetime of the plan¹⁴⁷.

Dwelling size	Private housing	Affordable housing
Studio or 1-bed	1.4 persons per dwelling	1.2 persons per dwelling
2-bed	1.9	2.2
3-bed	2.5	2.9

¹⁴⁶ The minimum threshold for provision is generally set at 75% of the average recorded site size within each typology. Children's provision is required from the point where the standard demands 0.75 of a site. Requirements for children and young peoples' provision will be rounded to the nearest whole number.

¹⁴⁷ Source: 2011 Census, Table DC4405EW / SBC analysis

4+ bed	3.1	3.9

14.49 Notwithstanding the advice in this policy, contributions towards open space may still be required under the general provisions of other policies in this plan. Similarly, areas of incidental open space and landscaping will be encouraged to ensure good design on all schemes, though these will not be adopted by the Council for maintenance purposes nor count towards open space provision.

Policy NH8: North Stevenage Country Park

Within that part of the Rectory Lane and St Nicholas Conservation Area which lies within the Green Belt, proposals that facilitate improved public access and / or the creation of a country park will be supported in principle where they also support the aims and purposes of the existing policy designations.

14.50 The land to the north of Stevenage, beyond Rectory Lane and Weston Lane is known colloquially as 'Forster Country' for its literary connections to writer E.M. Forster. The house at Rooks Nest¹⁴⁸ and the surrounding land inspired his writings. The Rectory Lane & St Nicholas Conservation Area was widened in 2007 to embrace this setting. The open area that remains within both the conservation area boundary and the Green Belt measures over 45 hectares.

14.51 The Council will seek to protect the openness and accessibility of this area, potentially through the means of a country park. This protection will recognise the literary connection of the land to E.M. Forster. 'Forster Country' is presently agricultural land outside the built-up area of the town traversed by a number of public rights of way but with no formal facilities. As such, it is not included in the analyses of open spaces in the Green Space Strategy. Pursuing a more formal management regime on this land may provide scope for (parts of) it to be considered as amenity greenspace and / or natural and semi-natural open space.

14.52 The provision of new public open space in this area will comprise the open space provision for the North of Stevenage development allocated under HO3, but could also allow for some offsetting of open space requirements arising from other developments in the plan period, or from the town as a whole, and any proposals will be viewed in this context. This includes consideration of any developments beyond the borough boundary in North Hertfordshire adjacent to the northern edge of the town.

14.53 The land to the west of the revised Green Belt boundary is allocated for housing development. Any scheme should demonstrate that both the land allocated from development and this area has been considered holistically, from North Road to Weston Road. In doing so, it is recognised that:

- The land within the conservation area would be unsuitable for intensive recreational use (such as sports pitches) or intensive management regimes (such as conversion to formally laid-out parkland); while

¹⁴⁸ Now known as 'Howards'

- The quantity of open land here is well in excess of that which would be required of any new development to the north of Stevenage following application of the open space standards in Policy NH7.

14.54 Small-scale developments which facilitate public access and use of this land, whilst respecting the purposes of Green Belt and the need to maintain and enhance the conservation area will be supported.

Archaeology

Policy NH9: Areas of archaeological significance

The following sites, as shown on the policies map, are identified as areas of archaeological significance:

NH9/1 Whormerley Wood	NH9/8 Fishers Green
NH9/2 The Six Hills	
NH9/3 Shephall Village	NH9/9 Symonds Green
NH9/4 Hampson Park	NH9/10 Broadwater Farm
NH9/5 Shephalbury	NH9/11 Wychdell
NH9/6 Martins Wood and Allotments	NH9/12 Bragbury End
NH9/7 The Old Town	NH9/13 The Bury
	NH9/14 Brick Kiln Road
	NH9/15 Broomin Green Farm

Where a development proposal affects an area of archaeological significance or has the potential to affect important archaeological remains on adjoining sites, developers will be required to submit the results of an archaeological field evaluation.

If in situ preservation of important archaeological remains is considered preferable, development proposals will be required to demonstrate how those remains will be preserved and incorporated into the layout of that development.

Where in situ preservation of important archaeological remains is not feasible, planning conditions or obligations will ensure that appropriate and satisfactory provision is made for the investigation and recording of archaeological remains that will be damaged or lost before development commences and for the subsequent analysis and publication of results and, where appropriate, excavation. Where appropriate the management, enhancement and public presentation of archaeological remains and their setting will be sought.

Any area of archaeological significance that is identified following the adoption of this document will be afforded the same level of protection as those listed within this policy.

14.55 The most important archaeological and historical sites are known as Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs). SAMs are identified by Historic England. They are protected by law and any works on them require special permission from the Government. There are three SAMs in Stevenage: The Six Hills Roman barrows, Whormley Wood moated site and the Old Malt Houses and Kiln, in the High Street. These are shown on our policies map.

14.56 There are also a number of areas in Stevenage which, although not nationally recognised or designated, are considered to be locally important because of the (potential for) archaeological remains that are contained within them. Fifteen areas of archaeological significance in Stevenage have been identified by Hertfordshire

County Council. Two of these also contain SAMs, indicating the archaeological potential of the surrounding area.

14.57 Where development will affect any of these areas, prospective developers will be required to undertake an archaeological field evaluation of the site, in line with Government guidance and in consultation with the County Council's Historic Environment Unit. However, in many areas, small-scale infill development, such as domestic extensions, and other minor works will pose little or no threat to any remains and homeowners will rarely be expected to secure archaeological recording.

14.58 During the development of the New Town area of Stevenage, the investigation of archaeological finds was sporadic. This means that new development has significant potential to uncover archaeological remains. In the event of previously unknown archaeological remains being uncovered after works have commenced, both the council and Historic England should be informed. Should the remains be deemed important enough to schedule, Scheduled Monument Consent will be required.

Conservation

Policy NH10: Conservation areas

The conservation area boundaries are shown on the policies map.

Development proposals, within, or affecting a conservation area should have regard to the guidance provided by the relevant Conservation Area Management Plan Supplementary Planning Document.

14.59 Stevenage contains seven conservation areas. These have been designated due to their particular historic or architectural significance.

14.60 Particular care will be required when considering the scale, layout, design and materials of development proposals within or adjacent to conservation areas, to ensure that the character and appearance of the heritage asset is preserved, and preferably enhanced. Features that characterise the heritage asset should be reflected in any new development. However, our Management Plans recognise that replication of the existing style is not necessarily appropriate and guidance on architectural style should not confine opportunities for innovative design.

14.61 Conservation Area Management Plans for each area have been adopted as SPDs. These provide guidance to enable effective management and change, and to secure the preservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of the area. They are based on the Conservation Area Appraisals produced by BEAMS and best practice advice from Historic England¹⁴⁹. Developers will need to demonstrate how they have complied with the guidance provided by the Management Plan.

129 Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management, Historic England, 2011

14.62 National guidance and legislation will also be used to determine these proposals.

¹⁴⁹ Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and management, Historic England, 2011

15 Delivery and monitoring

15.1 The policies in this plan show how we want Stevenage to develop and grow over the next fifteen years. This section says what we will do to make this happen (delivery). It says how we will measure if our policies are having the right effect (monitoring). We have identified the indicators we will monitor and set targets where possible. We have not set targets for some indicators because other matters outside of our control will also decide how the results change.

Infrastructure and delivery

15.2 It is a key test of local plans that they are deliverable. The Local Plan is supported by a wide-ranging evidence base which demonstrates how and when the sites and proposals in this plan can be brought forward. Our Strategic Land Availability Assessments (SLAA) for both housing and employment demonstrate commitment from relevant landowners to ensure their sites are delivered. The IDP examines the cumulative impacts of providing 7,600 homes over the plan period (4,956 homes between 2024 and 2031) and identifies a series of interventions¹⁵⁰.

15.3 Partnership working is key to successful delivery. The Duty to Co-operate places a legal duty on the Council to interact with other authorities, agencies, service providers and regulators. This is supplemented by positive engagement with other bodies that are not prescribed by the regulations. In developing the local plan and its evidence base, Stevenage Borough Council has engaged on a pro-active and ongoing basis with numerous organisations, whose assistance or approval will be required to deliver the plan. This includes (but is not limited to):

- **North Hertfordshire District Council and East Hertfordshire District Council** as the authorities directly adjoining Stevenage Borough to ensure emerging proposals are considered on a consistent and holistic basis and that the cumulative impacts of our plans are properly understood;
- **Hertfordshire County Council** as (variously) waste and minerals planning authority, highway authority and authority responsible for education. Our plan and policies map, where relevant and necessary, reflect proposals in those parts of the statutory Development Plan for which the county council retain responsibility. Mitigation schemes to ensure appropriate capacity on the local highway network and in the education system have been included;
- **Highways England** as the body responsible for the trunk road network, including the A1(M) which is the key strategic road link to and from Stevenage;
- **Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)** as the partnership between businesses and local authorities that covers Stevenage and sets priorities for investment through its Growth Plan;
- **Stevenage First Town Centre Task Force** as the partnership between the Borough Council, LEP and other agencies formed to unlock the development opportunities in and around the town centre; and

¹⁵⁰ Infrastructure Delivery Plan (SBC, 2015)

- **The Environment Agency** whose position as statutory regulator of the water environment has required positive interaction, particularly around issues relating to water and wastewater infrastructure.

15.4 The amount of new development being planned for is significant. It cannot occur without significant investment in infrastructure and supporting facilities. Key items and facilities are set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. Key delivery bodies are identified and costs are provided where known. The delivery of these schemes will be monitored on an on-going basis in our Authority Monitoring Reports.

Monitoring

15.5 We are required by law to monitor the effectiveness of our policies and plans. We produce a comprehensive Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) on an annual basis, at the end of each financial year (March 31st). The most recent is available on our website.

15.6 Changes to legislation in the last few years mean that we now take more responsibility for monitoring at a local level:

- The purpose of monitoring is now to share information with the local community rather than central government.
- We can set the time period that our monitoring reports to cover. This must not be longer than 12 months.
- We are responsible for our own performance management and can choose which indicators and targets to include in the report.

15.7 As a result of this, our monitoring report can focus on locally important issues.

15.8 Monitoring will show how we will measure the effects of our new plan. It will help to tell us whether our policies are working or having the right effect, and will let us know when things are not going so well. It will also show how we are meeting the Duty to Cooperate.

15.9 Monitoring should help us to decide if we need to review the plan or parts of it.

15.10 A monitoring framework has been drawn up for the Local Plan, this shows how specific policies will be monitored:

Objective	Policy	Target	Indicator(s)
Climate change	Carbon emissions	Operational / WLC net zero	Energy statements
	Heating and cooling	No new energy-dependent cooling systems	Energy statements
	Water efficiency	For residential water consumption to not exceed 110L per person per day	Planning permissions
Sustainable development		-	Index of multiple deprivation

	Reduce deprivation and improve quality of life	For average earnings to increase over the plan period	Average weekly earnings for residents
		-	Housing affordability
		-	Resident satisfaction
	Support facilities and services that encourage people to live, work and spend leisure time in Stevenage	To reduce the distance travelled to work	Distance travelled to work
A strong, competitive economy	Provide sites for new employment floorspace	At least 140,000m ² employment floorspace to be completed 2011-2031	Employment floorspace completions
		-	Employment land supply
		-	Claimant count
		-	Number of jobs
		-	New business start ups
	Protection of the Employment Areas	To protect the Gunnels Wood and Pin Green Employment Areas	Employment land up-take
A vital town centre	Preserve the viability and vitality of the retail hierarchy	-	Retail vacancy rates
	Support the type and range of retail required to meet identified need	7,600m ² of additional convenience retail floorspace by 2031	Retail, office and leisure completions
Infrastructure	Require new development to meet the demand it creates	-	Developer contributions
Sustainable transport	Create conditions for significant increase in passenger transport	To increase the use of passenger transport	Mode of travel to work
	Direct high density development to the most sustainable locations	For 100% of residential completions to be within 30 minutes of key services	Accessibility of services
	Require new development to provide relevant plans and assessments	For all major applications to include a Travel Plan	Travel Plans
High quality homes	Provide sites for new residential development	At least 7,600 new homes to be completed 2011-2031 ~~(4,956 homes between 2024 and 2031)~~	Housing completions
	45% of new homes to be on Previously Developed Land	45% of new homes to be on Previously Developed Land	Housing completions on PDL
	Maintain at least a five-year supply of land for housing	-	Housing supply
	To deliver up to 40% affordable homes, where viability permits	For at least 20% of all new homes to be affordable	Affordable housing completions
			Affordable housing supply

	To re-balance the housing stock by delivering a mix of housing types and sizes	For all major sites to comply with the mix identified in the SHMA	Housing Mix
		-	Aspirational homes
	Provide sites for new Gypsy and Traveller provision	At least 11 new Gypsy and Traveller sites to be provided	Gypsy and Traveller provision
Good design	New developments are effective in designing out crime	For the overall crime rate in Stevenage to be reduced	Crime rates
	New development to meet water usage standards	The design achieves a maximum of 110 litres per person per day including external water use	None – Building Regulation Approval will not be granted unless this is complied with
Healthy communities	Avoid the loss of any health, social or community facilities	To see no decrease in health, social and community uses across the town	Retail, office and leisure completions
	For new health, social and community facilities to be located within identified centres, in accordance with the sequential test	-	
Flooding and pollution	Reduce or mitigate against flood risk	For all Flood Storage Reservoirs to be retained	Number of Flood Storage Reservoirs
		To grant no permissions against Environment Agency advice	Environment Agency advice
		For all schemes to incorporate SUDS	Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems
Green infrastructure and the natural environment	Protection of Principal Open Spaces	No reduction in the total area of Principal Open Space	Principal Open Spaces
	Protection of wildlife sites	No reduction in the number or area of designated sites through development	Wildlife Sites
	Protection of Green Corridors	No reduction in the total area of designated sites through development	Green corridors
	Protection of Green Links	No reduction in the total area of designated sites through development	Green Links
The historic environment	Preserve and enhance conservation areas	For no conservation areas to be 'at risk'	Conservation areas
	Preserve and enhance listed buildings	For no listed buildings to be 'at risk'	Listed Buildings

15.11 One of the key elements of our monitoring work is an extensive survey of residential and commercial developments, to identify completion rates across the

Borough. We also produce a SLAA each year to update the supply of land that is available to meet the targets of our Plan.

15.12 If there is an insufficient supply of land, or other policy targets are not being met, it may be necessary to carry out a review or a partial review of the Local Plan.

15.13 The Council will continue to work with neighbouring planning authorities, to enable their Plans to come forward, and to ensure strategic needs are being met. The results of this work will be recorded within the AMR.

15.14 We will also monitor the wider effects of the plan through the SA. The SA sets out a list of indicators that we will use to measure the social, economic and environmental impacts of the plan. Some of these indicators may also form part of the monitoring framework for the plan.

A Superseded policies

Policies from the District Plan, to be replaced by Stevenage Borough Local Plan Policies

The schedule below indicates how, where and when [if at all] policies contained within the saved Stevenage District Plan Second Review (2004) will be replaced. Those policies which were not saved by the Secretary of State in December 2007 do not appear in the schedule.

District Local Plan Second Review Policy to be replaced	Replacement Policy contained within the Stevenage Borough Local Plan
TW1: Sustainable development	Policy SP2: Sustainable development in Stevenage
TW2: Structural open space	Policy SP12: Green infrastructure and the natural environment Policy NH1: Principal Open Spaces Policy NH6: General protection for open space Policy NH7: Open Space Standards
TW4: New neighbourhood centres	Policy SP4: A vital Town Centre Policy SP9: Healthy communities Policy HO2: Stevenage West Policy HO3: North of Stevenage Policy HO4: South-east of Stevenage Policy TC11: New convenience retail provision
TW6: Green Belt	Policy SP10: Green Belt Policy GB1: Green Belt Policy GB2: Green Belt settlements
TW7: Local Rural Areas	No equivalent policy
TW8: Environmental Safeguards	Policy SP6: Sustainable transport Policy SP8: Good design Policy IT5: Parking and access Policy GD1: High quality design
TW9: Quality in design	Policy SP8: Good design Policy GD1: High quality design
TW10: Crime prevention	Policy SP8: Good design Policy GD1: High quality design
TW11: Planning requirements	Policy SP5: Infrastructure
H2: Strategic housing allocation – Stevenage West	Policy HO2: Stevenage West
H3: New Housing Allocations	Policy HO1: Housing allocations Policy HO3: North of Stevenage Policy HO4: South-east of Stevenage
H6: Loss of residential accommodation	Policy HO6: Redevelopment of existing homes
H7: Assessment of windfall residential sites	Policy HO5: Windfall sites

H8: Density of residential development	Policy SP6: Sustainable transport Policy GD1: Good design
H12: Special needs accommodation	Policy HO10: Sheltered and supported housing Policy HO11: Accessible housing
H14: Benefits of affordability	Policy HO8: Affordable housing tenure, mix and design
E2: Employment areas	Policy EC2a: Gunnels Wood Employment Area Policy EC2b: Gunnels Wood Edge-of-Centre Zone Policy EC6: Pin Green Employment Area
E3: Employment sites	Policy EC1: Allocated sites for employment development
E4: Acceptable uses in employment areas	Policy EC2a: Gunnels Wood Employment Area Policy EC2b: Gunnels Wood Edge-of-Centre Zone Policy EC3: Gunnels Wood Industrial Zones Policy EC4: Remainder of Gunnels Wood Policy EC6: Pin Green Employment Area
E5: Retail and leisure proposals in employment areas	No equivalent policy
E6: Unit sizes within employment areas	Policy EC3: Gunnels Wood Industrial Zones Policy EC4: Remainder of Gunnels Wood Policy EC6: Pin Green Employment Area
E7: Employment uses outside employment areas and homeworking	Policy EC7: Employment development on unallocated sites
T6: Design standards	Policy GD1: High quality design
T8: Integration of transport modes	Policy SP6: Sustainable transport Policy TC4: Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area Policy IT6: Sustainable transport
T11: Rail freight provision	No equivalent policy
T12: Bus provision	Policy IT5: Parking and access
T13: Cycleways	Policy IT5: Parking and access Policy IT7: New and improved links for pedestrians and cyclists
T14: Pedestrians	Policy IT5: Parking and access Policy IT7: New and improved links for pedestrians and cyclists
T15: Car Parking Strategy	Policy IT5: Parking and access

T16: Loss of residential car parking	Policy IT8: Public parking provision
TR1: Town centre	Policy TC1: Town Centre Policy TC2: Southgate Major Opportunity Area Policy TC3: Centre West Major Opportunity Area Policy TC4: Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area Policy TC5: Central Core Major Opportunity Area Policy TC6: Northgate Major Opportunity Area Policy TC7: Marshgate Major Opportunity Area
TR3: Retail frontages	Policy TC8: Town Centre Shopping Area
TR4: Loss of retail floorspace	Policy TC8: Town Centre Shopping Area
TR7: Loss of office accommodation	No equivalent policy
TR8: Protection of leisure, social and community uses	Policy TC2: Southgate Major Opportunity Area Policy TC3: Centre West Major Opportunity Area Policy TC5: Central Core Major Opportunity Area Policy TC7: Marshgate Major Opportunity Area Policy HC6: Existing leisure and cultural facilities
TR9: Town centre car parking	Policy IT5: Parking and access Policy IT8: Public parking provision
TR10: Railway station parking	Policy IT8: Public parking provision
TR11: Replacement residential accommodation	No equivalent policy
TR14: New neighbourhood centres	Policy HO2: Stevenage West Policy HO3: North of Stevenage Policy HO4: South-east of Stevenage Policy TC11: New convenience retail provision
TR15: New free standing shops	No equivalent policy
EN9: Archaeology and development	Policy NH9: Areas of archaeological significance
EN10: Green Links	Policy NH4: Green Links
EN11: Provision of new and extended Green Links	Policy NH4: Green Links Policy NH7: Open space standards
EN12: Loss of woodland	Policy NH5: Trees and woodland
EN13: Trees in new developments	Policy NH5: Trees and woodland
EN15: Ancient lanes and associated hedgerows	Policy NH3: Green Corridors
EN16: Countryside Heritage Site	Policy NH1: Principal Open Spaces Policy NH2: Wildlife Sites

EN17: Wildlife Sites and Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS)	Policy NH2: Wildlife Sites
EN18: Natural habitats in adjoining local authorities	No equivalent policy
EN21: Other sites of nature conservation importance	No equivalent policy
EN27: Noise pollution	Policy FP7: Pollution
EN28: Aircraft noise	Policy FP7: Pollution
EN29: Light pollution	Policy FP7: Pollution
EN31: Hazardous installations	Policy FP5: Contaminated land Policy FP6: Hazardous installations
EN32: River corridors and water meadows	Policy FP4: Flood storage reservoirs and functional floodplain
EN36: Water conservation	Policy CC1: Climate change
EN37: Telecommunication equipment developments	No equivalent policy
EN38: Energy conservation and supply	Policy CC1: Climate change
L1: Major leisure facilities in the Town Centre Inset Area	Policy TC3: Centre West Major Opportunity Area Policy TC4: Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area Policy TC5: Central Core Major Opportunity Area Policy TC7: Marshgate Major Opportunity Area
L2: Major leisure facilities outside the Town Centre Inset Area	Policy HC7: New and refurbished leisure and cultural facilities
L3: Stevenage Leisure Park	Policy EC1: Allocated sites for employment development Policy TC3: Centre West Major Opportunity Area Policy HO1: Housing allocations
L4: Loss or reduction of existing leisure facilities	Policy HC6: Existing leisure and cultural facilities
L5: Modernisation, enhancement or redevelopment of leisure facilities	Policy HC6: Existing leisure and cultural facilities
L6: Leisure facilities in neighbourhood centres	Policy HC1: District, local and neighbourhood centres
L9: Play centres	No equivalent policy
L10: Principal open spaces	Policy NH1: Principal Open Spaces
L11: Fairlands Valley Park	Policy NH1: Principal Open Spaces
L12: Loss of playing fields and other outdoor sports facilities	Policy HC6: Existing leisure and cultural facilities
L13: Redundant school playing fields	Policy HC10: Redundant school sites
L14: Children's play space	Policy NH1: Principal Open Spaces Policy NH7: Open space standards
L15: Outdoor sports provision in residential developments	Policy NH7: Open space standards

L16: Children's play space provision in residential developments	Policy NH7: Open space standards
L17: Informal open space provision in residential developments	Policy NH7: Open space standards
L18: Open space maintenance	Policy NH7: Open space standards
L19: Loss of allotments	No equivalent policy
L20: New allotment provision	Policy NH1: Principal Open Spaces Policy NH7: Open space standards
L23: Horse and pony route	No equivalent policy
L26: Guest houses	No equivalent policy
SC1: Retention of social and community facilities	Policy HC4: Existing health, social and community facilities
SC4: Social, community and leisure provision sites	Policy HC5: New health, social and community facilities
SC5: Social and community provision in new developments	Policy HC5: New health, social and community facilities
SC6: Care in the community	Policy HO10: Sheltered and supported housing
SC9: Redundant school buildings	Policy HC9: Former Barnwell East Secondary School Policy HC10: Redundant school sites
SC10: Travellers site	Policy HO12: Gypsy & Traveller provision Policy HO13: Gypsy & Traveller provision on unallocated sites.
SC11: Cemetery extension at Weston Road	No equivalent policy
SC13: Provision in major new developments	Policy TC2: Southgate Park Major Opportunity Area Policy HO2: Stevenage West Policy HO3: North of Stevenage Policy HO4: South-east of Stevenage
SC14: Nursing homes and residential homes	Policy HO10: Sheltered and supported housing
SC15: Development at the Lister Hospital	Policy HC3: The Health Campus
OT4: New developments in the High Street	Policy TC9: High Street Shopping Area
OT5: Primary shopping frontage	Policy TC10: High Street Primary and Secondary Frontages
OT6: Secondary shopping frontages	Policy TC10: High Street Primary and Secondary Frontages
OT9: Advertisements	No equivalent policy
OT11: Service accesses onto Primett Road and Church Lane	No equivalent policy
OT14: Primett Road car parks	Policy IT8: Public parking provision
NC1: Large neighbourhood centres	Policy HO1: Housing allocations Policy HC1: District, local and neighbourhood centres

NC2: Small neighbourhood centres	Policy HO1: Housing allocations Policy HC1: District, local and neighbourhood centres
NC6: Redevelopment of the neighbourhood centres	Policy HO1: Housing allocations Policy HC1: District, local and neighbourhood centres
SW1: Development area	Policy HO2: Stevenage West
SW2: Master plan	Policy HO2: Stevenage West
SW3: Planning requirements	Policy SP5: Infrastructure Policy HO2: Stevenage West
SW4: Design guidance	Policy SP8: Good design Policy HO2: Stevenage West Policy GD1: High quality design
SW5: Transport principles	Policy IT1: Strategic development access points Policy IT2: West of Stevenage safeguarded corridors Policy IT4: Transport assessments and travel plans Policy IT5: Parking and access Policy IT6: Sustainable transport Policy IT7: New and improved links for pedestrians and cyclists Policy HO2: Stevenage West
SW6: Improvements to transport infrastructure	Policy SP5: Infrastructure Policy IT5: Parking and access Policy IT6: Sustainable transport Policy IT7: New and improved links for pedestrians and cyclists Policy HO2: Stevenage West
SW7: Potential use of existing A1(M) crossings	Policy IT1: Strategic development access points
SW8: Development along access corridors	Policy EC5: Active frontages and gateways
SW10: Loss of employment land	No equivalent policy
SW11: Natural, semi-natural and historic environment	Policy HO2: Stevenage West Policy NH2: Wildlife Sites Policy NH3: Green Corridors Policy NH4: Green Links Policy NH5: Trees and woodland Policy NH7: Open space standards
SW12: Employment land	Policy EC1: Allocated sites for employment development Policy HO2: Stevenage West
SW13: Managed small business units	Policy EC1: Allocated sites for employment development Policy HO2: Stevenage West
SW14: Retail provision	Policy TC11: New convenience retail provision

	Policy HO2: Stevenage West
SW15: Outdoor sports facility provision	Policy HO2: Stevenage West Policy HC8: Sports facilities in new development
SW16: Major leisure facilities	Policy HO2: Stevenage West Policy HC8: Sports facilities in new development
SW17: Allotment provision	Policy NH7: Open Space Standards
SW20: Surgeries and clinics	Policy HO2: Stevenage West
SW21: Emergency services	Policy HO2: Stevenage West
SW22: Cemetery provision	No equivalent policy

B Mobility Strategy

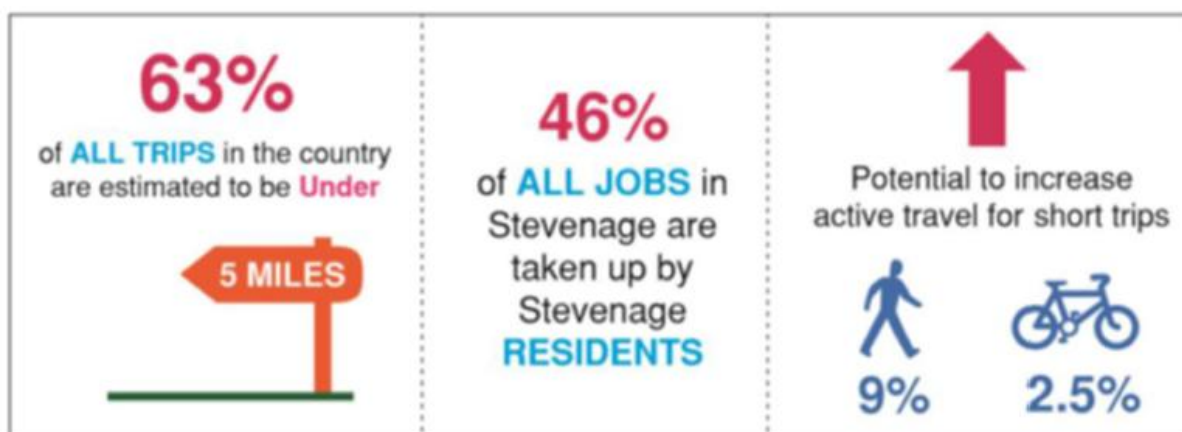
Overview

This Mobility Strategy for Stevenage makes commitments to tried, tested and innovative initiatives in Mobility and Behaviour, that do not just mitigate the demands from the Local Plan growth but will accelerate the more efficient use of transport infrastructure within the town. It enables growth, not just for this Local Plan but beyond, with a reduced reliance on the car and more active and integrated communities.

It steers away from the historic, and now contra-policy, predict and provide car commuter peak as a proxy for transport and Mobility. Instead of prioritising road building schemes to satisfy a theoretical short lived car commuter demand, the strategy is to design for and prioritise Mobility as a whole. It is to create even more attractive choice in movement than already exists, committing funds to physical improvements to the higher capacity cycle network, which can be up to seven times more effective in terms of unit road space compared with car use, invest in public transport and make huge inroads in influencing behaviour by significant funding of new measures to promote and use the mobility options that already exist and will improve.

The commuter peak periods are the times of the day when the highway network is under the most pressure. The National Travel Survey (NTS) shows that in the AM peak hour (08:00-09:00), 25% of all movement is for commuting and business purposes and 50% is associated with education¹⁵¹. Therefore, three quarters of all movement in the AM peak hour are focussed on just these two activities. In the PM peak hour (17:00-18:00), over 40% of all movement is associated with these purposes.

In addition to this, Stevenage has a high level of internalisation of jobs, with many local residents taking up available jobs in Stevenage. Therefore, commuting distances will be short for many residents. A high proportion of all trips, not just commuter trips, are less than 5 miles.



¹⁵¹ National Travel Survey Table NTSS0502 Trip Start Time by Trip Purpose (Monday to Friday) England

Figure 4.1 Propensity to Increase Active Travel for Short Trips

Given this, the strategy is to be cognisant of these trip purposes and to target in particular short trips made by car that could easily be made by active travel and public transport instead.

Active Travel Strategy

Existing Situation

Stevenage's cycle network was modelled on Dutch infrastructure and by the 1970s, when the network was finalised, Stevenage was held up as proof that the UK could build a Dutch-style cycle network.

Stevenage's good active travel infrastructure can easily become excellent with further investment. The cycle routes have the capacity to accommodate significant movement by bicycle, becoming material economic conduits for movement.

Appendix i is the cycle map of the whole Stevenage network.

Proposed Strategy

Stevenage Borough Council will place a high priority on active travel. For the purposes of this Local Plan and beyond, it will plan on the basis that the proportion of travel by active travel will increase, that commuter peak car demand will remain broadly static and therefore that the proportion of travel by car driver will decrease.

The strategy is to further encourage this shift through the creation of an active travel /car differential whereby it is more attractive to cycle for short journeys than drive.

The existence of the extensive, segregated cycle infrastructure means that Stevenage is better equipped than many towns to facilitate safe and convenient cycling and encourage this change in emphasis.

In Hertfordshire, it has been estimated that 63% of all journeys are less than 5 miles. Not only has Stevenage been designed with cycling in mind, but the majority of trips are of a distance that can comfortably be accommodated by a choice of means of mobility.

The strategy will focus on the following aspects:

- **Cycle Strategy:** an up to date cycling strategy will be prepared for Stevenage that will set out the strategy, measures and timescales for implementation. The strategy will consider all potential cycle trip purposes, including commuting, cycling to school and recreational cycling.
- **An upgraded cycle network:** the highest priority for investment will be the upgrade of the existing cycle network, which has suffered from a historic lack of investment. This will include improved surfacing, improved lighting, addressing missing links in the network and changes to priority where

cycleways meet the highway in order to create continuous routes. In accordance with Policy IT5 of the Local Plan, developers will be required to provide safe, direct and convenient routes within the development, and link to existing cycleway and pedestrian networks.

- **Wayfinding:** the former active travel Wayfinding Strategy that was developed, but not implemented, will be reviewed and updated where necessary. An Action Plan for its implementation will be included in the updated Cycle Strategy.
- **Cycle Storage:** a review of existing cycle parking available to the public within Stevenage will be undertaken. The review will identify any gaps in existing cycle parking provision in terms of appropriate locations at trip ends as well as the quality of cycle parking. In addition, in accordance with Policy IT5 of the Local Plan, developers will be required to provide secure cycle parking as part of any development coming forward.
- **Cycle Training:** Positive actions to influence behaviour are education in, and awareness of, opportunities, including the opportunity to make best use of the active travel infrastructure. Cycle training, including for those of an early age, will help to broaden horizons and provide confidence.

Public Transport Strategy

Existing Situation

Public transport (buses and trains) is well used in Stevenage. Approximately 6% of travel to work is by bus, and 7% by train. However, the existing bus and railway station have been underinvested for some time and require an upgrade in provision. The bus-rail transfer is currently relatively poor as the existing bus station is not located adjacent to the railway station to provide a seamless interchange.

Proposed Strategy

As part of the regeneration of the Town Centre it is proposed to close the existing bus station and replace it with new bus interchange at the railway station. It is also proposed to significantly improve bus connections into and through Stevenage, which will enable more employees in the town centre and Gunns Wood employment area easily access their place of work.

Through the Thameslink expansion, Stevenage will be directly connected, by fast services, to the heart of central London and a variety of destinations south of London, including Gatwick Airport. Services will also stop at Farringdon for easy connections onto the Elizabeth Line (i.e. Crossrail) to Heathrow, Canary Wharf and beyond. With new trains on both commuter and intercity services, by 2018 there will be a step change in the accessibility and attractiveness of travel by rail to/from Stevenage. The Local Plan identifies (Policy TC4 iv) a proposal for a radically improved Stevenage railway station, with National Rail having plans for a 5th platform, as part of a broader central area regeneration scheme. This will also help to drive a shift in travel onto rail.

Car Parking strategy

Proposed Strategy

Parking is no longer a stand-alone issue, but has become a key aspect of both transport and land use planning. Control over the availability of parking spaces is a key policy instrument in influencing car trips. The supply and pricing of car parking has a fundamental influence on the way people

travel. Research has shown that even where good alternatives to the car exist, if cheap and convenient car parking is available then people with access to a car will tend to choose this mode of travel.

The 2004 Parking Strategy will be updated as part of the development of the Stevenage Mobility Strategy as a tool for encouraging greater activity in the town centre whilst minimising the demand for commuter car parking.

Stevenage Borough Council will take the lead in this by critically reviewing and managing its own staff car parking strategy.

Car Sharing

Existing Situation

Hertfordshire County Council currently operates a Liftshare car-pooling scheme, which has over 1,000 members.

Proposed Strategy

Stevenage Borough Council will develop car-pooling within the Stevenage community, and expect new development, where appropriate, to invest in the development and encouragement of this type of mobility. It will stay abreast of the significant emerging European research in this field, and seek the implementation of the most effective elements of this growing, and particularly socially inclusive, method of mobility.

Workplace Travel Planning

Existing Situation

2011 Census data provides an insight into the main modes of travel for people working in Stevenage. This shows that 69% of people who work in Stevenage drive a car, 11% travel by public transport and 13% walk or cycle.

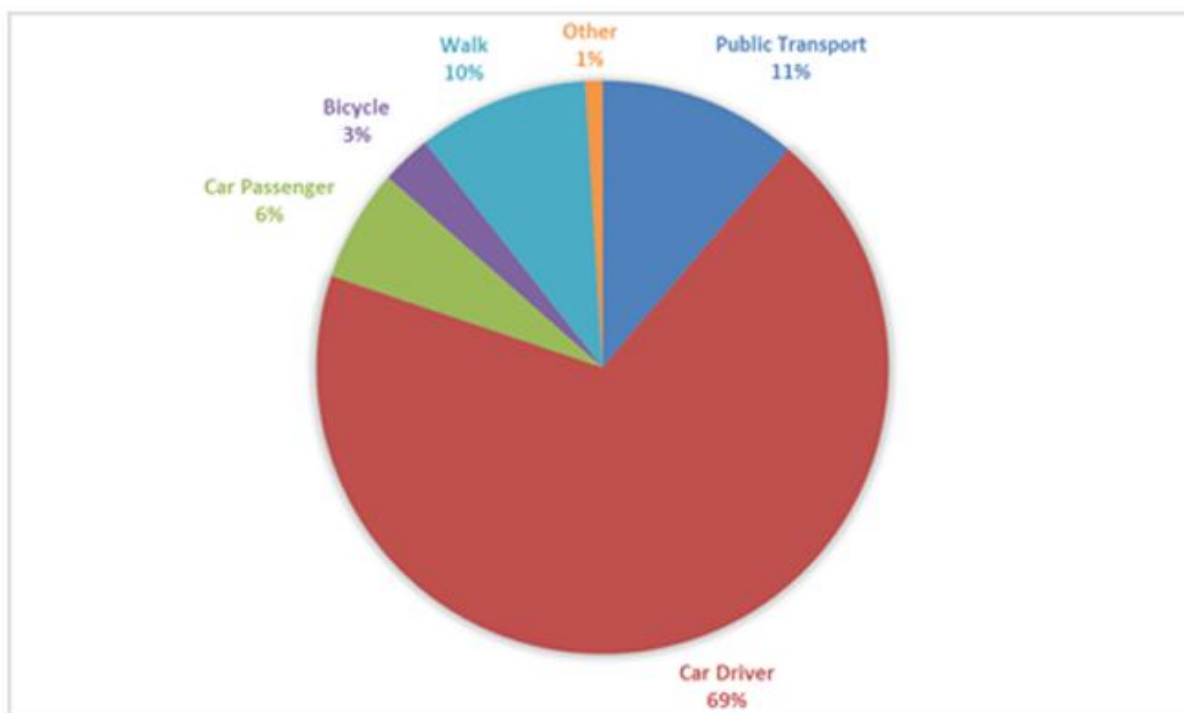


Figure 4.2 Mode of Travel to Work for People Working in Stevenage (2011 Census)

The Hertfordshire 2015 Household Survey provides a useful insight into how far people travel to work and by which mode. Of particular interest are those trips that are under 3 miles, and therefore have the easiest potential to be made by sustainable modes. Figure 4.3 illustrates the mode share of journeys to work under 3 miles.

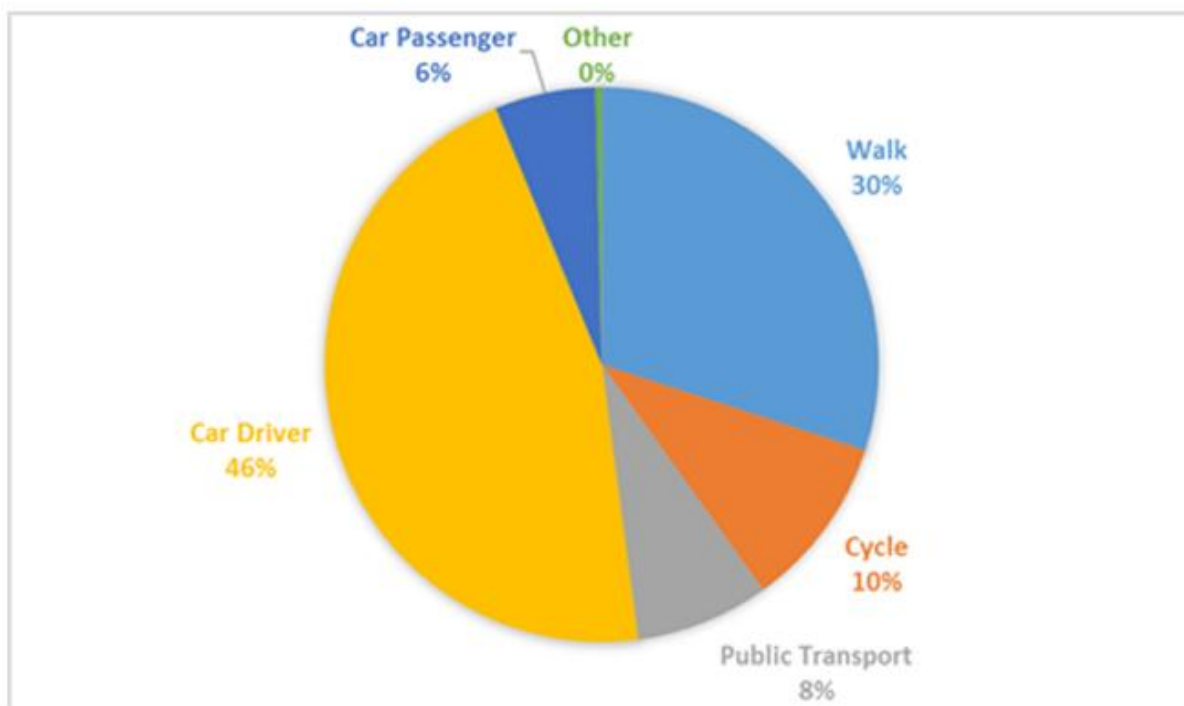


Figure 4.3 Mode of Travel for Journey to Work Trips under 3 miles

The survey showed that 22% of journeys to work in Hertfordshire are within 3 miles and that over half (52%) of these journeys are made by car. There is a significant potential for mode shift for these short trips to be made by active travel, public transport or more efficient use of the car.

Proposed Strategy

Gunnels Wood, between the A1(M) and the town centre, is by far the largest employment site in Stevenage. The area is made up of a large range of businesses, from small and medium businesses through to some very large employers including GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) and MBDA. Around 19,000 employees work on the estate for approximately 300 different businesses and it is set to intensify as part of the Local Plan.

The concentration of this many people, makes it an ideal area to target travel behaviour change through a range of travel planning measures. Major employers in this area, including GSK, are already part of the SmartGo Stevenage scheme, which offers a range of travel benefits and services to help make travel cheaper and easier for employees.

The strategy is to concentrate infrastructure and behavioural influence initiatives in these concentrated areas of employment, which include the Council office in Stevenage. There are some significant mobility benefits to be had in this way, and a strong evidential basis already in the UK for the effectiveness of this.

Education Travel Planning

Existing Situation

With regards to education trips, the Hertfordshire 2015 Household Survey shows that 40% of trips (all school ages) are made by car and the remaining 60% by non-car modes.

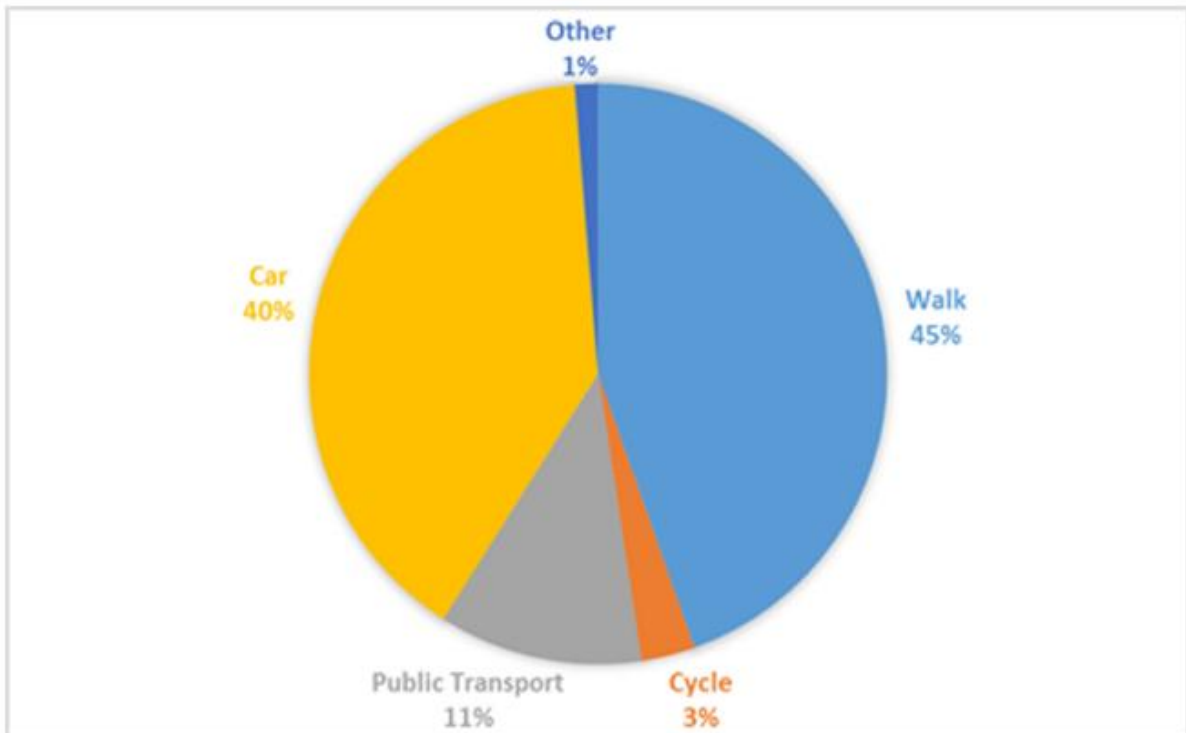


Figure 4.4 Mode of Travel for Education Trips (All School Ages)

Short car trips have the greatest propensity to change to active travel. The short educational trips (under 3 miles) make up the vast majority of education related trips (over 70%) and, 30% of these are currently made by car. Therefore, any shift away from the car for these trips would have a positive effect on travel, particularly in the morning peak period.

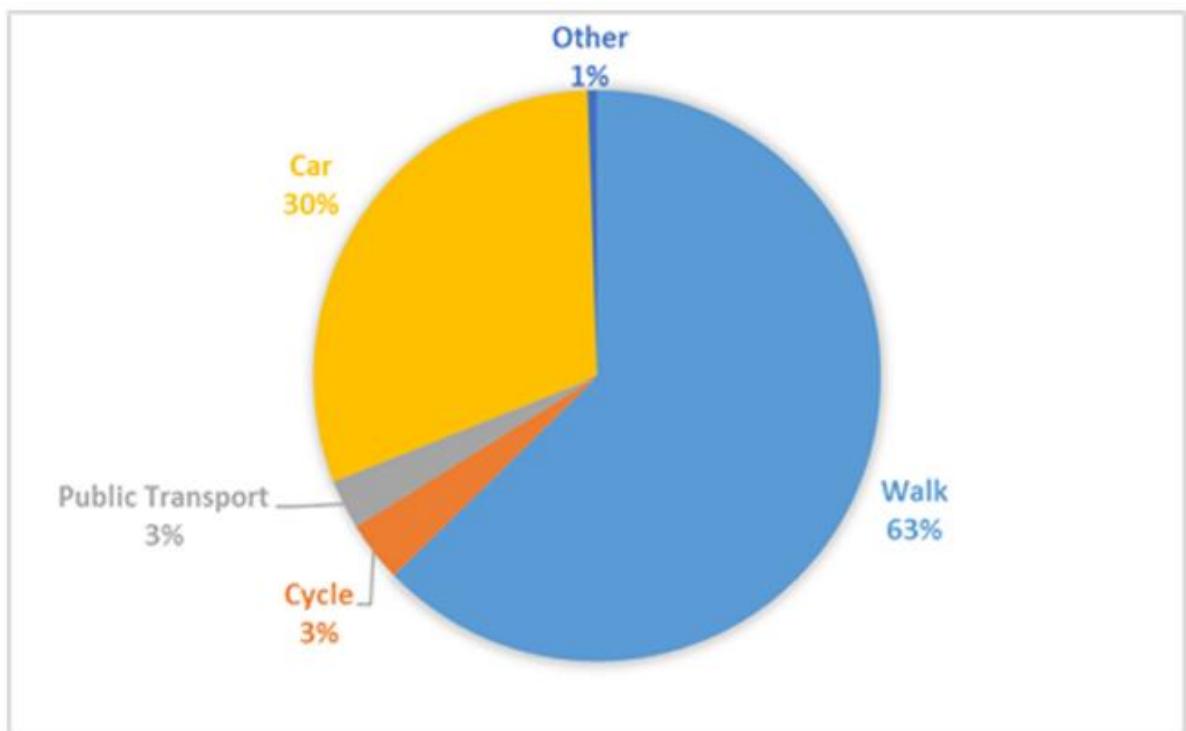


Figure 4.5 Mode of Travel for Education Trips under 3 miles

Proposed Strategy

The Transport Strategy for Stevenage will focus on encouraging a change in behaviour away from the car for education trips. There is a good evidential base¹⁵² for the effectiveness and benefits of education related interventions on school related travel, to the extent that positive behavioural initiatives can have a substantial effect on the propensity to travel to school by healthy and sustainable means. The strategy is to promote a plethora of measures, including:

Development and enforcement of School Travel Plans; Bikeability cycle training in schools; and Continued development of education facilities within easy access by non-car modes.

Highway Network Management

Proposed Strategy

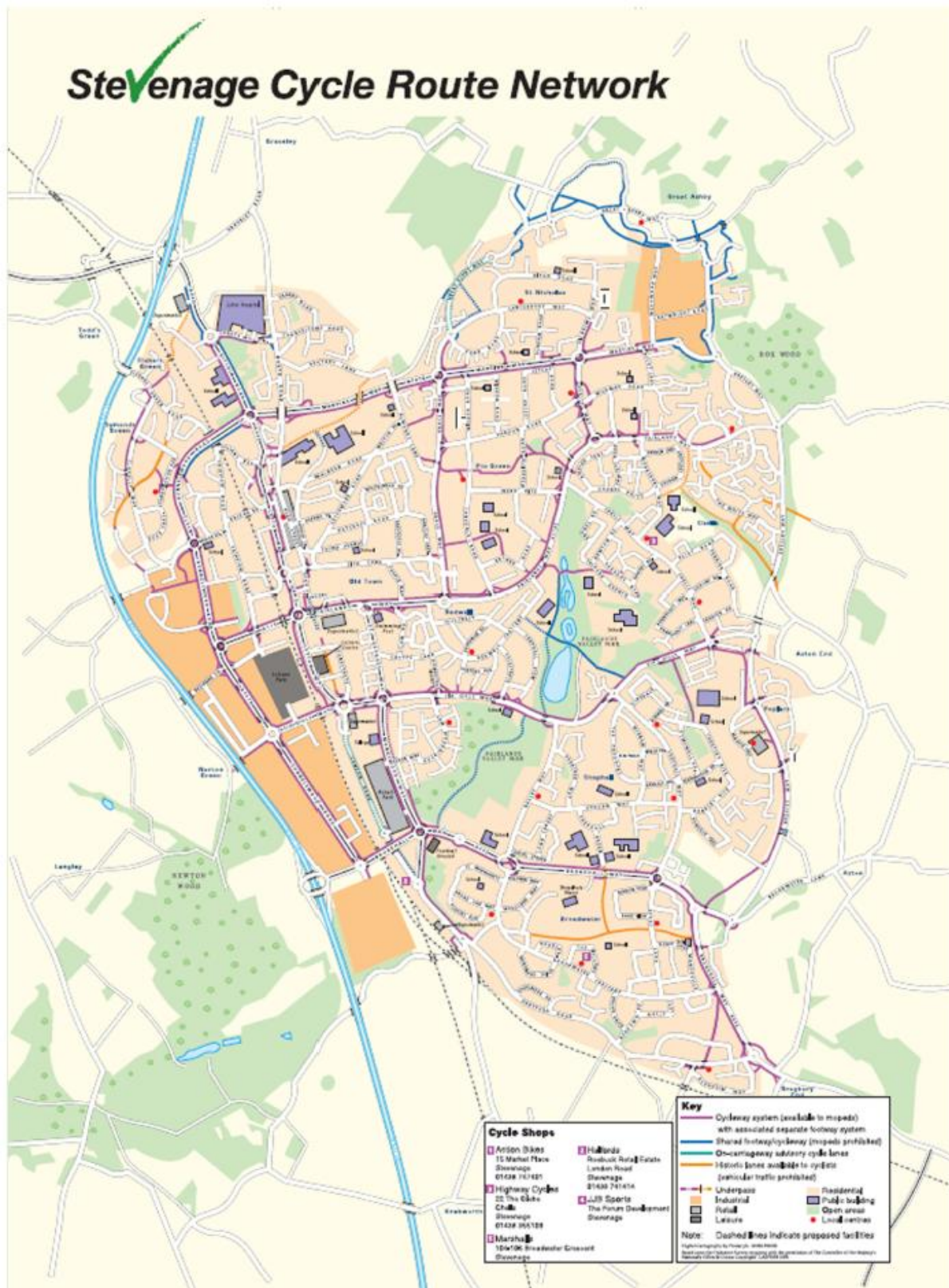
For car travel in Stevenage to be sustainable, many people will need to travel by other means. It is unrealistic to expect traffic to flow unimpeded at peak times, or to design to accommodate that desire.

The strategy is to prioritise delivery of the overall mobility network. In some cases, that might mean reallocation of road space between modes, and this may include junction or road improvements.

In terms of traffic capacity, the Council will identify pinch points on the network in the first instance, and prioritise funding for road capacity improvements to relieve those pinch points in the context of the overarching mobility strategy. The IDP identifies the pinch points currently forecast by the traffic modelling exercise and assigns costs and priorities to those measures.

¹⁵² DfT Modeshift STARS; NICE Guidance "What can local authorities achieve by encouraging walking and cycling"; Living Streets "Making the Case for Investment in the Walking Environment, A Review of the Evidence"

Appendix i: Stevenage Cycle Route Network



C Space standards and separation distances for dwellings

Space standards

Nationally described space standards are an optional Government standard that local authorities can choose to implement¹⁵³. These are summarised below

Number of bedrooms (b)	Number of bed spaces (persons)	1 storey dwellings	2 storey dwellings	3 storey dwellings	Built-in storage
1b	1p	39 / 37	N/A	N/A	1.0
	2p	50	58	N/A	1.5
2b	3p	61	70	N/A	2.0
	4p	70	79	N/A	
3b	4p	74	84	90	2.5
	5p	86	93	99	
	6p	95	102	108	
4b	5p	90	97	103	3.0
	6p	99	106	112	
	7p	108	115	121	
	8p	117	124	130	
5b	6p	103	110	116	3.5
	7p	112	119	125	
	8p	121	128	134	
6b	7p	116	123	129	4.0
	8p	125	132	138	

Table 3 Minimum gross internal floor area and storage (m²)

Separation distances

Privacy is an important aspect of residential environments and it is necessary to ensure that a reasonable degree of privacy for residents is provided, both within their habitable rooms and garden areas. The position of new dwellings, and the arrangement of their rooms and windows, should not create significant overlooking of other dwellings' windows or private garden areas, nor should they lead to any overbearing impacts or adversely affect the residential amenities of existing dwellings. Hence, the minimum separation distances set out below should be achieved unless the design of any new buildings and / or disposition of windows mitigates against any overlooking.

Similarly, extensions should be designed and orientated in relation to that of neighbouring properties so that they do not adversely affect the outlook from neighbouring dwellings or result in any significant overlooking to neighbouring houses and gardens. The minimum separation distances set out below will be equally applied to proposals for extensions:

¹⁵³ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/421515/150324_-_Nationally_Described_Space_Standard_Final_Web_version.pdf

No of storeys	Type of separation	Minimum distance (metres)
Between existing and new 2 storey or a mix of 1 and 2 storey dwellings	Back to back	25m
	Back to side	15m
Between new 2 storeys or mix of 1 and 2 storey	Back to back	20m
	Back to side	12m
Over 2 storeys between existing and new dwellings	Back to back	35m
	Back to side	25m
Between new dwellings over 2 storeys in height	Back to back	30m
	Back to side	20m

Table 4 Separation distances for dwellings

D Glossary

Accessible and adaptable dwelling: A dwelling complying with requirements M4(2) of the Building Regulations.

Active travel: Everyday journeys made by walking, wheeling (wheelchairs, scooters, adapted cycles), or cycling, aiming to make these low-carbon, healthy, and efficient transport choices for shorter trips, reducing car use and improving public health, air quality, and street life.

Aspirational home: A dwelling that complies with one of the following definitions:

Aspirational house: A house which meets all of the following criteria: (a) built as part of a small group in suburban or edge-of-town location; (b) low density, typically between 8 and 15 dwellings per hectare; (c) detached with at least four bedrooms and two bathrooms; (d) sited on a large plot with a footprint in excess of 100m² and a rear garden of at least 200m²; and (e) set back from the road and provided with at least two off-street parking spaces.

Aspirational flat: A flat which meets all of the following criteria: (a) located close to the town centre and railway station; (b) on the upper floor(s) of a multi-storey development; (c) provides significantly larger than average accommodation¹⁵⁴; and (e) internally finished to a high specification.

Assisted living housing: Housing regulated by the Care Quality Commission comprising self-contained flats where care is available 24 hours per day.

Employment uses: Uses falling within classes B2, B8 and E(g).

Extra care housing: See Assisted living housing.

Health, social and community facilities: Uses falling within classes C2, E(e), E(f) and F.2(b).

Larger HMO: Use as a sui generis house in multiple occupation by more than six residents not forming a single household.

Leisure and cultural uses: Uses falling within E(d), F.1(b), F.1(c), F.1(d), F.1(e), F.2(c) and F.2(d).

Local green jobs: Employment positions which contribute directly or indirectly towards meeting the UK's net zero emissions target and other environmental goals, such as nature restoration and mitigation against climate risks.

Major Development: Major development has the meaning given in Annex 2 to the NPPF December 2023. Householder and minor development are excluded from this definition.

¹⁵⁴ In excess of 100m² GIA for penthouse-style accommodation and in excess of 85m² GIA in all other cases.

Permitted development: Development which has planning permission by reason of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).

Regulated operational emissions: The CO2 emission rate for the building(s) determined using the Standard Assessment Procedure 10.2.

Smaller HMO: Use as a house in multiple occupation falling within class C4.

Sheltered housing: Housing with a resident warden.

Supported housing: Housing where care, support or supervision is provided to enable residents to live as independently as possible in the community.

Sui generis: A use of land not falling within any of the classes defined by the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended).

Wheelchair accessible dwelling: A dwelling complying with requirements M4(3)(2)(b) of the Building Regulations.

Wheelchair adaptable dwelling: A dwelling complying with requirements M4(3)(2)(a) of the Building Regulations.

Whole Life Carbon: Whole life carbon refers to the carbon impacts over the entire life cycle of a built asset, from its construction through to its end of life. A whole life carbon assessment (WLCA) is the calculation and reporting of the quantity of carbon impacts expected throughout all life cycle stages of a project. It also includes an assessment of the potential benefits and loads occurring beyond the system boundary.
https://www.rics.org/content/dam/ricsglobal/documents/standards/Whole_life_carbon_assessment_PS_Sept23.pdf

Partial Update of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011–2031

Main Modifications proposed by the Council to make the Local Plan sound

Stevenage Borough Council (the Council) undertook a formal review of the adopted Plan, as required by Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) (the Regulations) and concluded that only parts of the adopted Plan required updating at that time and thus only a partial update to the adopted Plan was required.

The Council's process for reaching this decision is summarised in a briefing note available on the Examination Website (CD16). The Council therefore undertook a consultation under Regulation 19 of the Regulations in November 2024 on a schedule of changes it proposed to make to update the adopted Plan (Partial Update of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011–2031 Schedule of Changes from Regulation 18 to Regulation 19) (CD2c), in other words the Council's proposed partial update.

However, the Council undertook a further consultation under Regulation 19 of the Regulations in August 2025 on an addendum which effectively set out a small number of further changes, superseding some of the changes detailed in CD2c (Partial Update of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011–2031 Schedule of Changes from Regulation 19 to Pre Submission) (CD2b).

For the avoidance of any doubt, the Inspector appointed to examine the partial update to the adopted Plan, is examining the changes proposed in CD2c except where they have been superseded by the changes proposed in CD2b. He is not examining any elements of the adopted Plan which are not being updated or in other words sections Examination of the partial update to the Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011–2031 of the adopted Plan which are not identified in CD2c or CD2b as subject to changes.

Sections of the adopted Plan which would be unchanged by the partial update are outside of the scope of the Examination. The Council has produced a consolidated document (Partial Update of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011–2031 Schedule of Changes from Adopted Local Plan to Submission Version – Changes since Adoption of Local Plan in May 2019) ([CD3](#)) which simply combines CD2c and CD2b and is intended to assist the Examination. Thus, the schedule of main modifications proposed below, following the Examination hearings must be read alongside CD3.

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

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3
MM1	001	Introduction Paragraph 1.7	Why have we carried out a <u>partial</u> review and <u>partial</u> update of the plan? 1.7A Local planning authorities are required to review their planning policies every five years to ensure that they remain fit for purpose. The Local Plan was adopted in May 2019 and the five-year period therefore elapsed in May 2024. <u>The requirement to review the plan was therefore triggered in May 2024 i.e. with just under seven years of the plan period remaining.</u> 1.7B <u>The Council carried out a full review of the plan, which revealed a number of areas where policies would benefit from updating. In light of the review, the following options were considered by the Council:</u> a) <u>Carry out a comprehensive update of the plan, with strategic policies looking ahead over the following 20 years (in effect, an entirely new Local Plan). Carry out a comprehensive update of the plan, with the plan period unchanged (a full update).</u> b) <u>Carry out a limited update of the plan, including only the changes most immediately necessary to keep the plan up-to-date and with the plan period unchanged (a partial update).</u> 1.7C <u>The Council considered that immediately proceeding to introduce a new 15-to-20-year strategic horizon was not realistic given the timetable and progress of its neighbouring authorities with their Local Plans and would have risked producing a strategy that was neither effective nor deliverable. On that basis, option (a) was discounted.</u> 1.7D <u>Whilst the picture of cross-boundary growth is largely settled for the remainder of the existing plan period up to 2031, a comprehensive update of the Local Plan as envisioned by option (b) would still have required a commensurate review of the Council's evidence base. In the Council's view, this would have amounted to an additional one to two years' worth of preparation and by the point of adoption, with so little time remaining in the plan period, the updated plan would be of limited benefit.</u>

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3
			<u>1.7E In any case, this option would have been subject to the same constraints in terms of updates to strategic policies as a more limited update of the plan. For these reasons, option (b) was discounted.</u> <u>1.7F The Council therefore decided to proceed with option (c) – a partial update of the Local Plan, with the changes limited to those most urgently necessary to ensure that the plan remains up-to-date and effective in dealing with the most pressing issues facing the borough. At the same time, the Council also committed to producing an entirely new Local Plan immediately upon the conclusion of the update process.</u> <u>1.7G This approach ensures that the most important elements of the current plan are kept up to date now, avoiding an extended period during which key policies would otherwise be out of date. It also enables the Council to align a new plan with the timetables of its neighbours and the emerging work on a joint strategic plan for the region.</u> <u>1.7HB</u> The review identified that the spatial strategy remains fit for purpose but a number of individual policies required updating. Consequently, a partial update was carried out to address those issues. The key changes are as follows: • Climate Change: The updated plan takes a stronger approach to climate change, with a new strategic climate change policy, a new chapter of detailed climate change policies, and revised policies relating to sustainable drainage and flood risk. • Station Gateway: The detailed policy for the Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area has been updated to reflect the Station Gateway Area Action Plan. • Housing: The requirements for accessible and adaptable housing have been updated to reflect the latest evidence of need. • Use Classes: Changes have been made throughout the plan to reflect the changes to the Use Classes Order, which came into effect in 2020.

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3
MM2	007	Paragraph 4.6	4.6 Our strategy sets out how 7,600 homes will be built in and around Stevenage between 2011 and 2031 (4,956 homes between 2024 and 2031). This will mean that we can meet our objectively assessed housing needs within our own administrative boundaries, although we maintain an on-going dialogue with our neighbours on this topic.
MM3	008 010	Policy SP1 Paragraphs 5.1F and 5.1H	Policy SP1: Climate Change We will require development to contribute to both mitigating and adapting to climate change. The extent to which developments reduce greenhouse gas emissions, sequester and store <u>carbon</u>, consider the <u>carbon stock and value on existing land</u>, prevent overheating and flooding and its negative effects, use water and other resources efficiently, produce clean energy, and contribute to a green local economy will be considered in the assessment of each planning application. Developments which demonstrate positive consideration of these issues will be supported. We will: a. apply emission reduction targets to <u>major</u> developments according to their scale, supporting developments that achieve these targets by reducing overall energy demand, supplying energy efficiently, and generating ultra-low and zero carbon energy; b. require developments to prioritise active travel and public transport by providing the infrastructure necessary to maximise their use; c. ~~ensure that any on-site shortfall against emission reduction targets is offset by an alternative off-site proposal;~~ d. ~~c.~~ apply water usage targets to developments, seek rainwater harvesting and grey water recycling, and encourage water neutrality; e. ~~d.~~ encourage the sustainable use of all other resources throughout the development life-cycle;

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3
			~~f. e.~~ support the use of decentralised energy networks, district heat networks, and intelligent energy systems in developments; ~~g. f.~~ support the use of ultra-low and zero carbon combined heat and power systems in developments; ~~h. g.~~ strongly support development proposals whose primary purpose is to generate ultra-low and zero carbon energy with a surplus to be injected into the national grid; ~~i.~~ protect the borough's significant carbon sinks, support the creation of new carbon sinks, and encourage developments to deliver net gains in carbon sequestration; ~~j. h.~~ encourage urban greening, particularly through the use of green roofs and walls; ~~k. i.~~ promote a green economy through the provision of local green jobs, local food production, and supporting the principles of a circular economy; ~~l. j.~~ ensure site waste is disposed of as sustainably as possible; and ~~m. k.~~ work collaboratively with neighbouring authorities to exploit cross-boundary opportunities to mitigate and adapt to climate change. 5.1F The planning system can aid these efforts by ensuring that places are designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. To this end, Policy SP1 promotes the sustainable use of resources, sustainable travel, green energy production, <u>and</u> energy efficiency and ~~carbon sequestration~~, as well as outright emission reduction targets. 5.1H Development proposals will be expected to contribute positively to mitigating and adapting to climate change. Planning applications will be assessed against the detailed policies in the new climate change chapter of this plan and applications which fail to make an acceptable <u>appropriate</u> contribution will be refused <u>supported</u>.

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3
MM4	013	Paragraph 5.14	5.14 The definition of “employment uses” is provided in appendix D to this plan. <u>In planning, employment land usually refers to the following uses and is provided in appendix D:</u> • <u>Class E(g)(i) - offices</u> • <u>Class E(g)(ii) - research and development</u> • <u>Class E(g)(iii) - light industry</u> • <u>B2 - general industry; and</u> • <u>B8 - storage and distribution.</u>
MM5	018 019 021	Policy SP4 Paragraph 5.35 Paragraph 5.38	Policy SP4: A vital Town Centre We will make provision for the type and range of retail facilities that are required to support Stevenage’s role, following the sequential test and the Borough’s retail hierarchy. We will: - Maintain the current retail hierarchy: - Stevenage Town Centre; - High Street, Major Centre; - Poplars, District Centre; - Seven Local Centres; and - Seven Neighbourhood Centres - Promote the comprehensive and co-ordinated regeneration of Stevenage Central (Town Centre plus adjoining sites). This will provide for in the order of 4,700m² of additional comparison retail floorspace, 3,000 new homes and an improved range of shopping, bars, restaurants, leisure, community, civic and cultural facilities. A n-extended-and-regenerated train station will be the focus of an enlarged Stevenage Central area, within which six Major Opportunity Areas will be designated to promote distinct mixed-use redevelopment schemes.

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3
			c. Retain the primary retail frontages in both the Town Centre Shopping Area and the High Street Shopping Area as the focus of major comparison shopping. c. d. Support the provision of up to 7,600 m² net of additional convenience floorspace within the Borough boundary by 2031 to meet the needs of the expanded town. This will include: i. 1,500m² for extensions to existing centres in the retail hierarchy, then other stores in accordance with the sequential test; ii. A Local Centre in the west of Stevenage development in the order of 500m² to meet the day-to-day needs of the residents of the new neighbourhood; iii. A Local Centre in the north of Stevenage development in the order of 500m² to meet the day-to-day needs of the residents of the new neighbourhood; iv. A Neighbourhood Centre in the south-east of Stevenage development of no more than 500m² with a convenience store and other related small-scale Use Class E(a) shops sufficient to meet the day-to-day needs of the residents of the new neighbourhood; v. A new allocation for a large new store, in the order of 4,600m² net convenience goods floorspace and 920m² net comparison goods floorspace, at Graveley Road to meet identified needs post-2023. d. e—Tightly regulate new out-of-centre comparison goods floorspace and refuse the relaxation or removal of conditions on the type of goods that can be sold from existing out-of-centre comparison retail units. 5.35 Our evidence studies show that there is a projected need for 4,700m² of additional comparison retail floorspace during the lifetime of this plan. In accordance with the retail hierarchy, and to support the regeneration of the Town Centre, this floorspace will be directed to the Town Centre. The projected significant increase in the resident population in and around the Town Centre may support some further growth in comparison floorspace: in which case, this will be directed towards the creation of additional floorspace in appropriate locations within the Stevenage Central area. In order to avoid potential adverse

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3
			impacts upon the town centre, this area will be re-examined at a Full Review to ensure existing and future need for comparison has been updated to reflect changes since the Plan was adopted. 5.38 Provision is made for a major new convenience store on Graveley Road in the north of the Borough (on the existing garden centre site) to help to meet identified needs towards the middle of the plan period. In order to avoid potential adverse impacts upon the existing retail hierarchy, this site will be re-examined at a full review to ensure existing and future need for convenience has been updated to reflect changes since the Plan was adopted.
MM6	024	Policy SP6 New Paragraph 5.56A	Policy SP6: Sustainable transport We will create the conditions for a significant increase in active travel and the use of public transport <u>and reduce the need to travel by directing new development to the most accessible locations</u>. We will <u>achieve this by</u>: a. ~~reduce the need to travel by directing new development to the most accessible locations;~~ a. <u>requiring</u> developments to first prioritise active travel in the layout of sites and by; b. <u>providing connections to surrounding pedestrian and cycle networks and requiring developments to prioritise accessibility to public transport with layouts that maximise the catchment area for public transport services and infrastructure that encourages their use;</u> c. <u>requiring</u> developments to provide appropriate cycle parking and supporting facilities, having regard to the supplementary planning documents and relevant Hertfordshire County Council guidance; d. <u>requiring</u> developments to then prioritise accessibility to public transport with layouts that maximise the catchment area for public transport services and infrastructure that encourages their use;

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3
			e. <u>supporting</u> the provision of new high-quality sustainable transport facilities <u>identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan</u>, including: i. schemes identified in local transport plans and other relevant plans and strategies; ii. new pedestrian and cycle links, particularly between the town centre, the Gunnels Wood employment area, and Old Town; iii. a new borough-wide cycle hire scheme; ~~iv. a new bus termini and waiting facilities; and~~ iv. a remodelled railway station that reflects Stevenage's position on the network and wider regeneration ambitions; f. <u>reducing</u> car dependency by limiting the provision of car parking according to site accessibility; ~~g. refuse permission where development proposals fail to provide any relevant plans or assessments relating to transport;~~ ~~h. seek any necessary developer contributions, in accordance with Policy SP5, to achieve all of the above.~~ <u>Development proposals should provide any relevant plans or assessments relating to transport necessary to the determination of the application.</u> <u>The Council will seek and to seek where required, any necessary developer contributions, in accordance with Policy SP5, to achieve all of the above.</u> <u>5.56A Active Travel comprises everyday journeys made by walking, wheeling (wheelchairs, scooters, adapted cycles), or cycling, aiming to make these low-carbon, healthy, and efficient transport choices for shorter trips, reducing car use and improving public health, air quality, and street life. Active travel is about creating communities where walking, wheeling, and cycling are safe, easy, and attractive alternatives to driving for everyday trips.</u>

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3
MM7	027	Policy SP7	Policy SP7: High quality homes This Local Plan supports significant growth in and around Stevenage to help meet needs across the market area. We will: a. Provide at least 7,600 new homes within Stevenage Borough between 2011 and 2031, ~~of which no fewer than 4,956 will be provided between 2024 and 2031.~~ b. Deliver these through the sites and broad locations identified in this plan that allow for: i. <u>2,950</u> new homes in and around the Town Centre; ii. <u>1,350</u> new homes in a new neighbourhood on undeveloped land to the west of the town within the Borough boundary; iii. <u>1,350</u> new homes to the north and south-east of the town on land removed from the Green Belt; iv. <u>1,950</u> new homes elsewhere in the Borough; and v. 11 new, permanent Gypsy and Traveller pitches on a new site close to Junction 8 of the A1(M). c. Ensure at least 60% of new homes completed within the Borough boundary between 2011 and 2031 are on previously developed land. d. Make sure there is always enough land to build homes for the next five years. e. Support applications for housing development on unallocated sites where they are in suitable locations and will not exceed our environmental capacity. f. Build a full range of homes in terms of tenure, type and size. This plan positively addresses housing needs and existing imbalances in the housing stock by setting targets for: i. At least 20% of all new homes over the plan period to be Affordable Housing with an aspiration to deliver up to 40% affordable housing where viability permits;
	028	Paragraph 5.67	
	029	Paragraph 5.68	
	031	Paragraph 5.68A Paragraphs 5.73 to 5.76	

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3
			ii. An appropriate mix of housing sizes, in line with the most up-to-date evidence of need; and iii. At least 3% of new homes over the plan period to be 'aspirational' to deliver a more balanced housing stock; and iv. At least 1% of new homes on the urban extensions to be self-build. g. Supplement these homes through the provision of up to 200 bed spaces in supported accommodation subject to up-to-date evidence of need; and h. Work with North Hertfordshire District Council and, if necessary, East Hertfordshire District Council to ensure any homes provided on the edge of Stevenage but outside the Borough boundary are successfully integrated into the urban fabric of the town. 5.67 The NPPF says that plans should normally meet the full, objectively assessed needs (OAN) for market and affordable housing in the housing market area. When the local plan was originally adopted in 2019, our evidence identified a requirement for Stevenage of 7,300 homes over the period 2011-2031. This took <u>takes</u> into account migration trends over a 10-year period and also includes <u>d</u> adjustments in response to market signals in line with Government guidance. 5.68 <u>This plan sets a target slightly above the identified level of OAN. This variously takes into account:</u> <u>The acute need for affordable housing in the town. A modest increase in the target allows more homes in response to this pressure and particularly reflects the Council's emerging housebuilding programme which will deliver up to 100% affordable homes on sites in the Borough;</u> <u>The fact that as people live for longer, and live in their own homes for longer, it may be appropriate to assume that more of their needs will be met in the normal housing stock;</u> <u>Official Government household projections for the Borough;</u> <u>The need to ensure development viability and set a challenging target that provides a clear signal that we are serious about delivering regeneration and change in the Borough; and</u> <u>What we consider to be a reasonable and achievable rate of housing delivery.</u>

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			• <u>The partial review and update of the local plan identifies a requirement for 4,956 homes to be delivered over the remainder of the plan period (to 2031). This figure represents the overall plan period target of 7,600 homes minus the net housing completions from 2011 to 2024.</u> 5.68A The housing requirement of the Plan is significantly above what would be required, using the National Planning Policy Framework's standard housing methodology calculation. 5.73 Our most recent housing land study identifies sufficient sites within the Borough to meet our housing requirement to 2031. In trying to meet these needs, whilst ensuring sustainable development, we have chosen sites for development in the order shown below. The sites allocated in the 2019 version of the plan remain sufficient to meet our housing requirement to 2031. In trying to meet these needs, whilst ensuring sustainable development, we have chosen sites for development in the order shown below: • Previously developed sites • Greenfield sites within the existing urban area • Greenfield sites outside of the existing urban area • Green Belt sites 5.74 A technical paper has been produced to explain how we have decided which sites from the land availability assessment to take forward and allocate within this plan. ~~how these sites will continue to meet the borough's needs up to 2031.~~ <u>5.75 Since 2011, 593 homes have been completed, and a further 1,758 are already in the planning process. This means that land for a further 5,249 homes need to be identified.</u>

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			<u>Locations</u>	<u>Minimum target 2011-2031</u>	<u>Already completed or permitted</u>	<u>Minimum still to be planned for to 2031</u>
			<u>In and around the town centre</u>	<u>2,950</u>	<u>950</u>	<u>2,000</u>
			<u>New neighbourhood to the west of the town</u>	<u>1,350</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1,350</u>
			<u>New neighbourhoods to the north and south-east on land removed from the Green Belt</u>	<u>1,350</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1,350</u>
			<u>Elsewhere within the Borough</u>	<u>1,950</u>	<u>1,401</u>	<u>549</u>
		<u>5.76 National guidance encourages the reuse of land that has been previously developed (brownfield land). Since the start of the plan period around 85% of new homes and planning permissions (including prior approvals) have been on previously developed land (PDL). We also plan to redevelop a number of large PDL sites in the future, including the Town Centre and some of the Neighbourhood Centres. However, Stevenage has a limited supply of these sites, so we will also require a number of greenfield sites to be developed. Our evidence suggests that just over 45% of future housing could be built on PDL. Overall, we expect that approximately 60% of all housing completions over the period 2011-2031 will be on PDL. National guidance encourages the reuse of land that has been previously developed (brownfield land). We plan to redevelop a number of large PDL sites in the future, including the Town Centre and some of the Neighbourhood Centres. However, Stevenage has a limited supply of these sites, so we will also require a number of greenfield sites to be developed. Our evidence suggests that just over 43% of</u>				

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			<u>future housing could be built on PDL. Overall, we expect that approximately 43% of all housing completions over the period 2011 – 2031 will be on PDL.</u>
MM8	036	Policy SP11	Policy SP11: Flooding, <u>drainage</u> and pollution We will work to minimise flood risk, <u>surface water run-off</u> and all forms of pollution. We will: a. direct development to areas at the lowest risk of flooding through the application of a sequential approach; b. determine planning applications in accordance with national flood risk planning policies; c. ensure development utilises sustainable drainage systems wherever possible, with a preference for the most sustainable, surface SuDS features; d. recognise the multifunctional benefits of SuDS; i. protect existing flood storage reservoirs and require new flood storage reservoirs to be provided where appropriate; j. protect existing watercourses, including requiring their re-naturalisation, where appropriate; and k. ensure that development does not result in unacceptable harm to human health or the natural environment as a result of pollution.

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MM9	038 039	Policy CC1 Paragraphs 6A.1 to 6A.11	6A Climate change Efficiency Policy CC1: Energy efficiency Development proposals must demonstrate how they will maximise reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, with consideration for the following: <u>Where appropriate, major development proposals should aim to achieve net zero regulated operational emissions, with consideration for the following:</u> a. <u>The provision of demand-side energy efficiency measures;</u> b. <u>The provision of supply-side energy efficiency measures; and</u> c. <u>The adoption of ultra-low and zero carbon energy generation.</u> <u>The council will apply Policy CC1 to decisions on planning applications flexibly, in recognition of the fact that it may not always be appropriate to achieve net zero emissions.</u> <u>Any development proposal designed to be whole-life carbon net zero will be strongly supported.</u> ÷ <u>Major development</u> ~~Major development proposals (including large scale major development proposals) must achieve net zero regulated operational emissions.~~

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			At the application stage, an energy statement must be submitted to demonstrate how the proposal will meet the net zero target. Post permission, planning conditions will be used to ensure that the net zero target is met in practice. <u>Large scale major development</u> Outside of the town centre large scale major development proposals must also achieve net zero emissions during construction and demolition i.e be whole life carbon net zero. At the application stage, an energy statement, which includes a whole life cycle carbon (WLC) assessment, must be submitted to demonstrate how the target will be met. Post permission, planning conditions will be used to secure an updated WLC assessment, using actual emissions figures. <u>Carbon offsetting</u> Where it is clearly demonstrated that a development proposal cannot fully meet the relevant target on site, the shortfall may be offset by an alternative off site proposal but only where the proposal has already been identified and delivery is certain. <u>6A.1</u> The council is committed to ensuring that Stevenage is net-zero carbon by 2030. Homes and workplaces account for a significant proportion of the borough's emissions and minimising these will be essential to meeting the 2030 target. For this reason, new <u>major</u> developments must should aim to meet the emissions targets set by Policy CG1 <u>achieve net zero regulated operational emissions where it is appropriate to do so.</u>

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			<u>6A.2 For the purposes of Policy CC1, “major development” has the meaning given in Annex 2 to the NPPF December 2023. Householder and minor development are excluded from the policy.</u> The design, construction and operation of new buildings should be informed by the principles set out at the start of the policy. The priority is to implement demand-side efficiency measures before addressing supply-side efficiency measures and the production of clean energy. <u>6A.3 “Net zero regulated operational emissions” will be achieved when the CO₂ emission rate for the development is equivalent to a 100% improvement on the Target Emission Rate determined using the Standard Assessment Procedure 10.2.</u> ~~Demand-side energy efficiency measures reduce the overall amount of energy required to operate and maintain a development. This includes energy conservation, monitoring, and the adoption of efficient design principles (e.g. those relating to the form, fabric and orientation of buildings).~~ <u>6A.4 The design, construction and operation of new buildings should be informed by the principles set out at the start of the policy. In achieving net zero regulated operational emissions, the priority is <u>should be</u> to implement demand-side efficiency measures before addressing supply-side efficiency measures and <u>finally</u>, the production of clean energy.</u> <u>6A.7 For the majority of developments, the production of clean energy is likely to involve the installation of solar panels but in some instances, there may be feasible alternatives. Where solar panels are considered, developers should be mindful of the benefits of combining them with green roofs to create bio-solar roofs.</u> ~~In practice, ensuring that the policy is effective will require the reporting of energy demand and emissions post construction. This should be done once for each development (or phase of development, where appropriate) at the earliest practicable opportunity following completion.~~

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			<u>6A.8 Applicants for major development proposals will be expected to include details of how their proposal will comply with Policy CC1 as part of their submission. Major development proposals will be required to provide an energy statement which shows how the overall target net zero regulated operational emissions or a justified lower standard of operational emissions will be met achieved and the contribution made by each of the measures considerations listed under points (a) to (c) of the policy.</u> ~~Where the targets set by Policy CC1 cannot be wholly met on site, the calculated shortfall may be offset on a different site. However, the council will only consider this where the offsetting scheme has already been identified and its delivery can, for all intents and purposes, be guaranteed.~~ <u>6A.9 The council will apply Policy CC1 to decisions on planning applications flexibly, in recognition of the fact that it may not always be appropriate to achieve net zero emissions. This will include instances where doing so would not be technically feasible, would not be financially viable, or would otherwise compromise the delivery of sustainable development.</u> ~~If permission is granted for a proposal, planning conditions and/or a legal agreement will be used to secure any measures agreed at the application stage.~~ <u>6A.10 The council will also support any development which is designed to be whole life carbon net zero. This is achieved when a development results in net zero greenhouse gas emissions over its entire life and includes operational emissions as well as the emissions arising from construction and demolition.</u> <u>6A.11 Applicants who wish to demonstrate that a development will be whole life carbon net zero should do so by submitting a whole life carbon assessment produced in accordance with a nationally recognised standard (e.g. the RICS WLCA Standard).</u>

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3
MM10	040	Policy CC2	Policy CC2: Heating and cooling <u>Where appropriate, all development proposals should minimise demand for energy-dependent air conditioning systems, with consideration for the following:</u> a. Balancing solar gain and solar shading b. Minimising internal heat generation c. Managing the heat within the building d. Providing passive ventilation e. Providing mechanical ventilaton ~~Major development proposals must demonstrate how buildings will be heated and cooled as part of an energy statement. Permission will be refused for proposals which rely on energy dependent cooling systems unless it is demonstrated that their use is essential.~~ <u>The council will apply Policy CC2 to decisions on planning applications flexibly, in recognition of the fact that it may not always be appropriate to minimise demand for active cooling systems. This will include instances where alternatives are not technically feasible, would not be financially viable, or would otherwise compromise the delivery of sustainable development.</u> 6A.1211 Climate change means Stevenage is already experiencing higher temperatures compared to the long-term average and more frequent severe heat events. For the majority of people, the impact of this is feeling uncomfortable or being unable to sleep but for vulnerable people, the impacts can be much more serious. <u>These impacts are often compounded by the urban heat island effect, where concentrations of buildings, hard surfacing and waste heat lead to increased local temperatures.</u> It is important that new development is designed to mitigate this <u>these</u> risks. 6A.1312 ~~Active Air conditioning~~ systems have significant energy requirements and also require maintenance <u>typically require significant amounts of energy to operate and thereby contribute to</u>
	041	Paragraphs 6A.11 to 6A.20	

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			<u>greenhouse gas emissions. They also usually expel waste heat to the external environment, which exacerbates the urban heat island effect. In this way, use of mechanical cooling systems can create a feedback loop, whereby higher temperatures drive greater cooling demand, further increasing emissions and local heat stress. In addition, mechanical cooling systems require regular maintenance and replacement over the life of a building, resulting in ongoing resource use.</u> 6A.14~~29~~ For these reasons, they <u>air conditioning systems</u> are <u>usually</u> not <u>the most</u> sustainable <u>cooling</u> solution. Instead, <u>the risk of overheating should, first and foremost, be mitigated through building design</u> <u>The most sustainable approach to managing overheating is usually to reduce cooling demand at source through passive design measures.</u> 6A.15 ~~13~~The impacts of excessive cold can be just as serious as those of excessive heat and it is therefore important that buildings are suitably warm during periods of colder temperatures. Designing buildings to be cool during the summer only to require additional energy for heating during the winter would be counterproductive. 6A.16 ~~14~~Therefore, the challenge is to ensure that buildings remain comfortable and safe throughout the year, including during periods of extreme temperatures, <u>without increasing whilst minimising energy demand for energy and other resources.</u> Policy CC2 explains how new development should approach this challenge. 6A.17 ~~15~~The priority should be to balance the warming effects of the sun (i.e. solar gain) and the cooling effects of shade (i.e. solar shading). This can be done through careful consideration of building orientation, building fabric, and fenestration. High-albedo materials can be used to reflect sunlight where necessary, while green infrastructure, such as green roofs and walls, can also be used to great effect, acting as insulation during winter and providing cooling through evapotranspiration during summer.

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			~~6A.18~~ ¹⁶Following this, consideration should be given to minimising internal heat generation. This can be achieved through energy efficiency, which will limit the amount of waste energy being lost as heat. ~~6A.19~~ ¹⁷The heat within buildings can be managed effectively through the use of high ceilings and exposed internal thermal mass. Both of these measures make buildings take longer to heat up, making them less susceptible to sudden temperature shocks. ~~6A.20~~ ¹⁸For ventilation, passive or mechanical methods may be appropriate, depending on the approach to building design and site context. In any case, single-aspect dwellings should still be avoided as far as possible. ~~6A.19~~ Policy CC2 recognises that in some instances, the use of active cooling systems may be unavoidable. This may include healthcare and laboratory settings, where precise temperature control is essential to the use. In these circumstances, the cooling systems should ideally be designed to reuse the waste heat that they produce. ~~6A.21~~ The council also recognises that many of the borough's existing buildings were constructed at a time when the risk of overheating was not a significant design consideration and as a result, may be vulnerable to higher summer temperatures. In these circumstances, Policy CC2 seeks to ensure that passive alternatives, such as shutters or improved glazing, are considered ahead of mechanical cooling systems. However, it is not intended as a prohibition of such systems where they are genuinely necessary to maintain safe and comfortable living conditions:- ~~6A.22~~ ¹⁹In all cases where mechanical cooling systems are installed, these circumstances, the cooling systems <u>they</u> should ideally be designed to reuse <u>any</u> waste heat that they produce. ~~6A.23~~ ²⁰ For major development proposals, applicants will be expected <u>should</u> include details of how Policy CC2 will be complied with as part of an energy statement at the point of application submission.

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			Applicants f For householder and minor development proposals, <u>a shorter technical note is likely to be more appropriate, and applicants need only provide this information if the proposals involve mechanical cooling.</u> will not need to submit an energy statement but will still be expected to comply with the policy by taking account of heating and cooling in the design of developments and avoiding reliance on energy dependent cooling systems.
MM11	042 043	Policy CC3 Paragraphs 6A.23 to 6A.27	Policy CC3: Water efficiency Development proposals involving the creation of new dwellings must ensure that water consumption does not exceed 110 litres per person per day, including external water use. <u>Where appropriate,</u> development proposals involving the creation of new dwellings must additionally incorporate <u>should also provide</u> for rainwater harvesting schemes unless there is a clear and convincing reasons for not doing so. <u>Where appropriate,</u> all non-residential development must <u>should</u> provide for the recycling of grey water unless there are clear and convincing reasons for not doing so. <u>The Council will apply Policy CC3, insofar as it relates to rainwater harvesting and grey water recycling, to decisions on planning applications flexibly, in recognition of the fact that it may not always be appropriate for development to provide for such systems.</u> <u>Where appropriate,</u> development proposals which demonstrate water neutrality will be strongly supported.

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			<u>6A.24</u> 6A.21 Stevenage lies in an area of severe water stress and water consumption is above the national average. With a growing population, it is therefore essential that we use our limited water resources more efficiently. For this reason, new development must comply with Policy CC3. <u>6A.25</u> 6A.22 Proposals for new dwellings must ensure that wholesome water consumption does not exceed 110 litres per person per day. This aligns with the Building Regulations optional requirement G2(2)(b). Where planning permission is granted, planning conditions will be used to ensure that this target is met. <u>6A.26</u> 6A.23 ~~Where appropriate, proposals for new dwellings must also incorporate~~ <u>should provide for rainwater harvesting, which is typically achieved by storing the water captured by gutters in a water butt schemes unless there are clear and convincing reasons for not doing so. This may include instances where it is exceptionally difficult to install or impractical to maintain. Rainwater harvesting reduces demand on mains water supplies by substituting potable water with collected rainfall for appropriate non-potable uses, helping to conserve water resources and improve resilience to drought. By capturing water at source, it also reduces surface water runoff, easing pressure on drainage networks and lowering the risk of flooding.</u> <u>6A.27</u> 6A.24 ~~Where appropriate, all non-residential development must~~ <u>should provide for the recycling of grey water, which means treating the relatively clean wastewater from sources like basins, showers and laundry and re-using it for non-potable uses. Grey water recycling reduces demand on mains water supplies by reusing water that would otherwise be discharged to the sewer, helping to conserve water resources and improve resilience to water scarcity. It can significantly lower potable water consumption in buildings with high water use, reducing pressure on water infrastructure and associated energy use for water treatment and pumping. By decreasing wastewater volumes, grey water recycling can also reduce loads on sewerage networks unless there are clear and convincing reasons for not doing so. The council will consider this in the same way as rainwater harvesting for residential developments.</u>

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			<u>6A.28 6A.25 The council will apply Policy CC3, insofar as it relates to rainwater harvesting and grey water recycling, to decisions on planning applications flexibly, in recognition of the fact that it may not always be appropriate for development to provide for such systems. This will include instances where it is not technically feasible, would not be financially viable, or would otherwise compromise the delivery of sustainable development. For the avoidance of doubt, financial cost will not, in and of itself, be accepted as a reason for failing to install rainwater harvesting or grey water recycling schemes. However, where the cost of installing these systems would demonstrably compromise other objectives in this plan (i.e. where a fully policy-compliant development is not viable), the council will seek to take a flexible and balanced approach to the requirements of Policy CC3.</u> <u>6A.29 6A.26 Notwithstanding the mandatory requirements of the policy, all types of development are encouraged to limit water consumption and incorporate both rainwater harvesting and greywater recycling as far as possible. Water neutrality is achieved when the total water demand arising from new development is equal to or less than savings delivered by offsetting measures within the same water resource zone. The entirety of Stevenage Borough falls within the same water resource zone: WRZ 3 Lee in the South-East Region. Where a proposal can demonstrate water neutrality (i.e. not increasing demand for water abstraction above existing levels), the council will strongly support it by attributing weight in favour of granting permission.</u> <u>6A.27 Where planning permission is granted, planning conditions will be used to secure any rainwater harvesting or greywater recycling measures agreed at the application stage.</u>

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MM12	044	Policy CC4	Policy CC4: Energy infrastructure <u>Where appropriate</u>, development proposals which create, utilise, or facilitate connection to decentralised energy networks (DENs) or district heat networks (DHNs) will be strongly supported. <u>Where appropriate, development proposals which incorporate</u> The use of ultra-low and <u>or</u> zero-carbon combined heat and power (CHP) systems, <u>or Intelligent Energy Systems (IES)</u> will also be strongly supported. <u>Where appropriate</u>, developments that <u>which</u> produce local ultra-low and <u>or</u> zero-carbon renewable energy with surplus injected into the grid will <u>also</u> be strongly supported. The implementation of Intelligent Energy Systems (IES) is strongly encouraged. <u>6A.30</u> 6A.28 Almost all of Stevenage's energy needs are currently met from outside of the borough, with electricity imported via the National Grid and pipelines supplying natural gas for heating. Work is underway to decarbonise the National Grid but this is not expected to be completed until 2035 and at present, only about 40% of UK electricity comes from renewable sources. It will be impossible to decarbonise heating without moving away from natural gas. <u>6A.31</u> 6A.29 For these reasons, the council will strongly support development proposals that incorporate sustainable energy infrastructure. This includes DENs, DHNs, ultra-low and zero carbon CHPs, and renewable energy production which generates a surplus. Where these are proposed, the council will apply weight in favour of granting planning permission. <u>6A.32</u> 6A.30 It is recognised that any large-scale proposals for renewable energy generation are likely to be located beyond the borough boundary. The council will, in principle, be supportive of such schemes
	045	Paragraphs 6A.28 to 6A.31	

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			and will seek to work with neighbouring authorities, energy companies and developers to implement any necessary supporting infrastructure within the borough boundary. <u>6A.33</u> ~~6A.34~~ The council also strongly encourages developers to incorporate IES in their proposals. These are combinations of technologies which allow for the monitoring and management of energy usage, similar to smart meters but with a far greater level of detail. IES therefore acts as a tool to help understand and then reduce energy usage.
MM13	046 047	Policy CC5 Paragraphs 6A.32 to 6A.34	Policy ~~CC5~~: Carbon sinks ~~Development proposals should not result in the loss or deterioration of significant carbon sinks. Development proposals which deliver net gains in carbon sequestration and storage through the enhancement of existing carbon sinks or the provision of new carbon sinks will be strongly supported.~~ ~~6A.32 A carbon sink is anything which absorbs more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere than it releases. In Stevenage, grasslands, wetlands and woodlands are significant carbon sinks.~~ ~~6A.33 Some carbon sinks are already afforded a degree of protection by other policies in this plan. The council is also in the process of identifying specific carbon sinks within the borough and may, in the longer term, provide these with specific protection. In the interim, the contribution made by all significant carbon sinks to mitigating climate change will be recognised and proposals resulting in their loss or deterioration will be resisted on this basis.~~ ~~6A.34 In contrast, proposals resulting in net gains in carbon sequestration and storage through the enhancement of existing carbon sinks or the provision of new carbon sinks will be strongly supported.~~

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MM14	048	Policy CC6	Policy CC6-CC5: Green roofs
	049	Paragraphs 6A.35 to 6A.39 (two paragraphs marked as 6A.39 in error)	Where appropriate, development proposals which incorporate green roofs, blue-green roofs, bio-solar roofs or green walls will be strongly supported. <u>6A.34 In Stevenage, the majority of land is already developed, which means that opportunities to provide new green space at ground level are often limited, especially in the town centre. As a result, roofs and vertical surfaces can play an important role in delivering green space and associated environmental benefits without placing additional pressure on scarce land resources.</u> 6A.35 Green roofs, also referred to as living roofs or sedum roofs, are rooftops covered by vegetation in a multi-layered system comprising a waterproof membrane, a substrate or growing medium and (usually) a drainage layer. Green roofs have a wide variety of benefits, including: • sequestering carbon dioxide from the atmosphere; • delaying or reducing surface water run-off; • naturally treating surface water run-off before it is discharged; • increasing biodiversity by acting as a habitat; • insulating buildings during colder months; • cooling buildings through evapotranspiration during warmer months; • reducing the heat island effect in built-up areas; and • acting as a form of sound insulation 6A.36 In recognition of these benefits, Policy CC6 provides strong support for developments incorporating green roofs. This includes green roofs which have been combined with other technologies to deliver additional benefits. <u>6A.36 6A.37 Blue roofs are roofs which store rainwater where it falls and then gradually release it through flow restrictor outlets. Although green roofs also naturally store rainwater, their effectiveness as a SuDS feature is limited by the fact that once the substrate is saturated, there is no control over the rate of</u>

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			<u>discharge. Blue-green roofs, as the name suggests, combine the benefits of blue and green roofs by providing an additional attenuation layer below the substrate and planted surface of the roof, with discharge rates then controlled by flow restrictor outlets.</u> <u>6A.37 6A.38 Green roofs and blue-green roofs are also compatible with solar panels. When designed properly, so-called biosolar roofs can actually improve the effectiveness of both the green roof (by providing shade) and the solar panels (by providing cooling).</u> <u>6A.38 Green walls are vegetated vertical building surfaces, typically consisting of climbing plants grown directly against a wall or supported by trellises, cables or mesh systems, or modular living wall systems in which plants are rooted in panels fixed to the building and supplied with water and nutrients. Green walls share many of the benefits of green roofs, although they are typically more difficult to install and maintain.</u> <u>6A.39 In recognition of the benefits provided by these systems, Policy CC5 provides strong support for developments incorporating green roofs, blue-green roofs, bio-solar roofs or green walls, where it is appropriate to do so. Appropriateness will vary between development proposals and will depend on a number of factors, most importantly whether green roofs or walls will be an effective means of achieving environmental benefits given the nature of the proposal and site context. They are most likely to be suitable on larger roof areas and developments in town centre or other highly constrained locations where opportunities for ground-level landscaping are limited.</u> <u>6A.40 6A.39 Given the wide array of potential benefits in providing green roofs, the council will take a flexible approach to visual considerations when proposals incorporating green roofs are assessed. Buildings which incorporate green roofs are currently the exception rather than the rule and to facilitate more widespread adoption, some degree of divergence from established character is likely to be necessary. However, applicants should note that this does not necessarily entail greater acceptance of flat roof designs, since solutions for pitched green roofs are now widely available.</u>

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			<u>6A.41</u> 6A.39 Visual considerations will be of greater importance where a site is located in an especially sensitive location or where there would be additional related impacts, for example on heritage assets. It is expected that proposals involving listed buildings or within conservation areas will generally not utilise green roofs but the council will support them where they are incorporated sensitively.
MM15	050 051	Policy CC7 Paragraphs 6A.56 to 6A.60	Policy CC7-CC6: The green economy <u>Where appropriate</u>, development proposals which demonstrate consistency with the principles of a circular economy will be strongly supported. <u>Where appropriate</u>, development proposals involving the provision of new local green jobs during the construction or operational phases will be strongly supported. ~~Development proposals involving the loss of existing allotments, orchards, gardens and food markets will be refused unless there is clear and convincing justification. Where appropriate, development proposals involving their the provision or enhancement of existing allotments, orchards, gardens and food markets will be strongly supported.~~ <u>6A.42</u> 6A.56 A circular economy is one where materials are retained in use at their highest value for as long as possible, with minimal residual waste. A move to a more circular economy will save resources, increase the resource efficiency of businesses and help to drive down greenhouse gas emissions. For these reasons, the council will support development proposals which demonstrate consistency with the principles of a circular economy by applying weight in favour of granting permission. <u>6A.43</u> 6A.57 In practice, the adoption of circular economy principles in development will mean designing buildings to be adapted, reconstructed and deconstructed. This is to extend the life of buildings and allow for their materials to be salvaged for reuse or recycling. How site waste is dealt with during demolition and construction will also be a key consideration. To this end, it is expected that applications for major

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			development will be accompanied by a site waste management plan. <u>Stevenage is a densely developed, growth-focused New Town with limited land availability and rising pressures on infrastructure, materials, energy and waste services. Supporting the provision of green jobs through development aligns with both Local Plan objectives and the Council’s wider corporate commitments.</u> <u>6A.44 6A.58</u> The definition of “local green jobs” is provided in appendix D to this plan. Development proposals resulting in the provision of new local green jobs will be strongly supported by the council, particularly where the positions would be filled by Stevenage residents. <u>In Stevenage it is estimated that 899 green jobs will be required by 2030, rising to 1,552 by 2050. These jobs include low carbon electricity, low carbon heat, alternative fuels, energy efficiency, low carbon services, and low emission vehicles and infrastructure.</u> <u>6A.45 6A.59</u> Producing food sustainably will also be an important component of the transition to a green economy. Producing food locally will reduce the greenhouse gas emissions associated with its transportation and processing, as well as reducing food waste and generally providing better nutrition. For these reasons, proposals that would reduce the borough’s ability to produce its own food will be refused unless there is clear and convincing justification. This is likely to be limited to instances where it would deliver overriding benefits when assessed against the objectives of this plan as a whole. Conversely, proposals that would increase local food production in appropriate locations through the provision or enhancement of allotments, orchards and gardens will be strongly supported. <u>6A.46 6A.60</u> Food that is grown locally also requires space to be sold locally. For this reason, the council will apply similar protections to food markets and will strongly support the provision or enhancement of food markets in appropriate locations.

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MM16	063	Policy TC2	Policy TC2: Southgate Park Major Opportunity Area Within the Southgate Park Major Opportunity Area, as defined on the Policies Map, planning permission will be granted for: a. High-density Use Class C3 residential units; b. New multi-storey or basement car parking; c. New Use F.1/F.2 <u>public services</u> ~~civic~~-hub; d. A linear park running east-west parallel to Six Hills Way; and e. A new primary school on the Eastgate car park 7.23 Stevenage's original police station, The Towers residential block and its associated car parking, the Southgate Health Centre, NHS Southgate West, the central library, the Borough Council's Southgate surface car park, Matalan and The Plaza are the current principal uses in this area. <u>The planning application for the SG1 development references a public services hub.</u>
MM17	064 065	Policy TC3 Paragraph 7.30	Policy TC3: Centre West Major Opportunity Area Within the Centre West Major Opportunity Area, as defined on the Policies Map, planning permission will be granted for: a. High-density Use Class C3 residential units; b. <u>Appropriate uses for main town centres as defined in Annex 2 of the NPPE.</u> ~~b. Replacement Use Class E(b) restaurant and cafe, E(d) indoor sport and recreation, and sui generis leisure, bar and entertainment uses;~~ c. New multi-storey or basement car parking; 95 d. ~~New Use Class E(g)(i) office premises;~~

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3
			e. New de minimis (by volume) Use Class E(a) shop units sufficient to serve the day-to-day convenience retail needs of the residents of Centre West; f. A new Use Class C1 hotel, with ancillary conference facilities, close to the train station; c. A taxi rank; and d. A series of interlinked public squares and open spaces; <u>7.30A For the purposes of Policy TC3, “Main Town Centre Uses” has the meaning given in Annex 2 to the NPPF December 2023.</u>
MM18	066	Policy TC4	Policy TC4: Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area
	067	Paragraph 7.36	Within the Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area, as defined on the Policies Map, planning permission will be granted for:
	068	Paragraph 7.38	a. A regenerated train station; b. High-density Use Class C3 residential units; c. New Use Class E(g)(i) office premises;
	069	Paragraphs 7.38A to 7.38F	d. A new Use Class C1 hotel; e. New Use Class E(a) <u>retail</u> and Use Class E(b) restaurant and cafe uses; and f. New Use Class E(g)(ii) research and development.
	070	Paragraph 7.39	g. <u>Appropriate uses for a main town centre (as referenced in Annex 2 of the NPPF December 2023), including and not limited to, F1 Use Class.</u>
	071	Paragraphs 7.39A to 7.39E	<u>A comprehensive and deliverable developer led Strategic Masterplan for the entire allocation is to be prepared and agreed between the landowner/developer and the Council which should address the following design and land use principles</u> Applications should address the following design and land use principles:

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			i. <u>High-quality gateway and arrival experience to create a positive image of Stevenage for all visitors.</u> ii. Major reconfiguration of Lytton Way between Fairlands Way and Six Hills Way to incorporate sustainable travel and improved connectivity in all forms of travel; iii. <u>The creation of Greeting</u>-an exemplar, low carbon “urban village” with climate change consideration in all developments; iv. Demolition of the Arts & Leisure Centre to facilitate better east-west integration and create new development sites in the environs of the train station; v. The provision of replacement sports and theatre facilities elsewhere within Stevenage Central; vi. A significantly regenerated and enlarged high quality dual-frontage train station with associated facilities; vii. New public squares and the inclusion of green infrastructure on the eastern and western frontages of the train station; viii. High-quality, mixed-use developments within <u>close to</u> short walking distance of the train station to unlock economic and employment opportunities; ix. Improved cycle connectivity and <u>short stay</u> parking ~~plus drop-off space~~ to specifically serve train customers; x. Celebrate the heritage of the town in the fabric, layout and design of the Station Gateway; xi. Establishment of an attractive east - west pedestrian route across the East Coast Main Line; <u>7.36A Any application as part of the site will be assessed against its contribution to the Strategic Masterplan and must not prejudice the implementation of the site as a whole.</u> <u>7.36B For clarity, the following terms are defined as they are used in this policy:</u>

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			• <u>Urban Village: “Urban village” refers to creating a mixed-use neighbourhood around the railway station — combining homes, workspaces, shops, leisure, and public spaces in a walkable, community focused environment.</u> • <u>Stevenage Central: Is defined as the <i>primary town centre area</i> — the shopping precincts, civic buildings, and surrounding public spaces.</u> • <u>Dual Frontage: A dual frontage train station means a station that has two main entrances or “front doors”, each facing different sides of the surrounding urban area. In the context of Policy TC4, this principle is about ensuring the station is not just enlarged and modernised, but also designed to connect both the town centre side and the opposite side of the railway tracks.</u> • <u>New Public Square: This term is used to describe an open, accessible urban space designed for people to gather, move through, and enjoy in terms of the station and beyond. Its purpose acts as a focal point for community life, events, and social interaction; examples include (and are not limited to) paved areas, seating, lighting, landscaping, and sometimes fountains or public art; the function in the Station Gateway is to create welcoming entrances on both sides of the station; provide space for people to meet, wait, or host community activities; and improve the station’s identity as a civic landmark, not just a transport hub.</u> <u>7.36C Creating an attractive, healthy and memorable Station Gateway area will lay the foundation for high-quality mixed-use development that maximises the station’s potential and benefits the wider town.</u> 7.36 The Station Gateway area currently comprises the 1970s train station, the Arts and Leisure Centre (including the Gordon Craig Theatre), a series of surface level car parks and the southern section of Lytton Way. The train station is one of the top three busiest stations in Hertfordshire, alongside St Albans and Watford Junction. To ensure that such facilities continue to meet local shopping needs we will consider removing Permitted Development rights and / or using legal agreements under Policy SP4 to retain any new units in E(a) <u>retail</u> use.

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			7.38B Since 2019, ongoing work has been commissioned to review the needs of the area. The Stevenage Station Gateway Area Action Plan (AAP) resulted from a holding direction placed on the Stevenage Borough Local Plan in 2017. This led to two rounds of consultation in 2021 and 2023 to review the vision and proposals for the area. <u>Work is ongoing to prepare a masterplan for the opportunity area. This will provide a clear, long-term vision that guides regeneration, sets development principles, and coordinates investment in housing, jobs, infrastructure, and public spaces. It will act as both a design framework and a delivery tool, ensuring that growth is sustainable, inclusive, and well-integrated. The AAP will no longer be pursued; the masterplan will utilise the work undertaken to date.</u> 7.38C Within this policy context, high-level policy <u>principles</u> objectives were developed which align with the Local Plan and national policy direction ~~for the AAP to respond to~~. These include: • A new gateway and arrival experience; • Creating an exemplar, low carbon “urban village”; • Sustainable travel considered throughout; • Mixed-use development to unlock economic opportunity; • Blue-green infrastructure in the public realm; • Climate change consideration in all development decisions; • Design of the highest architectural standards; • Celebrating the heritage of the town; and • Making the most of digital connectivity and high-speed broadband. 7.38D Climate change is one of the most important objectives ~~for the AAP to respond to~~. The Council declared a climate emergency in June 2019 and reconfirmed a commitment to tackling climate change and its impacts by setting a target to ensure that Stevenage has net zero carbon emissions by 2030. Added to this, the Government has strategic targets to have net zero emissions by 2050. The Council has been proactive in producing a Climate Change Strategy and outlined a Climate Change Action Plan. Both

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			the Strategy and Action Plan are being updated to ensure that the Council's commitment to battling climate change is kept at the top of its priorities. ~~7.38E The high level, strategic options proposed for the area included within the AAP will be strongly influenced by the masterplan for the SG1 development, which lies to the east and within the town centre. Connections to this development and connections through into the town square and central area will form the emerging physical context within which the AAP sits.~~ <u>7.38E 7.38F</u> The Station Gateway area of Stevenage is a key location for economic competitiveness. Other locations which are a similar time distance away from London terminals are seeing considerable commercial growth, for example Reading, Slough, Milton Keynes and Croydon. Stevenage is perfectly placed in terms of mobility, and already hosts major international companies in the Gunnels Wood Industrial Area as well as GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) to the south, a major pharmaceutical company 7.39 A high quality major mixed-use redevelopment around the train station that addresses these concerns is necessary to meet the growing expectations of a rising population and the international business community located in the Borough. Such schemes will enable the station to have an improved concourse and booking facilities, easy and improved accessibility for all pedestrians, introduce a customer-focused retail offer of an appropriate scale, create two passenger-friendly faces (to the Central Core and to Centre West MOAs) and to have active ground floor frontages. Taxi and <u>short stay parking drop-off facilities</u> should be <u>considered</u> designed with the proposals set out in the AAP and provide connectivity with the bus station and multi-storey car park to meet the growing needs of train passengers. <u>7.39A The Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area will serve as a catalyst for the transformation of Stevenage, delivering a modern, dual frontage station, high quality public realm, and a balanced mix of homes, jobs, and cultural facilities. Development proposals should demonstrate how they contribute to an exemplar low carbon "urban village," integrate sustainable travel, and celebrate the heritage of the town. By aligning with the Council's Strategies, schemes brought forward under this policy will not only meet the</u>

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			<u>immediate needs of rail users and residents but also secure long-term economic competitiveness, resilience, and a renewed identity for Stevenage as a thriving regional centre.</u> The AAP, through two rounds of consultation, has set out 4 “high-level” options or scenarios for the area adjacent to Stevenage Railway Station incorporating the section of Lytton Way, between Swingate and Danesgate: • Option 0 – Do nothing. • Option 1 – All traffic modes: reduces the central area of Lytton Way between Swingate and Danesgate to a single carriageway suitable for all modes of traffic. • Option 2 – Bus and Taxi only: reduces the central area of Lytton Way between Swingate and Danesgate to a single carriageway and restricts movement to buses and taxis only. • Option 3 – Pedestrianised Plaza: removes regular vehicle movement from the front of the station and Lytton Way ceases to be a through-route. An access through-route is retained for emergency vehicles needing to access and egress the station and immediate environs. 7.39B There were two proposed cycle path options in the AAP. Potential Layout 1 retains the existing cycle route, running alongside the railway line and at the extreme western edge of the AAP site boundary and adds a cycle route alongside Lytton Way. Potential Layout 2 removes the existing cycle route and replaces it with a cycle route alongside Lytton Way. 7.39C The proposed reconfiguration of Lytton Way is a bold idea but the options look to flexibility. The Preferred Options AAP presented the preferred approach as Option 2, but with flexibility to progress to Option 1 or Option 3 as and when circumstances developed. Potential Layout 1 for the cycle path option was taken forward in the Preferred Options AAP, as the preferred cycle layout. 7.39D All proposed options for the reconfiguration of Lytton Way have a set of core enhancements, primarily in the northern and southern zones of the AAP area, north of Swingate and south of Danesgate. Further details can be viewed within the Stevenage Station Gateway Area Action Plan: Preferred Options

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			Report (2023)⁶⁶. 7.39E Creating an attractive, healthy, memorable and enjoyable place in the Station Gateway area will provide the seeds for high quality mixed-use development to come forward and make the most of the station area and contribute widely across the town.
MM19	073 074	Policy TC5 Paragraph 7.43	Policy TC5: Central Core Major Opportunity Area Within the Central Core Major Opportunity Area, as defined on the Policies Map, planning permission will be granted for: a. High-density Use Class C3 residential units; b. New Use Class E(a), E(b) <u>as within Main Town Centres Uses as defined by the NPPF; and sui generis which will be assessed on a case-by-case for their impact on vitality, amenity, and sustainability shop, bar, restaurant and café uses.</u> c. New multi-storey or basement car parking; d. New Use Class E(g)(i) office premises; e. New Use Class F.1 and E(d) leisure, cultural and civic uses, including a replacement theatre and museum; and f. Signature public spaces Applications should address the following design and land use principles: i. A replacement bus station, closer to the train station; ii. A southern extension to the Westgate Centre, containing in the order of 4,700m² additional comparison floorspace, facing onto an enlarged Town Square; iii. A continuation of the east - west pedestrian route linking Town Square with the train station; iv. Continuing preservation and enhancement of the Town Square Conservation Area;

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			v. Provision will be made for new green space within an enlarged Town Square; vi. A new municipal theatre and art gallery on the north-eastern edge of the enlarged Town Square; vii. New development should include active ground floor frontages to principal streets; viii. The layout of new streets and squares should facilitate east-west pedestrian access and create sequential views and vistas between the train station and Town Square; ix. High quality development with landmark buildings in appropriate locations, including fronting onto Town Square; x. High-rise buildings; and xi. Heritage assessment and design work to preserve and enhance the significance of the Town Square Conservation Area and the contribution made by its setting. <u>7.43A For the purposes of Policy TC5, “Main Town Centre Uses” has the meaning given in Annex 2 to the NPPF December 2023.</u> 7.43 The Central Core currently comprises the buildings surrounding Town Square, the Borough Council's Danestrete and Swingate offices, Mecca bingo, the magistrates courts, surface car parking and Use Class E(a) <u>retail</u> shops, E(c)(i) financial services and E(c)(ii) professional services uses. To ensure that such facilities continue to meet local shopping needs we will consider removing Permitted Development rights and / or using legal agreements under Policy SP4 to retain any new units in E(a) use.

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MM20	075	Policy TC6	Policy TC6: Northgate Major Opportunity Area Within the Northgate Major Opportunity Area, as defined on the Policies Map, planning permission will be granted for: a. High-density Use Class C3 residential units; b. New Use Class E(g)(i) office premises; c. New Use Class E(a), E(b) <u>as within Main Town Centres Uses as defined by the NPPF and sui generis which will be assessed on a case-by-case for their impact on vitality, amenity, and sustainability shop, bar, restaurant and café uses.</u> d. Replacement Use Class E(a) major foodstore; e. New multi-storey or basement car parking; f. Replacement cycle and pedestrian footbridge between Ditchmore Lane and Swingate; and g. Signature public spaces. <u>7.50A For the purposes of Policy TC6, “Main Town Centre Uses” has the meaning given in Annex 2 to the NPPF December 2023.</u> 7.50 Northgate currently includes the Tesco Extra store and its associated large surface car park, servicing and filling station, together with the Saffron Ground office building. To ensure that such facilities continue to meet local shopping needs we will consider removing Permitted Development rights and / or using legal agreements under Policy SP4 to retain any new units in E(a) <u>retail</u> use.
	076	Paragraph 7.50	

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3
MM21	077	Policy TC7	Policy TC7: Marshgate Major Opportunity Area Within the Marshgate Major Opportunity Area, as defined on the Policies Map, planning permission will be granted for: a. High-density Use Class C3 residential units; b. New Use Class F.1 and E(d) leisure, cultural and civic uses; c. New Use Class E(a), E(b) <u>as within Main Town Centres Uses as defined by the NPPF and sui generis which will be assessed on a case-by-case for their impact on vitality, amenity, and sustainability</u> shops, bar, restaurant and café uses. d. New multi-storey or basement car parking. Applications should address the following design and land use principles: i. Rejuvenation through new retail units and public realm improvements, including the northern underpass to Town Centre Gardens; ii. Replacement retail units at the eastern end of The Forum connecting to a new surface-level pedestrian crossing of St George's Way to link with the new leisure complex and Town Centre Gardens; iii. Active retail frontages along St George's Way to redefine the eastern edge of the Town iv. Centre; v. New high-density residential development along St George's Way, orientated to have views over Town Centre Gardens; vi. A new sports/swimming complex with an interactive frontage onto Town Centre Gardens; vii. Creation of a critical mass of uses and activities to stimulate greater day-to-day and event use of Town Centre Gardens; and viii. Heritage assessment and design work to preserve and enhance the significance of the Town Square Conservation Area and the contribution made by its setting.
	078	Paragraph 7.54	

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3
			<u>7.54A For the purposes of Policy TC7, “Main Town Centre Uses” has the meaning given in Annex 2 to the NPPF December 2023.</u>
MM22	079	Policy TC8 New Paragraph 7.61A	Policy TC8: Town Centre Shopping Area The spatial extent of the Town Centre Shopping Area (TCSA) is defined on the policies map. Within the TCSA, uses appropriate to a town centre <u>falling with the definition of ‘main town centre uses’ in NPPF Annex 2 glossary will be permitted</u> will be permitted at ground floor level, including Use Classes E and G1, as well as some other sui generis uses. <u>7.61A The Town Square Conservation Area, which falls within Stevenage’s Town Centre Shopping Area (TCSA) — is located around the Clock Tower and Town Square. Heritage assets are worthy of protection in all cases where they would be affected by development, regardless of their location or the nature of the proposal. This is reflected in national policy and in Local Plan policies SP13 and (specifically for Conservation Areas) Policy NH10.</u>
MM23	081	Policy TC9	Policy TC9: High Street Shopping Area The spatial extent of the High Street Shopping Area (HSSA) is defined on the policies map. Within the HSSA, planning permission for development of a scale appropriate to the High Street's location in the retail hierarchy and <u>falling within the definition of ‘main town centre use’ in the NPPF Annex 2 except for hot food takeaway uses</u> which falls into Use Classes E, G1, G3, F.1 or F.2 will be granted where it:

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MM24	086	Paragraph 7.70	7.70 A site on Graveley Road, currently already in Class E(a) use as a garden centre, is identified to accommodate such a large store. The northern tip of the garden centre site lies in North Hertfordshire District: as it is outside of the Borough, this local plan cannot allocate that part of the site. Given the fact that there is no immediate need for additional floorspace, and allowing for construction and trading establishment, we will entertain a planning application for this store from 2018 onwards. This new store should not be trading before 2023. Although on the northern edge of the Borough, this store will be well located in respect of the new neighbourhood North of Stevenage (see Policy HO3). Also, there are no alternative sites capable of accommodating a store of the required size. In order to avoid potential adverse impacts upon the existing retail demand, this site will be re-examined at a full review to ensure existing and future need for convenience has been updated to reflect changes since the plan was adopted.
MM25	087	Paragraph 7.75	7.75 Because of the very significant quantum of out-of-centre comparison floorspace, and its adverse impact upon the vitality and viability of the Town Centre Shopping Area, the Borough Council will also resist any proposals to relax or remove conditions controlling the type of goods that can be sold from existing out-of-centre comparison units. In order to avoid potential adverse impacts upon the existing retail demand, this policy will be re-examined at a full review to ensure existing and future need for convenience has been updated to reflect changes since the plan was adopted.
MM26	090	Policy IT1	Policy IT1: Strategic development access points The preferred vehicular access points to strategic development sites from the existing road network are shown on the policies map: To land west of Stevenage via the existing road network at Bessemer Drive and Meadway; To land north of Stevenage from B197 North Road approximately 250 metres north of the junction with Granby Road;

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			• To land south-east of Stevenage from a new roundabout on the A602 approximately 200 metres east of the junction with Bragbury Lane; • To Stevenage Leisure Park from Argyle Way and Six Hills Way; and • To Stevenage town centre from reconfigured junctions between: ○ Fairlands Way and Lytton Way; and ○ Six Hills Way, Lytton Way and London Road Planning permission will be granted where proposals demonstrate: a. That these preferred access points have been incorporated into the scheme design; b. That new junctions adequately consider the needs of all users, including bus priority, and. <u>This includes, but is not limited to, pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders, mobility scooter users, wheelchair users, and other groups requiring safe and accessible movement. Development proposals should ensure that infrastructure improvements and design standards support inclusivity across this broad spectrum of users;</u> and c. For the development areas to the north and west of Stevenage, how they would integrate with any future phases of development beyond the Borough boundary. Alternative access points and solutions will be permitted where they are demonstrably preferable in highway terms.

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3
MM27	093 094	Policy IT4 Paragraph 8.26	Policy IT4: Transport assessments and travel plans Planning permission will be granted where: a. Development would not have an unacceptable <u>adverse</u> impact upon highway safety; b. Development reflects the principles of the Stevenage Mobility Strategy; c. Schemes exceeding the relevant thresholds are accompanied by a satisfactory Transport Statement or Assessment, which demonstrates that the residual cumulative impacts of development are not severe; and d. Developments exceeding the relevant thresholds are accompanied by an acceptable (green) travel plan. 8.26 The County Council, as highway authority, support the use of Transport Statements and Transport Assessments to assess the impact of new development upon the wider network as well as being a means to ascertain internal infrastructure needs. Guidance sets out the thresholds at which these are presently required <u>Highways Place and Movement Planning Design Guidance for Hertfordshire(HCC, 2024)</u>. Site-specific circumstances might result in an assessment or statement being requested for developments below these:
MM28	098	Paragraph 9.2A	~~9.2A The partial review and update of the local plan identifies a requirement for 4,956 homes to be built from 2024 to the end of the plan period in 2031. This figure represents the overall plan period target of 7,600 homes minus the net housing completions from 2011 to 2024.~~
MM29	099	Paragraph 9.3	9.3 Policy HO1 ~~includes~~ continues to include sufficient sites to meet the target, whilst also allowing for <u>some flexibility if any of these sites do not come forward. Sites have been allocated where we think at least five homes can be built.</u> A technical paper explains why this is the case.

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MM30	100	Policy HO2	Policy HO2: Stevenage West Land to the west of Stevenage, as defined by the policies map, is allocated for the development of approximately 1,350 dwellings. A Masterplan for the whole site will be required as part of any planning application. The Masterplan must be approved prior to the submission of detailed development proposals for the site. Development proposals will be permitted where the following criteria are met: a. The applicant can demonstrate that development can be expanded beyond the Borough boundary in the future, into safeguarded land within North Hertfordshire; b. The development incorporates employment floorspace of 10,000m², in accordance with Policy EC1; c. Improvements to existing access routes across the A1(M), via Bessemer Drive and Meadway, are provided, which link effectively into the existing road, cycleway and pedestrian networks; d. The scheme is designed to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport; e. An appropriate buffer to mitigate against noise impacts from A1(M) is included; f. At least 5% aspirational homes are provided in line with Policy HO9; g. Plots to accommodate at least 1% new homes are made available for self-build purposes; h. <u>30-40% affordable housing is provided in accordance with Policy HO7;</u> i. Provision for supported or sheltered housing is made in line with Policy HO10; j. A primary school is provided in line with the most up-to-date evidence of need; k. Local facilities to serve the community are incorporated, including a GP surgery, subject to demand; l. Sports facilities are provided on-site, in line with Policy HC8, including, but not limited to: i. A skate park or MUGA for children; and
	101	Paragraph 9.21A	

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3
			ii. Land to accommodate a new cricket facility; m. A full archaeological assessment is undertaken; n. A full flood risk assessment is undertaken; o. The scheme incorporates a network of green infrastructure, with an emphasis on high quality landscaping within and around the development to reduce the impact of the development on the surrounding greenfield / Green Belt land; p. Existing Public Rights of Way retained and incorporated, where possible; q. The impact of noise pollution from London Luton Airport is mitigated; and 9.21A The partial review and update of the local plan introduces an uplift in the proportion of affordable houses required on greenfield sites. However, planning permission has already been granted for the Stevenage West site. For this reason, the affordable housing requirement for the Stevenage West site remains at the level set in the 2019 version of the plan i.e. 30%.
MM31	102 104	Policy HO3 Paragraph 9.34A	Policy HO3: North of Stevenage Land to the North of Stevenage, as defined by the policies map, is allocated for the development of approximately 800 dwellings. A Masterplan for the whole site will need to be submitted as part of an outline planning application. The Masterplan must be approved prior to the submission of detailed development proposals for the site. Development proposals will be permitted where the following criteria are met: a. The applicant can demonstrate that development can be expanded beyond the Borough boundary, and fully integrated with a wider, cross-boundary scheme;

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3
			b. Satisfactory vehicular access is provided. At least two access points to and from the site will be required, which link effectively into the existing road, cycleway and pedestrian networks; c. The scheme is designed to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport; d. At least 5% aspirational homes are provided in line with Policy HO9; e. Plots to accommodate at least 1% new homes are made available for self-build purposes; f. ~~30-40%~~ affordable housing is provided <u>in accordance with Policy HO7</u>; g. Provision for supported or sheltered housing is made in line with Policy HO10; h. Local facilities to serve the community are incorporated, including a GP surgery, subject to demand; i. A primary school is provided in line with the most up-to-date evidence of need; j. A skate park or MUGA for children is provided on-site; k. A full archaeological assessment is undertaken; l. A full flood risk assessment is undertaken; m. The proposal seeks to preserve or enhance the conservation area, including the setting of adjacent listed buildings. The following mitigation measures should be incorporated; i. As much of the requirement for aspirational homes (criteria d) as possible should be met on the part of the site that lies within the conservation area. Development within this area should also be heavily landscaped to reduce the visual impact of development; ii. Existing hedgerows should be maintained and additional screening implemented to reduce the visual impact of the development; iii. Tall buildings will not be permitted. Building heights will be a maximum of two storeys within the eastern part of the site; iv. No vehicular access to the site will be permitted from the east of the site, across the open fields; v. Existing Public Rights of Way are retained and designed into the development, where possible, and diverted where necessary; and

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3
			vi. Building styles and layout within the conservation area to the east of the site should reflect the key features of the conservation area. n. The scheme incorporates a network of green infrastructure, with an emphasis on high quality landscaping within and around the development to reduce the impact of the development on the surrounding greenfield / Green Belt land; o. An appropriate buffer around existing power lines is incorporated; and p. Electric car charging points are provided at an easily accessible location within the site As part of any development proposal, we will require the open space to the east of the boundary to be retained as such, either via a Legal Agreement or through the transfer of land to the Borough Council. ~~9.34A The partial review and update of the local plan introduces an uplift in the proportion of affordable houses required on greenfield sites. However, planning permission has already been granted for the North of Stevenage site. For this reason, the affordable housing requirement for the North of Stevenage site remains at the level set in the 2019 version of the plan i.e. 30%.~~
MM32	111	Policy HO10 New Paragraph 9.85A	Policy HO10: Sheltered and supported housing Planning permission for sheltered and supported housing schemes will be <u>supported</u> granted where they comply with other relevant policies in this plan. On large developments in excess of 200 units, an element of sheltered or supported accommodation within use classes C3 should be provided where practicable as part of the general housing mix requirements of Policy HO9. The new neighbourhoods to the north and west of Stevenage should additionally include an element of accommodation in use class C2 as part of a comprehensive offer.

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3
			Schemes that would result in a net loss of sheltered or supported housing will not normally be permitted. <u>9.85A The council will apply Policy HO10 to decisions on planning applications flexibly. This will include instances where doing so would not be technically feasible, would not be financially viable, or would otherwise compromise the delivery of sustainable development.</u>
MM33	113	Policy HO11	Policy HO11: Accessible and adaptable housing At least 10% of dwellings within major residential developments to which Part M of the Building Regulations applies should comply with optional standard M4(3)(2)(b) for wheelchair user dwellings, with a further 40% complying with optional standard M4(2) for accessible and adaptable dwellings. <u>The Council will apply Policy HO11 to decisions on planning applications flexibly, in recognition of the fact that it may not always be appropriate to provide M4(2) or M4(3) dwellings.</u> Minor residential developments which meet these standards will be strongly supported. 9.87A <u>Building Regulation M4(1) is mandatory for all new dwellings unless a planning condition requires compliance with one of the optional requirements M4(2) or M4(3). Where requirement M4(3) applies, a dwelling may either be designed to be readily adapted to the needs of a wheelchair user or designed to meet the needs of a wheelchair user from the outset. The former is known as a 'wheelchair adaptable' dwelling and conforms to requirement M4(3)(2)(a), while the latter is known as a 'wheelchair accessible' dwelling and conforms to requirement M4(3)(2)(b). Where no specific requirement is specified, the requirement defaults to a M4(3)(2)(a) wheelchair adaptable dwelling.</u> 9.87D Taking all of this evidence into account, Policy HO11 requires at least 10% of new dwellings within major residential developments to comply with optional requirement M4(3)(2)(b) and a further 40% to
	115	Paragraph 9.87A to 9.87E	
	117	Paragraph 9.89	

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3
			comply with optional requirement M4(2), <u>where appropriate</u>. This applies to major developments which are entirely residential and major mixed-use developments which include a residential component. 9.87E <u>The council will apply Policy HO11 to decisions on planning applications flexibly, in recognition of the fact that it may not always be appropriate to provide M4(2) or M4(3) dwellings. This will include instances where providing step-free access would not be technically feasible, would not be financially viable, or would otherwise compromise the delivery of sustainable development. All such developments should ensure the targets set by Policy HO11 are met unless there are clear and convincing reasons as to why it would be inappropriate. This may include practical difficulties, for example in converting existing buildings, or instances where compliance with the targets would compromise other Local Plan objectives, for example the delivery of affordable housing. In these circumstances, a revised requirement will be negotiated having regard to site-specific circumstances.</u> 9.89 Compliance with the standard will ultimately be assessed through the Building Regulations process. However, any preceding planning application should clearly set out the extent of intended compliance.
MM34	119 120	Policy HO14 Paragraph 9.98A	Policy HO14: Houses in Multiple Occupation <u>Proposals for new HMOs and extensions to existing HMOs that require planning permission (C4 or sui generis) will be supported where effective measures are proposed to mitigate any significant adverse effect on the living or working conditions of those living or working nearby or on highway safety. To achieve this, developers are expected to ensure:</u> a. <u>Off street parking and manoeuvring space is provided to meet the Council's Standards or, if on-street parking is necessary, it would not result in unacceptable congestion in the surrounding area, would not prejudice highway safety; and does not materially reduce the availability of existing on-street parking.</u>

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3
			b. <u>Appropriate provision for secure cycle parking is made in accordance with the Council's Standards;</u> c. <u>Sufficient space is made available for storage provision for waste / recycling appropriate to the number of occupants in a suitable enclosure within the curtilage of the property.</u> d. <u>Any external alterations or physical extensions to HMO's meet the requirements of Policy GD1 and the Council's Design Standards. As contained within the Stevenage Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document.</u> <u>Planning permission will be granted for new similar (use class C4) and larger (sui generis) houses in multiple occupation where the proposed scheme would have an acceptable impact on housing supply and comply with other relevant policies in the plan.</u> 9.98A Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) can serve an important purpose within the housing market, fulfilling a need for low-cost accommodation when self-contained affordable houses or flats are <u>unavailable</u>. A house in multiple occupation (HMO) is a house occupied by two or more separate households who share basic amenities such as cooking and washing facilities. For planning purposes, there are two types of HMO: 'smaller HMOs', which house up to and including six residents and fall within use class C4; and 'larger HMOs', which house more than six residents and are sui generis.
MM35	124	Policy GD2	Policy GD2: Design certification <u>The Council will support developments that are designed to achieve high levels of certification against nationally and internationally recognised sustainability standards. This includes but is not limited to:</u> Development proposals which demonstrate that they have been designed to achieve a rating of excellent or higher against the a relevant BREEAM standard; ~~Development proposals which demonstrate that they have been designed to achieve the Secured by Design silver award or higher;~~

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3
			And Residential development proposals which demonstrate that they have been designed to achieve the BRE Home Quality Mark will also be strongly supported.
MM36	137	Policy FP1	13 Flooding, <u>drainage</u> and pollution Water management and flood risk Policy FP1: Sustainable drainage All major and minor development proposals <u>should utilise</u> sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) <u>unless it is demonstrated that their use would be impracticable unless there are clear and convincing reasons for not doing so. Development proposals involving SuDS should be supported by an appropriate SuDS strategy which demonstrates how principles a to e below will be complied with. Where relevant, this should include evidence of agreement to the proposed discharge rates with the appropriate statutory undertaker.</u> SuDS proposals <u>should</u> ~~must~~: - be designed to ensure that peak discharge rates from the site will not increase; - on greenfield sites, achieve greenfield run-off rates; - on brownfield sites, aim to achieve greenfield run-off rates; - be designed in accordance with the surface water disposal hierarchy, as shown in Table 4; and - be designed in accordance with the SuDS hierarchy, as shown in Table 5 below. Proposals reliant on surface water discharge to the foul network will be refused unless it can be shown to be unavoidable.

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3
			Proposals reliant on underground attenuation features or impervious hard surfaces will be refused unless their use can be shown to be unavoidable. At the application stage, development proposals involving SuDS must, as a minimum, be supported by a SuDS strategy which demonstrates how the above principles will be complied with. Where relevant, this must include evidence of agreement to the proposed discharge rates by the appropriate statutory undertaker. Post-permission, conditions will be used to secure the final detailed design of the drainage system and measures for management and maintenance.
MM37	141	Policy FP2	Policy FP2: Flood risk management All development proposals will be assessed <u>against national planning policies for flood risk and should must:</u> a. <u>Appropriately protect the integrity of adjacent flood defences and allow sufficient space for access, maintenance, future upgrades and new flood defence schemes;</u> b. <u>Provide an appropriate undeveloped buffer zone from the top of the bank of any adjacent main rivers or ordinary watercourses; and</u> c. <u>Unless impracticable, provide for the re-naturalisation of any on-site culverted watercourses;</u> a. Ensure that flood risk, whether on-site or elsewhere, is not increased and is reduced where appropriate, taking into account the future impacts of climate change; b. Where appropriate¹¹⁹, be supported by a site-specific flood risk assessment at the application stage; c. Pass the sequential and exception tests, as required¹²⁰, and then apply the sequential approach to site layout; d. Preserve the functional floodplain, also known as Flood Zone 3b;

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3
			e. Protect the integrity of adjacent flood defences and allow sufficient space for access, maintenance, future upgrades and new flood defence schemes; f. Provide an 8m undeveloped buffer zone from the top of the bank of any adjacent main rivers; g. Provide a 3m undeveloped buffer zone from the top of the bank of any adjacent ordinary watercourses; h. Provide for the re-naturalisation of any on-site culverted watercourses; i. Where appropriate, provide flood warning and evacuation plans; and j. Be appropriately flood resistant and resilient.
MM38	149	Policy NH5a	Policy NH5a: Trees and woodland <u>Proposals which affect, or are likely to affect, existing trees, will require an arboricultural report. Existing trees must be protected and retained where possible, and sensitively incorporated into developments.</u> <u>Planning permission for proposals where the loss of trees is demonstrated to be unavoidable will be granted where:</u> a. <u>Sufficient land is reserved for appropriate replacement planting and landscaping;</u> b. <u>Replacement trees or planting are provided which are:</u> <u>i. Of equal or better quality than the trees which are lost</u> <u>ii. Sensitively incorporated into the development; and</u> <u>iii. Where appropriate, locally native species of similar maturity; and</u> c. <u>In the case of a loss of woodland:</u> <u>i. It can be demonstrated that any adverse affects can be satisfactorily mitigated;</u> <u>ii. The need for the use of the site outweighs the amenity of the woodland; or</u>
	150	Policy NH5b	
	151	Paragraph 14.32	
	152	Paragraphs 14.32A to 14.32E	
	153	Paragraph 14.33	
	154	Paragraph 14.34	

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3																	
	155	Paragraphs 14.34A to 14.34C	iii. <u>It can be demonstrated that there would be a net gain in the quality of any remaining woodland through the enhancement of the recreational, amenity, landscape and/or nature conservation value of the remaining woodland and that there would be provision for its improved long-term management.</u> All development proposals which involve works to, or within the vicinity of, existing trees or woodland must be accompanied by an arboricultural impact assessment (AIA) at the application stage. <u>Individual trees</u> Development proposals resulting in harm to the health or longevity of existing individual trees which are worthy of retention will be refused unless: a. The harm is demonstrated to be unavoidable; b. Replacement trees would be planted in accordance with Table 6 below; and c. Any replacement trees would be of an appropriate size and species, and planted in an appropriate location. Post-permission, conditions will be used to secure any replacement planting and safeguard any retained trees. <table><tr><th colspan="2">Trees Felled</th><th rowspan="2">Replacements</th></tr><tr><th>Category</th><th>Diameter at Breast Height</th></tr><tr><td>Small</td><td>Less than or equal to 30cm</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>Medium</td><td>Greater than 30cm and less than or equal to 60cm</td><td>5</td></tr><tr><td>Large</td><td>Greater than 60cm and less than or equal to 90cm</td><td>10</td></tr><tr><td>Very Large</td><td>Greater than 90cm</td><td>21</td></tr></table>	Trees Felled		Replacements	Category	Diameter at Breast Height	Small	Less than or equal to 30cm	2	Medium	Greater than 30cm and less than or equal to 60cm	5	Large	Greater than 60cm and less than or equal to 90cm	10	Very Large	Greater than 90cm	21
Trees Felled		Replacements																		
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Very Large	Greater than 90cm	21																		

Table 6 – Individual tree replacement standard

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3
			<u>Woodland</u> Development proposals resulting in the loss or deterioration of existing woodland will be refused unless: a. There are exceptional reasons which justify the loss or deterioration; b. Replacement habitat would be provided in accordance with the statutory biodiversity metric; c. Following replacement, there would be no net-loss of woodland by area; and d. Appropriate measures are proposed for the long-term management of any replacement woodland. Post-permission, the planting and management of any replacement woodland will be secured by conditions or legal agreement. <u>Ancient and veteran trees</u> Development proposals resulting in the loss or deterioration of ancient or veteran trees will be refused unless: a. There are wholly exceptional reasons which justify the loss or deterioration; and b. A suitable compensation strategy exists. Post-permission, any compensation will be secured by conditions or legal agreement. <u>Arboricultural offsetting</u> Replacement trees or woodland must be provided on-site unless there are clear and convincing reasons for not doing so. Where it is satisfactorily demonstrated that a development proposal cannot fully provide the necessary replacement planting on-site, any shortfall must be offset by either: a. A cash in lieu contribution to the Council; or b. An alternative off-site proposal, where this has already been identified and delivery is certain. The acceptability of option (b) will be subject to agreement with the Council and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3
			<u>14.31 Significant areas of woodland were retained by the masterplans for the New Town to help create an attractive environment within Stevenage. Many of these areas are protected, either in their own right as Principal Open Spaces and wildlife sites (see Policies NH1 and NH2) or as part of the network of Green Links and Green Corridors identified across the town (see Policies NH3 and NH4).</u> <u>14.32 However, it is important that all woodlands and trees of amenity value are retained where this is practicable and desirable. An arboricultural report will be required where trees are to be affected. This should provide details about the location and characteristics of existing trees and clearly indicate which are to be removed or retained.</u> <u>14.33 Without sensitive planning, mature trees can be permanently damaged during construction or create long-term problems for the occupiers of new developments such as shade, storm damage and subsidence. Where new planting takes place, trees may not mature and achieve a similar canopy, ground cover or ecological value if inappropriate species or techniques are used.</u> <u>14.34 Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) are used to protect important specimens. Consent is required to fell or carry out any tree surgery work on a TPO'd tree. Where individual trees, groups of trees or woodlands of particular value are under threat, the Council will consider making new TPOs. In considering TPO applications, the Council will have regard to expert advice, relevant British Standards and any other appropriate information.</u> Policy NH5b: Tree-lined streets Development proposals involving the creation of new streets must ensure that those streets are tree-lined unless there are clear, justifiable and compelling reasons why this would be inappropriate.

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3
			14.31—Significant areas of woodland were retained by the masterplans for the New Town to help create an attractive environment within Stevenage. Many of these areas are protected, either in their own right as Principal Open Spaces and wildlife sites (see Policies NH1 and NH2) or as part of the network of Green Links and Green Corridors identified across the town (see Policies NH3 and NH4). 14.32—However, it is important that all woodlands and trees of amenity value are retained where this is practicable and desirable. An arboricultural method statement will be required where trees are to be affected. This should provide details about the location and characteristics of existing trees and clearly indicate which are to be removed or retained. 14.32A Where it is proposed to fell individual trees, they should be replaced in accordance with Table 6. This tree replacement standard has been informed by the statutory biodiversity net gain (BNG) provisions insofar as the value of the existing tree is determined by its diameter at breast height (1.3 metres above ground level) and the number of replacements is equal to the number of small replacement trees required to achieve a 10% net gain according to the statutory metric. 14.32B For applications subject to the statutory BNG provisions, Policy NH5a will effectively act as an additional trading rule, requiring that individual trees be replaced by individual trees. In all other cases, the policy will operate as an independent standard. 14.32C Where replacement planting takes place, trees may not mature and achieve a similar canopy, ground cover or ecological value if inappropriate species or techniques are used. For these reasons, the acceptability of the size, species and location of replacement trees will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. 14.32D The loss or deterioration of existing woodland should only take place where it is justified by exceptional reasons. In this context, “exceptional reasons” should be understood to mean instances where the proposed development is of an unusual nature, where the public benefits of the proposal would

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3
			outweigh the harm caused by the loss of woodland, and where there is no reasonable and viable alternative to the loss or deterioration. Most residential development¹ will fail these tests and the council expects that the loss or deterioration of woodland will usually only be justified by proposals for public service infrastructure. 14.32E The loss or deterioration of ancient or veteran trees should only take place where it is justified by wholly exceptional reasons. Here, “wholly exceptional reasons” should be understood to mean instances where refusal of the application would be very obviously contrary to the objectives of this plan when read as a whole. 14.34 Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) are used to protect important specimens. Consent is required to fell or carry out any tree surgery work on a TPO tree. Where individual trees, groups of trees or woodlands of particular value are under threat, the Council will consider making new TPOs. In considering TPO applications, the Council will have regard to expert advice, relevant British Standards and any other appropriate information. 14.34A The NPPF requires new streets to be tree-lined unless there are clear, justifiable and compelling reasons why this would be inappropriate. This is reflected in Policy NH5b. 14.34B In applying Policy NH5b, the council will be particularly mindful of the need to ensure that new trees are of an appropriate species and planted using appropriate techniques. When implemented poorly, tree-lined streets can discourage active travel and their other benefits (air quality, shelter, biodiversity, among others) can be significantly diminished. 14.34C For these reasons, tree planting for new streets should be designed with regard to the width of the adjacent foot and cycleways, and the need to provide adequate cover whilst allowing pollution to disperse

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3
			through the canopy. Trees that are fast growing, thorny, or with destructive root systems or delicate leaves should be avoided. In some instances, it may also be necessary to provide separate lighting for pedestrians and cyclists.
MM39	157 159	Paragraph 15.2 Paragraph 15.10 (table)	15.2 It is a key test of local plans that they are deliverable. The Local Plan is supported by a wide-ranging evidence base which demonstrates how and when the sites and proposals in this plan can be brought forward. Our Strategic Land Availability Assessments (SLAA) for both housing and employment demonstrate commitment from relevant landowners to ensure their sites are delivered. The IDP examines the cumulative impacts of providing 7,600 homes over the plan period (4,956 homes between 2024 and 2031) and identifies a series of interventions. At least 7,600 new homes to be completed 2011-2031 (4,956 homes between 2024 and 2031)
MM40	160	Appendix D: Glossary	Active travel: Everyday journeys made by walking, wheeling (wheelchairs, scooters, adapted cycles), or cycling, aiming to make these low-carbon, healthy, and efficient transport choices for shorter trips, reducing car use and improving public health, air quality, and street life. Major Development: Major development has the meaning given in Annex 2 to the NPPF December 2023. Householder and minor development are excluded from this definition. Whole Life Carbon: Whole life carbon refers to the carbon impacts over the entire cycle of a built asset, from its construction through to its end of life. A whole life carbon assessment (WLCA) is the calculation and reporting of the quantity of carbon impacts expected throughout all life cycle stages of a project. It also includes an assessment of the potential benefits and loads occurring beyond the system boundary. https://www.rics.org/content/dam/ricsglobal/documents/standards/%20Whole_life_carbon_assessment_PS_Sept23.pdf

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3
Footnotes			
MM7	029	Paragraph 5.68	(Footnote 30) Our previous SHMA (DCA, 2013) said 575 affordable homes were required each year. The latest SHMA suggests that our Objectively Assessed Needs should contain a 10% uplift in response to market signals and affordable housing needs. These extra homes would equate to a 14% uplift.
MM7	029	Paragraph 5.68	(Footnote 31) The 2012-based household projections (DCLG, 2015) suggest 7,700 households will form over the plan period. Although the evidence suggests our housing requirements should be calculated in a slightly different way, we think it is also important to aim towards this higher number.
MM7	031	Paragraphs 5.73 to 5.76	(Footnote 35) Strategic Land Availability Assessment: Housing. Update 2015
MM7	031	Paragraphs 5.73 to 5.76	(Footnote 37) Excludes some schemes that we know are unlikely to come forward in their current form, to avoid double-counting.
MM7	031	Paragraphs 5.73 to 5.76	(Footnote 38) Housing Technical Paper (SBC, 2015)

MM Ref	CD3 Ref	Policy / Paragraph of the Adopted Plan	Proposed Main Modification to the changes proposed in CD3
MM15	051	Paragraphs 6A.56 to 6A.60	(New Footnote) The Council's wider corporate commitments sit under its "transforming our town" priority regarding enterprise and skills (link: https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/about-the-council/plans-and-performance/corporate-plan-making-stevenage-even-better-2024-2027).
MM15	051	Paragraphs 6A.56 to 6A.60	(New Footnote) These figures are modelled estimates provided through the Local Government Inform Service (https://lginform.local.gov.uk/reports/view/lga-research/estimated-total-number-of-direct-jobs-in-low-carbon-and-renewable-energy-sector?mod-area=E07000243&mod-group=AllDistrictInRegion_East&mod-type=namedComparisonGroup)
MM27	094	Paragraph 8.26	(New Footnote) https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developer-information/development-management/highways-development-management.aspx#designguide

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AUDIT COMMITTEE/ CABINET / COUNCIL

Portfolio Area: Resources and Performance

**Date: 3 February 2026 / 11 February
2026 / 25 February 2026**



ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY INCLUDING PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2026/27

NON-KEY DECISION

Author – Rhona Bellis
Lead Officer – Atif Iqbal
Contact Officer – Atif Iqbal

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To recommend to Council the approval of the Treasury Management Strategy 2026/27, including its Annual Investment Strategy, Prudential Indicators and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy following considerations from Audit and Cabinet committees.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Audit Committee

That post consideration by the Audit Committee to the Cabinet, the 2026/27 Treasury Management Strategy is recommended to Council for approval.

2.2 Cabinet

That post consideration by the Cabinet, in addition to those made by the Audit Committee, the 2026/27 Treasury Management Strategy is recommended to Council for approval.

2.3 Council

That post consideration by the Audit Committee and the Cabinet, the 2026/27 Treasury Management Strategy be approved by Council.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1.1 CIPFA published the latest Treasury Management and Prudential Codes on 20 December 2021 for implementation from 2023/24. This Council, therefore, has to have regard to these Codes of Practice when it prepares the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy, and also related reports during the financial year, which are taken to Full Council for approval.
- 3.1.2 The Council is required to operate a balanced budget, which broadly means that cash raised during the year will meet cash expenditure. Part of the treasury management operation is to ensure that this cash flow is adequately planned, with cash being available when it is needed. Surplus monies are invested in low-risk counterparties or instruments commensurate with the Council's low risk appetite, providing adequate liquidity initially before considering investment return.
- 3.1.3 The second main function of the treasury management service is the funding of the Council's capital plans. These capital plans provide a guide to the borrowing need of the Council, essentially the longer-term cash flow planning, to ensure that the Council can meet its capital spending obligations. This management of longer-term cash may involve arranging long or short-term loans or using longer-term cash flow surpluses. On occasion, when it is prudent and economic, any debt previously drawn may be restructured to meet Council risk or cost objectives.
- 3.1.4 The contribution the treasury management function makes to the authority is critical, as the balance of debt and investment operations ensure liquidity or the ability to meet spending commitments as they fall due, either on day-to-day revenue or for larger capital projects. The treasury operations will see a balance of the interest costs of debt and the investment income arising from cash deposits affecting the available budget. Since cash balances generally result from reserves and balances, it is paramount to ensure adequate security of the sums invested, as a loss of principal will in effect result in a loss to the General Fund Balance.
- 3.1.5 CIPFA defines treasury management as:
- “The management of the local authority's borrowing, investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.”*
- 3.1.6 Whilst any commercial initiatives or loans to third parties will impact on the treasury function, these activities are generally classed as non-treasury activities, (arising usually from capital expenditure), and are separate from the day-to-day treasury management activities.

3.2 Reporting Requirements

3.2.1 Capital Strategy

The Capital Strategy (January and February 2026 Cabinet meeting) will be brought before members as a separate report. The aim of that strategy is to ensure that all Members of the Council fully understand the overall long-term policy objectives and resulting capital strategy requirements, governance procedures and risk appetite.

3.2.2 Treasury Management reporting

The Council is required to receive and approve (as a minimum) three main treasury reports each year. The annual treasury management strategy including the Prudential Indicators (this report) is forward looking, it is the first and most important of the three and includes:

- a. **Prudential and treasury indicators and treasury strategy** (this report)-
 - the capital plans, (including prudential indicators).
 - a minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy, (how residual capital expenditure is charged to revenue over time).
 - the Treasury Management Strategy, (how the investments and borrowings are to be organised), including treasury indicators; and
 - an Annual Investment Strategy, (the parameters on how investments are to be managed).
- b. **A mid-year treasury management report** – This is primarily a progress report and will update members on the capital position, amending prudential indicators as necessary, and whether any policies require revision.
- c. **An annual treasury report** – This is a backward-looking review document and provides details of a selection of actual prudential and treasury indicators and actual treasury operations compared to the estimates within the strategy.

3.2.3 These reports are required to be adequately scrutinised, and this is undertaken by the Audit Committee and Cabinet.

3.2.4 In addition to the three major reports detailed above quarterly reporting is also required and form an appendix to the quarterly Capital monitoring reports, where this is not included in the main reports. However, these additional reports do not have to be reported to Full Council but do require to be adequately scrutinised. This role is undertaken by the Cabinet (The reports should comprise updated Treasury / Prudential Indicators only).

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

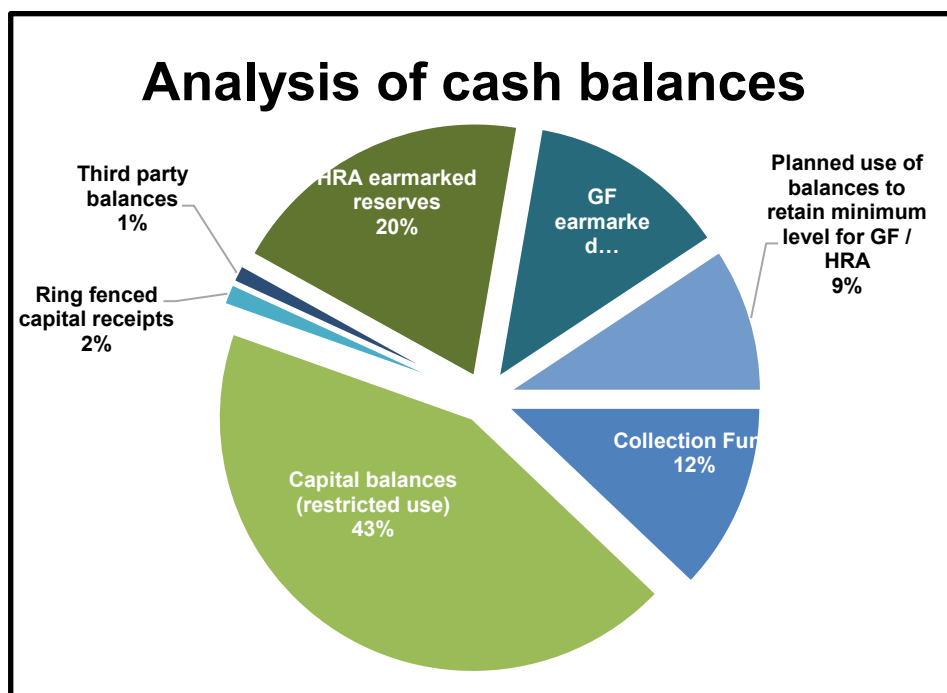
4.1 PERFORMANCE OF CURRENT TREASURY STRATEGY

4.1.1 For the financial year to 31 December 2025 returns on investments have averaged 5.27% and total interest earned was £1.8Million contributing to General Fund and Housing Revenue Account income.

Part I

Release to Press

- 4.1.2 Cash balances as of 31 December 2025 were £56Million and are forecast to be £42Million as of 31 March 2026. The Council's balances are made up of cash reserves e.g., HRA and General Fund balances, restricted use receipts such as right to buy one for one receipts and balances held for provisions such as business rate appeals, reduced by internal borrowing.
- 4.1.3 In considering the Council's level of cash balances, Members should note that the General Fund MTFs and Capital Strategy have a planned use of resources over a minimum of five years and the HRA Business Plan (HRA BP) a planned use of resources over a 30-year period, which means, while not committed in the current year; they are required in future years.
- 4.1.4 The Council's current investment portfolio is held for Treasury management purposes only and consists of "conventional" cash investments: deposits with banks and building societies, Money Market Funds and loans to other Local Authorities. Currently no investments have been made with any of the other approved instruments within the Specified and Non-specified Investment Criteria (see Appendix C).
- 4.1.5 There have been **no breaches** of treasury **counter party limits**, with the investment activity during the year conforming to the approved strategy. Any breach would be notified to the Chief Finance Officer. The Council has had no liquidity difficulties, and no funds have been placed with the Debt Management Office (DMO) during 2025/26 to date, demonstrating that counterparty limits and availability for placing funds approved in the TM Strategy were working effectively. It is possible that surplus funds borrowed during the year may be placed in the DMO temporarily if cash balances, due to the timing of taking out new loans would breach other counterparty limits.
- 4.1.6 The following chart shows the planned use of cash balances forecast to be held at 31 March 2026.



4.2 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR 2026/27

4.2.1 The strategy for 2026/27 covers two main areas:

Capital issues

- the capital expenditure plans and the associated prudential indicators.
- the minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy.

Treasury management issues

- the current treasury position.
- treasury indicators which limit the treasury risk and activities of the Council.
- prospects for interest rates.
- the borrowing strategy.
- policy on borrowing in advance of need.
- debt rescheduling.
- the investment strategy.
- creditworthiness policy; and
- the policy on use of external service providers.

4.2.2 These elements cover the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003, MHCLG Investment Guidance, MHCLG MRP Guidance, the CIPFA Prudential Code and the CIPFA Treasury Management Code.

4.2.3 The Council's Treasury Management Policy Statement can be found at **Appendix A**.

4.2.4 The Council's Capital Strategy is reported separately from the Treasury Management Strategy. Non-treasury investments are reported through the former, ensuring the separation of the core treasury function under security, liquidity and yield principles, and the policy and commercialism investments usually driven by expenditure on an asset.

4.2.5 The revised Treasury Management Code requires all investments and investment income to be attributed to one of the following three purposes: -

- **Treasury management**

Arising from the organisation's cash flows or treasury risk management activity, this type of investment represents balances which are only held until the cash is required for use. Treasury investments may also arise from other treasury risk management activity which seeks to prudently manage the risks, costs or income relating to existing or forecast debt or treasury investments.

- **Service delivery**

Investments held primarily and directly for the delivery of public services including housing, regeneration and local infrastructure. Returns on this category of investment which are funded by borrowing are permitted only in cases where the income is "either related to the financial viability of the project in question or otherwise incidental to the primary purpose".

- **Commercial return**

Investments held primarily for financial return with no treasury management or direct service provision purpose. Risks on such investments should be proportionate to an authority's financial capacity – i.e., that 'plausible losses' could be absorbed in budgets or reserves without unmanageable detriment to local services. An authority must not borrow to invest primarily for financial return.

4.2.6 The Council's current investment portfolio is held for Treasury management purposes only.

4.2.7 **Environmental, social and governance (ESG)** investment considerations - investment considerations here mean understanding the ESG "risks" that the council is exposed to and evaluating how well it manages these risks. It is NOT the same as Socially Responsible Investing.

4.2.8 Managing the ESG risk is already part of the current Treasury Investment Strategy, as the council uses mainstream rating agencies to assess counterparty creditworthiness – they now incorporate ESG risks alongside more traditional financial risk metrics when assessing counterparty ratings.

4.3 TRAINING

4.3.1 The CIPFA Code requires the responsible officer to ensure that members with responsibility for treasury management receive adequate training in treasury management. This especially applies to members responsible for scrutiny.

4.3.2 The last training arranged for members took place on 22 January 2026, further training will be arranged as required.

4.3.3 The training needs of treasury management officers are periodically reviewed, and all new members of staff are given formal external training by CIPFA.

4.3.4 A formal record of the training received by officers, central to the Treasury function will be maintained by the Head of Technical Accounting. Similarly, a formal record of the treasury management training received by members will also be maintained by the Head of Technical Accounting.

4.4 TREASURY MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS

4.4.1 The Council uses MUFG Corporate Markets Treasury Limited (MUFG - formerly Link Asset Services) as its external treasury management advisors.

4.4.2 The Council recognises that responsibility for treasury management decisions always remains with the organisation and will ensure that undue reliance is not placed upon the services of our external service providers. All decisions will be undertaken with regards to all available information, including, but not solely, our treasury advisors.

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- 4.4.3 It also recognises that there is value in employing external providers of treasury management services to acquire access to specialist skills and resources. The Authority will ensure that the terms of their appointment and the methods by which their value will be assessed are properly agreed and documented and subjected to regular review.

4.5 THE CAPITAL PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2026/27-2028/29

The Council's capital expenditure plans are the key driver of treasury management activity. The output of the capital expenditure plans is reflected in the prudential indicators, which are designed to assist members' overview and confirm capital expenditure plans are prudent, affordable and sustainable.

- 4.5.1 **Capital Expenditure and Financing** – this prudential indicator is a summary of the Council's capital expenditure plans, both those agreed previously, and those forming part of the Capital Strategy 2026/27 and HRA Budget 2026/27. Members are asked to approve the capital expenditure forecasts: -

Capital Expenditure	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
£000	Actual	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
Non-HRA	13,347	29,831	46,551	30,918	6,427
HRA	31,074	40,556	75,634	45,799	37,961
Total	44,421	70,387	122,185	76,717	44,388

- 4.5.2 Some late changes included in the Final Capital Strategy 2025/26 in relation to fully funded (grants and contributions) have not been included above. These fully funded schemes have no impact on the borrowing position of the council.

- 4.5.3 **Affordability Prudential Indicator** – this assesses the affordability of the capital investment plans on the council's overall finances. Members are asked to approve the following indicators: -

Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream %	2024/25 Actual	2025/26 Estimate	2026/27 Estimate	2027/28 Estimate	2028/29 Estimate
General Fund ¹	(1.1)	4	8	8	2
HRA ²	12.70	13	15	16	15

The estimates of financing costs include current commitments and proposals in this budget report and both external and internal borrowing.

- 4.5.4 The table below summarises the above capital expenditure plans and how these plans are being financed by capital or revenue resources. Any shortfall of resources results in a funding borrowing need.

¹ General Fund: Net revenue stream is the RSG, NNDR grant, and Council Tax raised for the year.

² HRA: The net revenue stream is the total HRA income shown in the Council's accounts from received rents, service charges and other incomes. The ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream reflects the high level of debt as a result of self-financing.

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Financing of Capital Expenditure £000	2024/25 Actual	2025/26 Estimate	2026/27 Estimate	2027/28 Estimate	2028/29 Estimate
Capital receipts	8,941	10,279	19,548	23,729	4,074
Capital grants and contributions	8,061	24,987	35,997	9,400	3,742
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	137	109	4,957	1,138	1,729
Capital reserves	591	116	338	105	133
Revenue	3,319	1,125	2,605	2,857	1,070
Major Repairs Reserve	19,312	13,138	13,630	14,044	14,792
Net financing need for the year	40,361	49,754	77,075	51,273	25,540
Capital Expenditure requiring borrowing	4,060	20,633	45,110	25,444	18,847

4.6 The Council's Borrowing Need (the Capital Financing Requirement) -

The second prudential indicator is the Council's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). The CFR is simply the total historic outstanding capital expenditure which has not yet been paid for from either revenue or capital resources. It is essentially a measure of the Council's indebtedness and so its underlying borrowing need. Any capital expenditure above, which has not immediately been paid for through a revenue or capital resource, will increase the CFR.

4.6.1 The CFR does not increase indefinitely, as the minimum revenue provision (MRP) is a statutory annual revenue charge which broadly reduces the indebtedness in line with each asset's life, and so charges the economic consumption of capital assets as they are used.

4.6.2 The CFR includes any other long-term liabilities (e.g., finance leases). Whilst these increase the CFR, and therefore the Council's borrowing requirement, these types of schemes include a borrowing facility by the lease provider and so the Council is not required to separately borrow for these schemes.

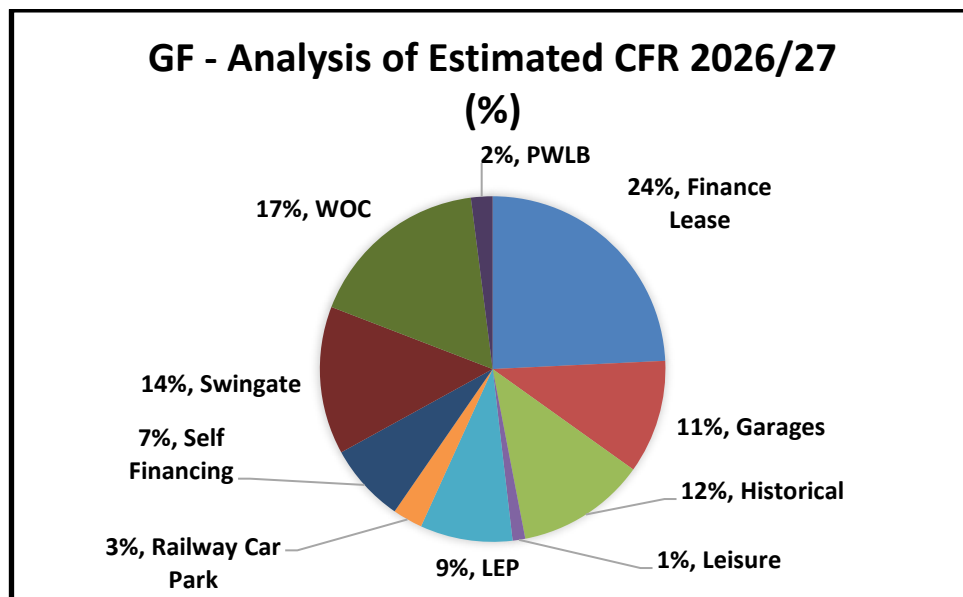
4.6.3 The Council is asked to approve the CFR projections below:

£000	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
	Actual	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
Capital Financing Requirement					
General Fund excluding Finance Lease	44,884	53,756	50,055	35,884	38,165
Finance Lease	17,235	17,016	16,693	16,353	16,009
Total General Fund	62,119	70,772	66,748	52,237	54,174
Housing	272,356	283,039	310,634	318,525	324,822
Total CFR	334,475	353,811	377,382	370,762	378,996
Movement in CFR		19,336	23,571	(6,620)	8,234
Movement in CFR represented by					
Net financing need for the year (above)		20,633	45,110	25,444	18,847

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£000	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
	Actual	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
Internal and External debt repayments		(500)	(20,528)	(31,048)	(9,600)
Less MRP/VRP ³ and other financing movements		(797)	(1,011)	(1,016)	(1,013)
Movement in CFR		19,336	23,571	(6,620)	8,234

4.6.4 The General Fund CFR consists of mainly internal borrowing as illustrated below for 2025/26 (£71Million).



4.7 Liability Benchmark

A third prudential indicator is the Liability Benchmark (LB). The Council is required to estimate and measure the LB for the forthcoming financial year and the following two financial years.

Financial Year End	2026 £'000	2027 £'000	2028 £'000
(Over)/Under Liability Benchmark	(13,650)	(12,379)	(35)

4.7.1 There are four components to the LB: -

- Existing loan debt outstanding – the Council's existing loans that are still outstanding in future years.
- Loans CFR - this is calculated in accordance with the loans CFR definition in the Prudential Code and projected into the future based on approved prudential borrowing and planned MRP.
- Net loans requirement: this will show the Authority's gross loan debt less treasury management investments at the last financial year-end, projected

³ Voluntary Revenue Provision

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into the future and based on its approved prudential borrowing, planned MRP and any other major cash flows forecast.

- Liability benchmark (or gross loans requirement): this equals net loans requirement plus short-term liquidity allowance.

4.7.2 In years where actual loans are less than the benchmark (negative value) this indicates a future borrowing requirement; any years where actual loans outstanding exceed the benchmark (positive value) represent a technically overborrowed position.

4.7.3 The table above shows the current forecast overborrowed position remaining over the short term. This shows that in each year, there are theoretical investment balances that if unallocated, could be used to pay off debt.

4.7.4 Investment balances held by the Council are already allocated and are not available for repayment of debt or additional capital expenditure. As a result, the Council will need to externally borrow to replace internal borrowing in the medium term.

4.7.5 Cashflow is monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure that the timing of external borrowing to support the Capital Strategy and Treasury function is undertaken in a timely and prudent manner.

4.8 Core Funds and Expected Investment Balances

4.8.1 The application of resources (capital receipts, reserves etc.) to either finance capital expenditure or other budget decisions to support the revenue budget will have an ongoing impact on investments unless resources are supplemented each year from new sources (asset sales etc.). Detailed below are estimates of the year-end balances for each resource and anticipated day-to-day cash flow balances.

Year End Resources £000	2024/25 Actual	2025/26 Estimate	2026/27 Estimate	2027/28 Estimate	2028/29 Estimate
Fund balances / reserves	92,682	105,165	66,777	65,269	74,101
Provisions	3,410	3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500
Total core funds	96,092	108,665	70,277	68,769	77,601
Working capital*	28,642	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
(Under)/over borrowing	(78,602)	(76,321)	(50,277)	(46,073)	(57,601)
Expected investments	46,132	42,344	30,000	32,696	30,000

*Working capital balances shown are estimated year-end; these may be higher mid-year

4.9 Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement

4.9.1 Under Regulation 27 of the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) Regulations 2003, where the Council has financed capital expenditure by borrowing it is required to make a provision each year through a revenue charge (MRP). The 2003 Regulations have been further amended with full effect from April 2025 to expressly provide that in determining a prudent provision local authorities cannot exclude any amount of CFR from its calculation, unless by an exception set out in statute.

4.9.2 The Council is required to calculate a prudent provision of MRP which ensures that the outstanding debt liability is repaid over a period that is

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reasonably commensurate with that over which the capital expenditure provides benefits.

- 4.9.3 The MRP policy statement requires Full Council approval in advance of each financial year. The Council is recommended to approve the MRP Statement at **Appendix B** to this report.

4.10 Borrowing

- 4.10.1 The capital expenditure plans set out in paragraph 4.5.1 provide details of the service activity of the Council. The treasury management function ensures that the Council's cash is organised in accordance with the relevant professional codes, so that sufficient cash is available to meet this service activity and the Council's Capital Strategy. This will involve both the organisation of the cash flow and, where capital plans require, the organisation of appropriate borrowing facilities. The strategy covers the relevant treasury / prudential indicators, the current and projected debt positions, and the Annual Investment Strategy.

4.11 Current Portfolio Position

The overall treasury management portfolio as at 31 March 2025 and as at 31 December 2025 are shown below for both borrowing and investments.

TREASURY PORTFOLIO		
£000	actual 31.3.25	current 31.12.25
Banks	17,692	12,503
Local Government	10,000	29,570
Money Market Funds	18,440	14,000
Total treasury investments	46,132	56,073
Treasury external borrowing:		
PWLB	247,987	247,987
Finance Leases and other external borrowing	23,305	23,086
Total external borrowing	271,292	271,073
Net treasury investments / (borrowing)	(227,097)	(215,000)

- 4.11.1 The Council's forward projections for borrowing are summarised below. The table shows the actual external debt, against the underlying capital borrowing need, highlighting any over or under borrowing.

£000	2024/25 Actual	2025/26 Estimate	2026/27 Estimate	2027/28 Estimate	2028/29 Estimate
External Debt					
Debt at 1 April	258,532	271,292	298,800	333,874	339,681
Expected change in Debt	13,121	27,727	35,397	6,148	6,310

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£000	2024/25 Actual	2025/26 Estimate	2026/27 Estimate	2027/28 Estimate	2028/29 Estimate
Expected change in Other long-term liabilities (OLTL)	(361)	(219)	(323)	(341)	(343)
Actual gross external debt at 31 March	271,292	298,800	333,874	339,681	345,648
The Capital Financing Requirement	(334,475)	(353,812)	(377,382)	(370,762)	(378,996)
(Under) / over borrowing external debt	(63,183)	(64,228)	(50,054)	(30,646)	(20,617)

4.11.2 Within the range of prudential indicators there are several key indicators to ensure that the Council operates its activities within well-defined limits. One of these is that the Council needs to ensure that its gross debt does not, except in the short-term, exceed the total of the CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for 2026/27 and the following two financial years. This allows some flexibility for limited early borrowing for future years but ensures that borrowing is not undertaken for revenue or speculative purposes.

4.11.3 The S151 officer reports that the Council complied with this prudential indicator in the current year and does not envisage difficulties for the future. This view takes account of current commitments, existing plans and the proposals in this budget report.

4.12 Treasury Indicators: Limits to Borrowing Activity

4.12.1 **The Operational Boundary.** This is the limit beyond which external debt is not normally expected to exceed. In most cases, this would be a similar figure to the CFR but may be lower or higher depending on the levels of actual debt and the ability to fund under-borrowing by other cash resources.

Operational Boundary £000	2025/26 Estimate	2026/27 Estimate	2027/28 Estimate	2028/29 Estimate
General Fund	60,772	56,747	42,237	44,174
General Fund additional borrowing facility available to the Housing (WOC)				
Wholly Owned Company	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000
Total - General Fund	75,772	71,747	57,237	59,174
HRA	285,039	312,634	320,525	326,822
Total	360,812	384,382	377,762	385,996
Previous Operational Boundary	356,740	370,250	361,749	361,749

4.12.2 **The Authorised Limit for external debt.** This is a key prudential indicator and represents a control on the maximum level of borrowing. This represents a legal limit beyond which external debt is prohibited, and this limit needs to be set or revised by the Full Council. It reflects the level of external debt which, while not desired, could be afforded in the short-term, but is not sustainable in the longer-term.

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- This is the statutory limit determined under section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003. The Government retains an option to control either the total of all local authority plans, or those of a specific authority, although this power has not yet been exercised.
- The Council is asked to approve the following Authorised Limit:

Authorised Limit £000	2025/26 Estimate	2026/27 Estimate	2027/28 Estimate	2028/29 Estimate
Borrowing - General Fund	82,772	78,747	64,237	66,174
Borrowing - HRA	296,039	323,634	331,525	337,822
Total	378,811	402,381	395,762	403,996
Previous Authorised Limit	374,740	388,250	379,749	379,749

4.13 Prospects for Interest Rates

4.13.1 The Council retains MUFG as its treasury advisor and part of their service is to assist the Council to formulate a view on interest rates. MUFG provided the following forecasts on 9 January 2026. These PWLB rates exclude the Certainty Rate (the standard rate minus 20 bps) which has been accessible to most authorities since 1 November 2012. Please note, the lower Housing Revenue Account (HRA) PWLB rate started on 15 June 2023 (standard rate minus 60 bps) and will end on 31 March 2026.

Interest Rate Forecasts								
Bank Rate	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26	Dec-26	Mar-27	Jun-27	Sep-27	Dec-27
MUFG CM	3.75%	3.50%	3.50%	3.25%	3.25%	3.25%	3.25%	3.25%
Cap Econ	3.50%	3.50%	3.25%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%
5Y PWLB RATE								
MUFG CM	4.60%	4.50%	4.30%	4.20%	4.10%	4.10%	4.10%	4.10%
Cap Econ	4.70%	4.60%	4.60%	4.50%	4.50%	4.40%	4.40%	4.40%
10Y PWLB RATE								
MUFG CM	5.20%	5.00%	4.90%	4.80%	4.80%	4.70%	4.70%	4.70%
Cap Econ	5.30%	5.20%	5.10%	5.10%	5.10%	5.10%	5.10%	5.10%
25Y PWLB RATE								
MUFG CM	5.80%	5.70%	5.60%	5.50%	5.50%	5.40%	5.30%	5.30%
Cap Econ	5.90%	5.80%	5.70%	5.60%	5.60%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
50Y PWLB RATE								
MUFG CM	5.60%	5.50%	5.40%	5.30%	5.30%	5.20%	5.10%	5.10%
Cap Econ	5.60%	5.50%	5.30%	5.20%	5.20%	5.20%	5.20%	5.20%

4.13.2 The Bank of England (BOE) base rate stands at 3.75% currently and is expected to continue its gradual downwards path when both the CPI inflation and wage/employment data are supportive of such a move.

4.13.3 The CPI measure of inflation (a key bank of England KPI driving decisions on interest rates) is now 3.2%. The BOE expects inflation to reduce to near 2% by the middle of 2026.

4.13.4 Regarding the PWLB forecast, these show an increase in forecast and current rates since the last forecast, coming back to similar levels to the historical averages.

4.13.5 The short to medium part of the curve is forecast to remain elevated over the course of the next year, and the degree to which rates moderate will be tied

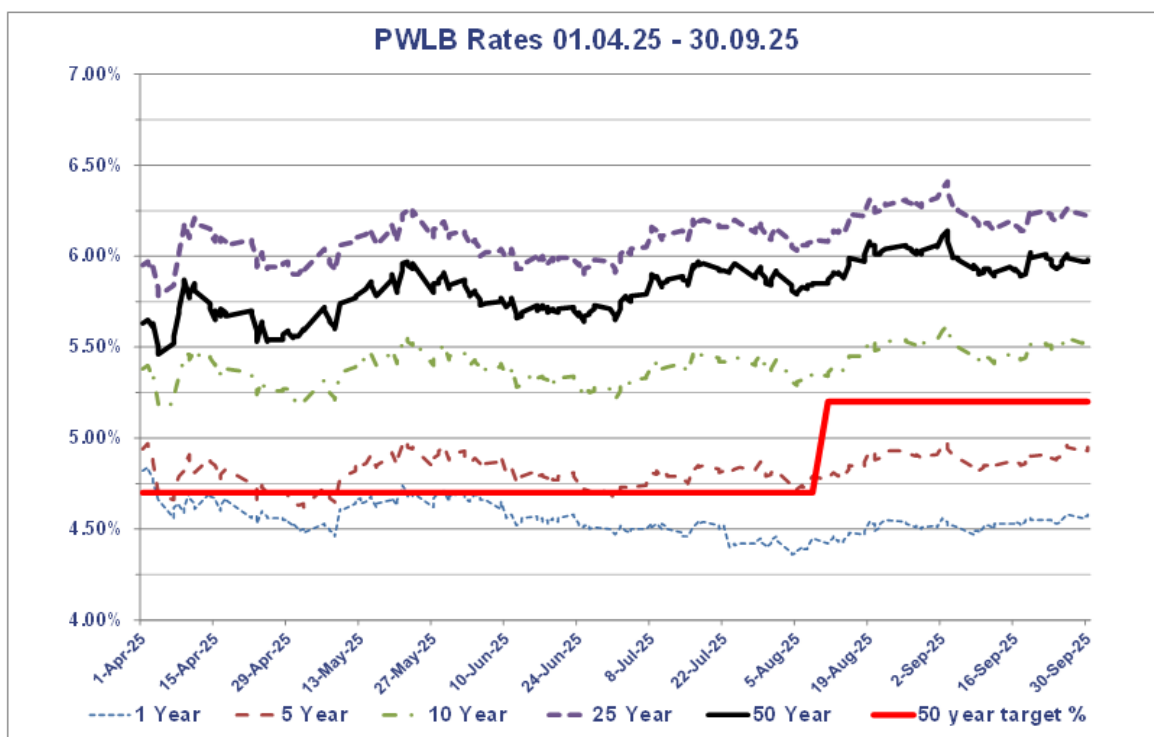
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to the arguments for further Bank Rate loosening or otherwise. The longer part of the curve will also be impacted by inflation factors, but there is also the additional concern that with other major developed economies such as the US and France looking to run large budget deficits there could be a glut of government debt issuance that investors will only agree to take if the interest rates paid provide sufficient reward for that scenario.

4.13.6 Invariably the direction of US Treasury yields will, in all probability, impact UK gilt yields. So, there are domestic and international factors that could impact PWLB rates whilst, as a general comment, geo-political risks abound in Europe, the Middle East, Asia and now in America (N&S).

4.13.7 Historical PWLB loans rates and shown in the chart below.



5 Current Borrowing Position

5.1.1 The estimated Council's capital financing requirement (CFR) for 2025/26 is £353Million. The CFR denotes the Council's underlying need to borrow for capital purposes. If the CFR is positive the Council may borrow from the PWLB or the market (external borrowing), or from internal balances on a temporary basis (internal borrowing). The balance of external and internal borrowing is generally driven by market conditions. The Council had £271Million in external debt at 31 December 2025, of which PWLB debt and its purpose is detailed in the table below.

Purpose of Loan	PWLB Loan £'000
General Fund Regeneration Assets	1,756
HRA	
Decent Homes	38,320
Self-Financing	207,911
Total HRA Loans	246,231
Total PWLB Debt at 31st December 2024	247,987

5.1.2 Borrowing balances in this report reflect the position as at 31 December 2025. PWLB borrowing of £12M has been agreed with PWLB and will be remitted to Stevenage on 26th January 2026. This has been taken to re-finance HRA internal borrowing. Remaining planned borrowing in the capital programme is being kept under regular review because of inflationary pressures, shortages of materials and labour. Our borrowing strategy will, therefore, also be regularly reviewed and then revised, if necessary, to achieve optimum value and risk exposure in the long-term.

5.1.3 General Fund external borrowing and finance leases are: -

- PWLB borrowing of £1.8Million
- Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) borrowing £6.57Million, repayable in 2030.
- A finance lease of £15.9Million (Aviva) for Queensway entered into in 2018/19 for 37 years and immediately sublet to Queensway Properties (Stevenage) LLP for 37 years, and
- A finance lease of £1Million in relation to Boston House (indoor market).

5.1.4 The HRA has external borrowing from PWLB of £246Million

- £7.763Million from pre-2012,
- £4.010Million taken out in 2019/20,
- £10.0 Million taken out in 2020/21,
- £9.047Million taken out in 2021/22,
- £7.5Million taken out in 2023/24 and
- £13Million taken out in 2024/25.

The remainder of £194.911 Million relates to HRA self-financing payment made to central government in 2012.

5.1.5 The target average borrowing rate in the latest HRA MTFS is 4.8% in 2025/26 and 4.8% in 2026/27.

5.1.6 The HRA BP includes a heightened reserves provision going forward to mitigate the risk associated with having a higher borrowed BP. It is currently

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forecast that the HRA outstanding debt will be repaid in full by 2055/56, including period of re-financing.

- 5.1.7 Finance leases entered between the HRA and Marshgate Ltd during 2021/22 and 2022/23, the Council's Wholly Owned Housing Company, relating to 10 residential dwellings, leased for 25 years amounted to £1.3Million.

5.2 Borrowing Strategy

- 5.2.1 The Council is currently maintaining an under-borrowed (non-fully funded) position. This means that the capital borrowing need, (the Capital Financing Requirement), has not been fully funded with loan debt as cash supporting the Council's reserves, balances and cash flow has been used as a temporary measure. This strategy is prudent as medium and longer dated borrowing rates are expected to fall from their current levels once prevailing inflation concerns are addressed by tighter near-term monetary policy. That is, Bank Rate remains relatively elevated in 2026 even if further rate cuts arise.
- 5.2.2 Against this background and the risks within the economic forecast, caution will be adopted with the 2026/27 treasury operations. The Director of Finance will monitor interest rates in financial markets and adopt a pragmatic approach to changing circumstances.
- 5.2.3 Borrowing may be taken to facilitate investment in regeneration and/or economic improvements for the town. This may include investment in special purpose vehicles owned by the Council to facilitate regeneration aspirations. Any such investments will be presented to Members.

5.3 Policy on Borrowing in advance of Need

- 5.3.1 It is the Council's intention not to borrow more than or in advance of its needs purely to profit from the investment of the extra sums borrowed. Any decision to borrow in advance will be within forward approved Capital Financing Requirement estimates and will be considered carefully to ensure that value for money can be demonstrated and that the Council can ensure the security of such funds.
- 5.3.2 In determining whether borrowing will be undertaken in advance of need the Council will.
- ensure that there is a clear link between the capital programme and maturity profile of the existing debt portfolio which supports the need to take funding in advance of need
 - ensure the ongoing revenue liabilities created, and the implications for the future and budgets have been considered
 - evaluate the economic and market factors that might influence the manner and timing of any decision to borrow
 - consider the merits and demerits of alternative forms of funding
 - consider the alternative interest rate bases available, the most appropriate periods to fund and repayment profiles to use.

5.4 Rescheduling

- 5.4.1 Rescheduling of current borrowing in the debt portfolio may be considered whilst premature redemption rates remain elevated but only if there is surplus cash available to facilitate any repayment, or rebalancing of the portfolio to provide more certainty is considered appropriate.

5.5 New Financial Institutions as a Source of Borrowing and / or Types of Borrowing

- 5.5.1 Currently the PWLB Certainty Rate is set at gilts + 80 basis points. However, consideration may still need to be given to sourcing funding from the following sources for the following reasons:
- 5.5.2 Local authorities (primarily shorter dated maturities out to 3 years or so – generally still cheaper than the Certainty Rate).
- 5.5.3 Financial institutions (primarily insurance companies and pension funds but also some banks, out of forward dates where the objective is to avoid a “cost of carry” or to achieve refinancing certainty over the next few years).
- 5.5.4 The Council’s advisors will keep us informed as to the relative merits of each of these alternative funding sources.
- 5.5.5 The latest list of approved borrowing sources is in Appendix E. These options allow flexibility if funds are required for the short or medium term in order to minimise costs where possible.

5.6 Annual Investment Strategy

- 5.6.1 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)) and CIPFA have extended the meaning of ‘investments’ to include both financial and non-financial investments. This report deals solely with treasury (financial) investments, (as managed by the treasury management team). Non-financial investments, essentially the purchase of income yielding assets and service investments, are covered in the Capital Strategy, (a separate report).
- 5.6.2 In managing the TM function other areas kept under review include:
- Training opportunities available to Members and officers (the most recent training for Members took place on 22 January 2026)
 - That those charged with governance are also personally responsible for ensuring they have the necessary skills and training
 - A full mid-year review of the TMS will be reported in 2026/27.
- 5.6.3 The 2026/27 Strategy uses the credit worthiness service provided by MUFG the Council’s treasury advisors. This service uses a sophisticated modelling approach which utilises credit ratings from the three main credit rating agencies and is compliant with CIPFA code of practice.
- 5.6.4 While MUFG may advise the Council, the responsibility for treasury management decisions always remains with the Council and officers do not place undue reliance on the external service advice.

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5.6.5 The TM limits for 2026/27 (Appendix C) have been reviewed. No changes are considered necessary since that agreed as part of the Mid-Year Review of 2025/26.

5.6.6 The latest list of “Approved Countries for Investment” is detailed in Appendix E. This lists the countries that the Council may invest with providing they meet the minimum credit rating of AA-. The Council retains the discretion not to invest in countries that meet the minimum rating but where there are concerns over human rights issues.

5.7 Non-Treasury Investments

5.7.1 The CIPFA Prudential and Treasury Codes recommend that authorities’ capital strategies should include a policy and risk management framework for all investments. The Codes identify three types of local authority investment:

- Treasury management investments, which are taken to manage cashflows and as part of the Council’s debt and financing activity
- Commercial investments (including investment properties), which are taken mainly to earn a positive net financial return (previously purchased commercial investments only as Council’s are no longer permitted to access PWLB rates if they invest in commercial investments primarily for gain.
- Service investments, which are taken mainly to support service outcomes

5.7.2 Details of the Annual Investment Strategy can be found in Appendix A.

5.8 Investment returns expectations

5.8.1 The current BOE base rate of 3.75% is expected to reduce during 2026 to 3.25% by March 2027. The suggested budgeted investment earnings rates for returns on investments placed for periods up to about three months during each financial year are as follows: -

Average earnings in each year	
2026/27	3.5%
2027/28	3.0%
2028/29	3.0%
Years 5+	3.0%

5.8.2 As there are so many variables at this time, caution must be exercised in respect of all interest rate forecasts.

5.8.3 Against this view the forecast of interest earned on Treasury investments in 2026/27 is £1.7Million based on average balances of £49Million.

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- 5.8.4 For its cash flow generated balances, the Council will seek to utilise its business reserve instant access and notice accounts, Money Market Funds and short-dated deposits, to benefit from the compounding of interest.

5.9 Changes of investment strategy

- 5.9.1 There are no proposed changes to the Strategy for 2026/27.

5.10 OTHER ISSUES

- 5.10.1 **UK Sovereign rating and investment criteria:** The UK sovereign rating is currently on the lowest acceptable level suggested for approved countries as set out in Appendix E. The Council's investment criteria only use countries with a rating of AA- or above. The UK rating will be exempt from the sovereign rating investment criteria so in this event if it were to result in the UK being downgraded below AA- it would not impact on the Council's ability to invest with UK institutions. Other investment criteria will be considered in this event to ensure security of funds for the Council.
- 5.10.2 **Queensway Properties (Stevenage) LLP:** In December 2018, the Council entered into a 37-year agreement with Aviva to facilitate the regeneration of Queensway in the town centre. A separate legal entity, Queensway Properties (Stevenage) LLP, was incorporated to manage the rental streams and costs associated with the scheme.

6 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial Implications

- 6.1.1 This report is of a financial nature and reviews the treasury management function for 2025/26 to date. Any consequential financial impacts identified in the Capital strategy and Revenue budget monitoring reports have been incorporated into this report.
- 6.1.2 During the financial year Officers operated within the treasury and prudential indicators set out in the Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement and in compliance with the Council's Treasury management practices.

6.2 Legal Implications

- 6.2.1 Approval of the Prudential Code Indicators and the Treasury Management Strategy are intended to ensure that the Council complies with relevant legislation and best practice.
- 6.2.2 There have been no changes to PWLB borrowing arrangements or changes to the Prudential and Treasury Management codes since the last Treasury report.

6.3 Risk Implications

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- 6.3.1 The current policy of minimising external borrowing only remains financially viable while cash balances are high and the differentials between investment income and borrowing rates remain. As these conditions change the Council may need to take borrowing at higher rates which would increase revenue costs.
- 6.3.2 The Council's Treasury Management Strategy is based on limits for counterparties to reduce risk of investing with only a small number of institutions.
- 6.3.3 The thresholds and time limits set for investments in the Strategy are based on the relative ratings of investment vehicles and counter parties. These are designed to consider the relative risk of investments and to preclude certain grades of investments and counterparties to prevent loss of income to the Council.
- 6.3.4 There is a risk to the HRA BP's ability to fund the approved 30-year spending plans if interest rates rise above planned rates - this will be included in future revisions to the BP.

6.4 Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.4.1 This report is technical in nature and there are no implications associated with equalities and diversity within this report. In addition to remaining within agreed counterparty rules, the council retains the discretion not to invest in countries that meet the minimum rating but where there are concerns over human rights issues. Counterparty rules will also be overlaid by any other ethical considerations from time to time as appropriate.
- 6.4.2 The Treasury Management Policy does not have the potential to discriminate against people on grounds of age; disability; gender; ethnicity; sexual orientation; religion/belief; or by way of financial exclusion. As such a detailed Equality Impact Assessment has not been undertaken.

6.5 Climate Change Implications

- 6.5.1 The council's investment portfolio is invested in sterling investments and not directly in companies. These investments are short term and mainly used for working capital purposes. The council uses mainstream rating agencies to assess counterparty creditworthiness – they now incorporate ESG risks alongside more traditional financial risk metrics when assessing counterparty ratings. In this way the TM team aligns with the Councils ambition to attempt to be carbon neutral by 2030.

APPENDICES

- Appendix A Treasury Management Strategy (TMS) 2026/27
- Appendix B Minimum Revenue Provision Policy 2026/27
- Appendix C Specified and Non-Specified Investment Criteria
- Appendix D Approved Countries for investment
- Appendix E Approved Sources of Long and Short-term Borrowing 2026/27

Appendix A Treasury Management Strategy 2026/27

1. Treasury Management Policy Statement

- 1.1. The Council defines its treasury management activities as: *“The management of the Council’s investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks”*.
- 1.2. The Council regards the successful identification, monitoring and control of risk to be the prime criteria by which the effectiveness of its treasury management activities will be measured. Accordingly, the analysis and reporting of treasury management activities will focus on their risk implications for the organisation.
- 1.3. The Council acknowledges that effective treasury management will provide support towards the achievement of its business and service objectives. It is therefore committed to the principles of achieving value for money in treasury management, and to employing suitable comprehensive performance measurement techniques, within the context of effective risk management.
- 1.4. This Strategy has been prepared in accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Management Code 2021. The Code requires the Council to approve the Treasury Management Strategy annually and to produce a mid-year and annual report. In addition, Members in both Executive and Scrutiny functions receive monitoring reports and regular reviews. The aim of these reporting arrangements is to ensure that those with ultimate responsibility for the treasury management function appreciate fully the implications of treasury management policies and activities, and that those implementing policies and executing transactions have properly fulfilled their responsibilities regarding delegation and reporting.
- 1.5. The Act requires the Council to set out its Treasury Management Strategy for borrowing and to prepare an Annual Investment Strategy to set out the Council’s policies for managing its investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments.

2. Annual Investment Strategy

2.1. Investment Policy – Management of Risk

- 2.1.1. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and CIPFA have extended the meaning of ‘investments’ to include both financial and non-financial investments. This report deals solely with treasury (financial) investments, (as managed by the treasury management team). Non-financial investments, essentially the purchase of income yielding assets and service investments, are covered in the Capital Strategy, (a separate report).

The Council’s investment policy has regard to the following:

- MHCLG’s Guidance on Local Government Investments (“the Guidance”)
- CIPFA Treasury Management in Public Services Code of Practice and Cross Sectoral Guidance Notes 2021 (“the Code”)
- CIPFA Treasury Management Guidance Notes 2021

The Council’s investment priorities will be security first, portfolio liquidity second and then yield, (return). The Council will aim to achieve the optimum return (yield) on its investments commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity and regarding the Council’s risk appetite.

In the current economic climate, it is considered appropriate to maintain a degree of liquidity to cover cash flow needs but to also consider “laddering” investments for periods up to 12 months with high credit rated financial institutions, whilst investment rates remain elevated, as well as wider range fund options.

2.1.2. The guidance from the MHCLG and CIPFA place a high priority on the management of risk. This Council has adopted a prudent approach to managing risk and defines its risk appetite by the following means: -

- a. Minimum acceptable **credit criteria** are applied in order to generate a list of highly creditworthy counterparties. This also enables diversification and thus avoidance of concentration risk. The key ratings used to monitor counterparties are the short term and long-term ratings.
- b. **Other information:** ratings will not be the sole determinant of the quality of an institution; it is important to continually assess and monitor the financial sector on both a micro and macro basis and in relation to the economic and political environments in which institutions operate. The assessment will also take account of information that reflects the opinion of the markets. To achieve this consideration the Council will engage with its advisors to maintain a monitor on market pricing such as “**credit default swaps**” and overlay that information on top of the credit ratings.
- c. **Other information sources** used will include the financial press, share price and other such information pertaining to the banking sector in order to establish the most robust scrutiny process on the suitability of potential investment counterparties.
- d. This Council has defined the list of **types of investment instruments** that the treasury management team are authorised to use. There are two lists in Appendix C under the categories of ‘specified’ and ‘non-specified’ investments.
 - **Specified investments** are those with a high level of credit quality and subject to a maturity limit of one year.
 - **Non-specified investments** are those with less high credit quality, may be for periods in excess of one year, and/or are more complex instruments which require greater consideration by members and officers before being authorised for use.

The Council has determined that it will limit the maximum total exposure to non-specified investments as detailed in Appendix C.

- e. **Lending limits and Transaction Limits**, (amounts and maturity), for each counterparty will be set through applying the matrix table in Appendix C and will consider investments longer than 365 days
- f. This Council has engaged **external consultants**, MUFG Corporate Markets Treasury Limited (MUFG – formerly Link Asset Services), to provide expert advice on how to optimise an appropriate balance of security, liquidity and yield, given the risk appetite of this Council in the context of the expected level of cash balances and need for liquidity throughout the year.
- g. All investments will be denominated in **sterling**.

- h. The Council only invests in counterparties with a high credit quality in the UK or other countries meeting minimum AA- sovereign rating. The Council understands that changes have taken place to the ratings agencies and that their new methodologies mean that sovereign ratings are now of lesser importance in the assessment process. However, the Council continues to specify a minimum sovereign rating as the underlying domestic and where appropriate, international, economic and wider political and social background will still have an influence on the ratings of a financial institution (see Appendix D).
- i. As a result of the change in accounting standards under IFRS 9, this Council will consider the implications of investment instruments which could result in an adverse movement in the value of the amount invested and resultant charges at the end of the year to the General Fund. (In November 2018, the MHCLG, concluded a consultation for a temporary override to allow English local authorities time to adjust their portfolio of all pooled investments by announcing a statutory override to delay implementation of IFRS 9 for five years ending 31.3.23. Subsequently, a further extension to the over-ride to **31.3.29** was agreed by Government but only for those pooled investments made before 1st April 2024.
- j. However, this Council will also pursue value for money in treasury management and will monitor the yield from investment income against appropriate benchmarks for investment performance. Regular monitoring of investment performance will be carried out during the year.

2.2. Creditworthiness policy

- 2.2.1. The primary principle governing the Council's investment criteria is the security of its investments, although the yield or return on the investment is also a key consideration. Based on this this main principle, the Council will ensure that:
 - It maintains a policy covering the categories of financial instruments it will invest in, maximum investment duration, criteria for choosing counterparties with adequate security, and monitoring their security.
 - It has sufficient liquidity in its investments. For this purpose, it will set out procedures for determining the maximum periods for which funds may prudently be committed. These procedures also apply to the Council's Prudential indicators of the maximum principal sums invested more than 364 days.
- 2.2.2. The Director of Finance will maintain a counterparty list in compliance with the criteria in the Strategy for Specified and Non-Specified Investment and will revise the criteria and submit them to Council for approval as necessary.
- 2.2.3. In determining the credit quality, the Council uses the Fitch credit ratings, together with Moody and Standard & Poor's equivalent where rated. Not all counterparties are rated by all three agencies and the Council will use available ratings.
- 2.2.4. The Council also applies the creditworthiness service provided by MUFG Corporate Markets (MUFG). This service employs a sophisticated modelling approach utilising credit ratings from the three main credit rating agencies - Fitch, Moody's and Standard & Poor's. The credit ratings of counterparties are supplemented with the following overlays:

- Credit watches and credit outlooks from credit rating agencies.
- Credit Default Swap (CDS) spreads. A CDS is a contract used to insure the holder of a bond against default by the issuer. A CDS can act as an indicator of default risk and provide an early warning of likely changes in credit ratings.
- Sovereign ratings to select counterparties from only the most creditworthy countries.

MUFG modelling approach combines credit ratings, credit watches and credit outlooks in a weighted scoring system which is then combined with an overlay of CDS spreads for which the product is a series of colour coded bands which indicate the relative creditworthiness of counterparties. These colour codes are used by the Council to determine the suggested duration for investments.

2.2.5. Credit ratings will be monitored whenever an investment is to be made, using the most recent information. The Council is alerted to changes to ratings of all three agencies through its use of the MUFG creditworthiness service.

- If a downgrade results in the counterparty / investment scheme no longer meeting the Council's minimum criteria, its further use as a new investment will be withdrawn immediately.
- In addition to the use of credit ratings the Council will be advised of information in movements in credit default swap spreads against the iTraxx benchmark and other market data daily via its Passport website, provided exclusively to it by MUFG Asset Services. Extreme market movements may result in downgrade of an institution or removal from the Council's lending list.

2.2.6. Sole reliance will not be placed on the use of this external service. In addition, the Council will also use market data including information on government support for banks and the credit ratings of that government support.

2.2.7. The Council receives updates from MUFG on future changes to Money Market Funds (MMF) that might affect the liquidity or risk of the fund. The Council is likely to change its approach to the use of MMF should liquidity or risk be adversely affected.

2.2.8. There are alternatives to the PWLB for borrowing, for both the General Fund and the HRA, including the UK Municipal Bonds Agency. The UKMBA provides funding through three lending programmes. Current UKMBA trading levels in the market, inclusive of all fees, are lower than the PWLB Certainty rate at like maturities.

- Proportionally guaranteed, pooled loans of £1 million or more for maturities greater than one year.
- Standalone loans to a single local Council for £250 million or more for maturities greater than one year. These loans are outside of the proportional guarantee and are guaranteed solely by the borrower, who must obtain an external credit rating from one or more of the major credit rating agencies.
- Short term, pooled loans, outside of the proportional guarantee for maturities of less than one year.

To date the borrowing rates available were lower than those offered for comparable loans available from the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) at the time of issuance. The Council may make use of this alternative source of borrowing as and when appropriate.

2.3. Investment Strategy

2.3.1. **In-house funds.** Investments will be made with reference to the core balance and cash flow requirements, anticipated capital financing requirements and the outlook for short-term interest rates (i.e., rates for investments up to 12 months). Greater returns are usually obtainable by investing for longer periods. While most cash balances are required to manage the ups and downs of cash flow, where cash sums can be identified that could be invested for longer periods, the value to be obtained from longer term investments will be carefully assessed.

- If it is thought that Bank of England base rate (Bank Rate) is likely to rise significantly within the time horizon being considered, then consideration will be given to keeping most investments as being short term or variable.
- Conversely, if it is thought that Bank Rate is likely to fall within that time period, consideration will be given to locking in higher rates currently obtainable, for longer periods.

3. Country limits

3.1. The Council has determined that it will only use approved counterparties from UK or selected countries with a minimum sovereign credit rating of AA- from Fitch Ratings (or equivalent from other agencies if Fitch does not provide). This is part of the criteria used to produce the Council's Counterparty List.

4. Borrowing Strategy and Policy on Borrowing in Advance of Need

4.1. The Council is currently maintaining an under-borrowed position. This means that the capital borrowing need (the Capital Financing Requirement), has not been fully funded with loan debt as cash supporting the Council's reserves, balances and cash flow has been used as a temporary measure. The current strategy is prudent as medium and longer dated borrowing rates are expected to fall from their current levels as current high inflation rates are expected to continue to reduce throughout 2025/26.

4.2. Against this background and the risks within the economic forecast, caution will be adopted with the 2025/26 treasury operations. The Assistant Director of Finance will monitor interest rates in financial markets and adopt a pragmatic approach to changing circumstances. When prudent to do so "internal borrowing" will be replaced with external borrowing in order to reduce interest rate risk.

4.3. Borrowing may be taken to facilitate investment in regeneration and/or economic improvements for the town. This may include investment in special purpose vehicles owned by the Council to facilitate regeneration aspirations. Any such investments will be presented to Members.

4.4. The Council will not borrow more than or in advance of its needs purely to profit from the investment of the extra sums borrowed. Any decision to borrow in advance will be considered carefully to ensure value for money can be demonstrated and that the Council can ensure the security of such funds.

4.5. In determining whether borrowing will be undertaken in advance of need the Council will:

- ensure that there is a clear MUFG between the capital programme and maturity profile of the existing debt portfolio which supports the need to take funding in advance of need

- ensure the ongoing revenue liabilities created, and the implications for the future plans and budgets have been considered
 - evaluate the economic and market factors that might influence the manner and timing of any decision to borrow
 - consider the merits and demerits of alternative forms of funding
 - consider the alternative interest rate bases available, the most appropriate periods to fund and repayment profiles to use.
- 4.6. Borrowing may be taken to facilitate investment in regeneration and/or economic improvements for the town. This may include investment in special purpose vehicles owned by the Council to facilitate regeneration aspirations. Any such investments will be presented to Members.
- 5. End of year investment report**
- 5.1. At the end of the financial year, the Council will report on its investment activity as part of its Annual Treasury Outturn Report.
- 6. Policy on the use of external service providers**
- 6.1. In October 2023, the Council reappointed MUFG Asset Services (formerly Link) as its treasury management advisors on a three-year contract. The new contract commenced on 1 November 2023.
- 6.2. The Council recognises that responsibility for treasury management decisions always remains with the organisation and will ensure that undue reliance is not placed upon our external service providers.
- 6.3. It also recognises that there is value in employing external providers of treasury management services to acquire access to specialist skills and resources. The Council will ensure that the terms of their appointment and the methods by which their value will be assessed are properly agreed and documented and subjected to regular review.
- 7. Scheme of Delegation and Role of Section 151 officer**
- 7.1. The Council has the role of:**
- receiving and reviewing reports on treasury management policies, practices and activities
 - approval of annual strategy.
 - approval of/amendments to the organisation's adopted clauses, treasury management policy statement and treasury management practices
 - budget consideration and approval
 - approval of the division of responsibilities
 - receiving and reviewing regular monitoring reports and acting on recommendations
 - approving the selection of external service providers and agreeing terms of appointment
- 7.2. The Audit Committee** has the role of reviewing the policy and procedures and making recommendations to Council.
- 7.3. The Section 151 Officer** has the role of:
- recommending clauses, treasury management policy/practices for approval, reviewing the same regularly, and monitoring compliance
 - submitting regular treasury management policy reports
 - submitting budgets and budget variations

- receiving and reviewing management information reports
- reviewing the performance of the treasury management function
- ensuring the adequacy of treasury management resources and skills, and the effective division of responsibilities within the treasury management function
- ensuring the adequacy of internal audit, and liaising with external audit
- recommending the appointment of external service providers.
- preparation of a capital strategy to include capital expenditure, capital financing, non-financial investments and treasury management, with a long-term timeframe ensuring that the capital strategy is prudent, sustainable, affordable and prudent in the long term and provides value for money
- ensuring that due diligence has been carried out on all treasury and non-financial investments and is in accordance with the risk appetite of the Council
- ensure that the Council has appropriate legal powers to undertake expenditure on non-financial assets and their financing
- ensuring the proportionality of all investments so that the Council does not undertake a level of investing which exposes the Council to an excessive level of risk compared to its financial resources
- ensuring that an adequate governance process is in place for the approval, monitoring and ongoing risk management of all non-financial investments and long-term liabilities
- provision to Members of a schedule of all non-treasury investments including material investments in subsidiaries, joint ventures, loans and financial guarantees
- ensuring that members are adequately informed and understand the risk exposures taken on by a Council
- ensuring that the Council has adequate expertise, either in house or externally provided, to carry out the above
- creation of Treasury Management Practices which specifically deal with how non treasury investments will be carried out and managed, to include the following (covered in Annual Capital Strategy Report).

In addition, high value and/or urgent payments can be made by CHAPS by the Treasury Team, however as these can have a material impact on cash flows on the day, authorisation for this type of payment must be obtained from the S151 or deputy S151 Officer.

7.4. Reporting arrangement to the Council and the Audit Committee is as below:

Area of Responsibility	Council Committee	Frequency
Treasury Management Policy Statement (revised)	Council	Initial adoption in 2010

Area of Responsibility	Council Committee	Frequency
Treasury Management Strategy / Annual Investment Strategy / Prudential Indicators and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy	Council	Annually before the start of the year
Treasury Management Strategy / Annual Investment Strategy / Prudential Indicators and MRP policy – mid-year report	Council	Annually before the end of the year
Treasury Management Strategy / Annual Investment Strategy / Prudential Indicators and MRP policy – updates or revisions at other times	Council	As required.
Annual Treasury Outturn Report	Council	Annually by 30 th November
Scrutiny of Treasury Management Strategy	Audit Committee	Annually before the start of the year
Scrutiny of Treasury Management performance (mid year)	Audit Committee	Annually by 31 st December

Appendix B

Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement 2026/27

From 2013/14, the council has not had a fully funded capital programme, and although there has not been a need to borrow in full externally, due to the use of investment balances, it is necessary to make adequate provision for the repayment of debt in the form of Minimum Revenue Provision.

The **preferred method for existing underlying borrowing is Option 3 – the Asset Life Method** (out of 4 allowable options – the council can use a mixture of options), whereby the MRP will be spread over the useful life of the asset which range. Useful life is dependent on the type of asset and was reviewed in 2019/20. Following that review asset lives now ranges from 7 years (ICT equipment) to 50 years (Investment properties, regeneration sites and car parks for example).

In applying the new asset lives historic MRP had been overpaid and in accordance with current MHCLG MRP Guidance can be reclaimed in future years. The council has a policy to ring fence costs and income associated with regeneration assets and as such has shown these MRP changes separately, see table below. The overpayment of £1,057,660.39 resulted in no MRP needing to be charged to the accounts for the regeneration assets until 2025/26, when a partial charge will be applied, utilising the remainder of the overpayment balance.

voluntary MRP made		Use of overpayment	
	Regeneration		Regeneration
2012/13	£46,929.65	2020/21	£193,703.12
2013/14	£140,788.95	2021/22	£193,703.12
2014/15	£163,165.30	2022/23	£193,703.12
2015/16	£141,355.30	2023/24	£193,703.12
2016/17	£141,355.30	2024/25	£193,703.12
2017/18	£141,355.30	2025/26	£89,144.79
2018/19	£141,355.30		
2019/20	£141,355.30		
cumulative total	£1,057,660.39	cumulative total	£1,057,660.39

Capital expenditure financed by borrowing in 2025/26 will not be subject to an MRP charge until 2026/27, or in the financial year following the one which the asset first becomes available for use.

The Council will apply the asset life method for any expenditure capitalised under a Capitalisation Direction.

Leases - the adoption of International Financial Reporting Standard 16 has introduced a single lessee accounting model and requires a lessee to recognise assets and liabilities for all leases with a term of more than 12 months unless the underlying asset is low value.

Regarding MRP in respect of assets acquired either under leases where a right-of-use asset is on the balance sheet or where on-balance sheet PFI contracts are in place, the prudent charge to revenue is measured as being equal to the element of the rent/charge that goes to write down the balance sheet liability.

Investment property - MRP is chargeable in respect of investment properties where acquisition results in an increase to the CFR.

Capital Loans

Where the Council has issued capital loans that are categorised as **non-commercial**, and have not been subject to a recognised credit loss in the current or any previous financial year, the provision of MRP will not apply on the following basis:

- (a) the loan is treated as capital expenditure in accordance with regulation 25(1)(b),
- (b) the loan is not a commercial loan, and
- (c) the local council has not recognised, in accordance with proper practices(c), any expected or actual credit loss in respect of that loan.

For capital loans which are classed as **commercial** then the Authority will provide MRP over a maximum of the useful life of the assets purchased by the third party.

A commercial loan is defined in regulation 27(5) as a loan from the council to another entity for a purpose which, if the council were to undertake itself, would be primarily for financial return; or, where the loan is itself, capital expenditure undertaken primarily for financial return.

Capital receipts received from the non-commercial and commercial loan repayments in the financial year will be used to reduce the debt liability i.e. the capital receipts will be used in lieu of MRP to reduce the CFR.

For capital loans to third parties granted before 7 May 2024 - Where those loans have been subject to an actual or expected credit loss in the current or any previous financial year then MRP will be provided over the useful life of the assets purchased by the third party.

For capital loans to third parties granted on or after 7 May 2024 - Where those loans are subject to an expected or actual credit loss, then the MRP charge will be at least the amount of the recognised credit loss for the financial year, after adjusting for any previous MRP or capital receipts applied to the loan.

The Council has determined that MRP is not required for borrowing or credit arrangements used to finance capital expenditure on housing assets and accounted for within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) as it has determined, through its duty to charge depreciation and hold a Major Repairs Reserve, that prudent provision has been made.

Capital Receipts - for capital expenditure on loans to third parties where the principal element of the loan has been repaid in annual instalments, the capital receipts arising from the principal loan repayments will be used to reduce the CFR instead of MRP.

Where no principal repayment is made in a given year, MRP will be charged using the Asset Life Method.

Share Capital - where a Council incurs expenditure that is capitalised on or after April 2008, which is financed by borrowing for the acquisition of share capital, Regulation 25(1)(d) Acquisition of share capital sets out the maximum period for an council to provide MRP of 20 years.

MRP Overpayments - under the MRP guidance, charges made in excess of the statutory MRP can be made and are known as voluntary revenue provision (VRP).

VRP can be reclaimed in later years if deemed necessary or prudent. In order for these amounts to be reclaimed for use in the budget, this policy must disclose the cumulative overpayment made each year.

**Specified and Non-specified Investment Criteria
(including Treasury Limits and Procedures)**

Table 1

Specified Investments are sterling denominated with maturities up to maximum of one year and must meet the following minimum high credit quality criteria:

Investment Counterparty	Investment Instrument	Minimum High Credit Quality Criteria	Investment Duration
Banks or Building Societies	Overnight Deposit	Fitch: Short Term F1 and Long Term A and Moody, Standard & Poor, equivalent where rated, the lowest rating used where different OR Part-nationalised or Nationalised UK banking institutions (subject to regular reviews of government share percentage).	Maximum duration as per Treasury Advisor's (MUFG's) colour coded Credit List, and less than one year
	Notice Account		
	Short Term Deposit		
Debt Management Office or UK Local Authority	Any deposit	No limit.	
Money Market Funds	Instant Access or with Notice	AAA rated	Instant Access or notice period up to one year

Table 2

Non-Specified Investment are sterling denominated with a maturity longer than one year but no longer than five years, and must meet the following criteria:

Investment Counterparty	Investment Instrument	Minimum High Credit Quality Criteria	Investment Duration
Banks or Building Societies	Any deposits with maturity up to a maximum of five years	Fitch: Short Term F1+ and Long Term AA- and Moody, Standard & Poor, equivalent where rated, the lowest rating used where different	Maximum duration suggested by Treasury Advisor's (MUFG's) colour coded Credit List, and not in excess of five years
Debt Management Office or UK Local Authority		No Limit.	

Table 3

Treasury Limits

Investment Instrument	Cash balances less than £30Million	Cash balances higher than £30Million
	Limits	Limits
Variable Rate Investments (Excluding Enhanced Cash Funds)	Maximum holding £30M	Maximum holding 100%
Counterparty limits (to encompass all forms of investment)	Maximum £5M	Maximum £10M
Instant Access Or Overnight Deposit	Maximum holding 100%	
Fixed Rate less than 12 month maturity	Maximum holding 100%	
Fixed Rate more than 12 months to maturity (includes all types of Fixed Rate Investments i.e. Certificates of Deposits)	Maximum £5M	Maximum £10M
Money Market Funds - Traditional Instant Assess (Counterparty Limit per Fund)	Maximum £5M per MMF	Maximum £10M per MMF
	No limit on total cash held	
Enhanced Cash Funds	Maximum £3M	
Certificates of Deposits	Maximum £5M	
Property Funds	Maximum of £3M - No durational limit. Use would be subject to consultation and approval	

Procedures of Applying the Criteria and Limits

Before the Treasury Team makes an investment, the Team will follow the follow procedure to ensure full compliance with the Specified and Non-Specified Criteria and Treasury Limits:
1 Check that the Counterparty is on the Counterparty List (also known as Current Counterparty Report for Stevenage) produced by MUFG Corporate Markets (LAS), specifically meeting the Council's Specified and Non-specified Minimum High Credit Quality Criteria in the above Table 1 & 2. If it is not on the list, the Treasury Team will not invest with them.
2 If the Counterparty is on the list, then the Treasury Team refers to the Credit List produced by LAS in colour coding, to determine the maximum investment duration suggested for the deposit, as per the column of Suggested Duration (CDS Adjusted with manual override).
3 Refer to the Treasury Limits in the above Table 3 to ensure the amount invested complies with the Treasury Limits.

Approved Countries for Investments

This list is based on those countries which have sovereign ratings of AA- or higher, (we show the lowest rating from Fitch, Moody's and S&P) and also, (except - at the time of writing - for Hong Kong and Luxembourg), have banks operating in sterling markets which have credit ratings of green or above in the MUFG Corporate Markets creditworthiness service.

Based on lowest available rating (as at 13.11.25)

AAA

- Australia
- Denmark
- Germany
- Netherlands
- Norway
- Singapore
- Sweden
- Switzerland

AA+

- Canada
- U.S.A.

AA

- Abu Dhabi (UAE)
- Finland

AA-

- U.K.

A+

- Belgium
- France

The UK is exempt from the sovereign rating criteria as recommended by MUFG. The UK sovereign rating is currently AA-.

The above list includes the possible countries the Council may invest with. Not all of these countries are used or will be used in treasury management investments

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Approved Sources of Long and Short-term Borrowing 2026/27

On Balance Sheet	Fixed	Variable
PWLB	●	●
UK Municipal Bond Agency	●	●
Local Authorities	●	●
Banks	●	●
Pension Funds	●	●
Insurance Companies	●	●
UK National Wealth Fund	●	●
Market (long-term)	●	●
Market (temporary)	●	●
Market (LOBOs)	●	●
Stock Issues	●	●
Local Temporary	●	●
Local Bonds	●	
Local Authority Bills	●	●
Overdraft		●
Negotiable Bonds	●	●
Internal (capital receipts & revenue balances)	●	●
Commercial Paper	●	
Medium Term Notes	●	
Finance Leases	●	●

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