

Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031

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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 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.

1.7B 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.

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

- **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.

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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.

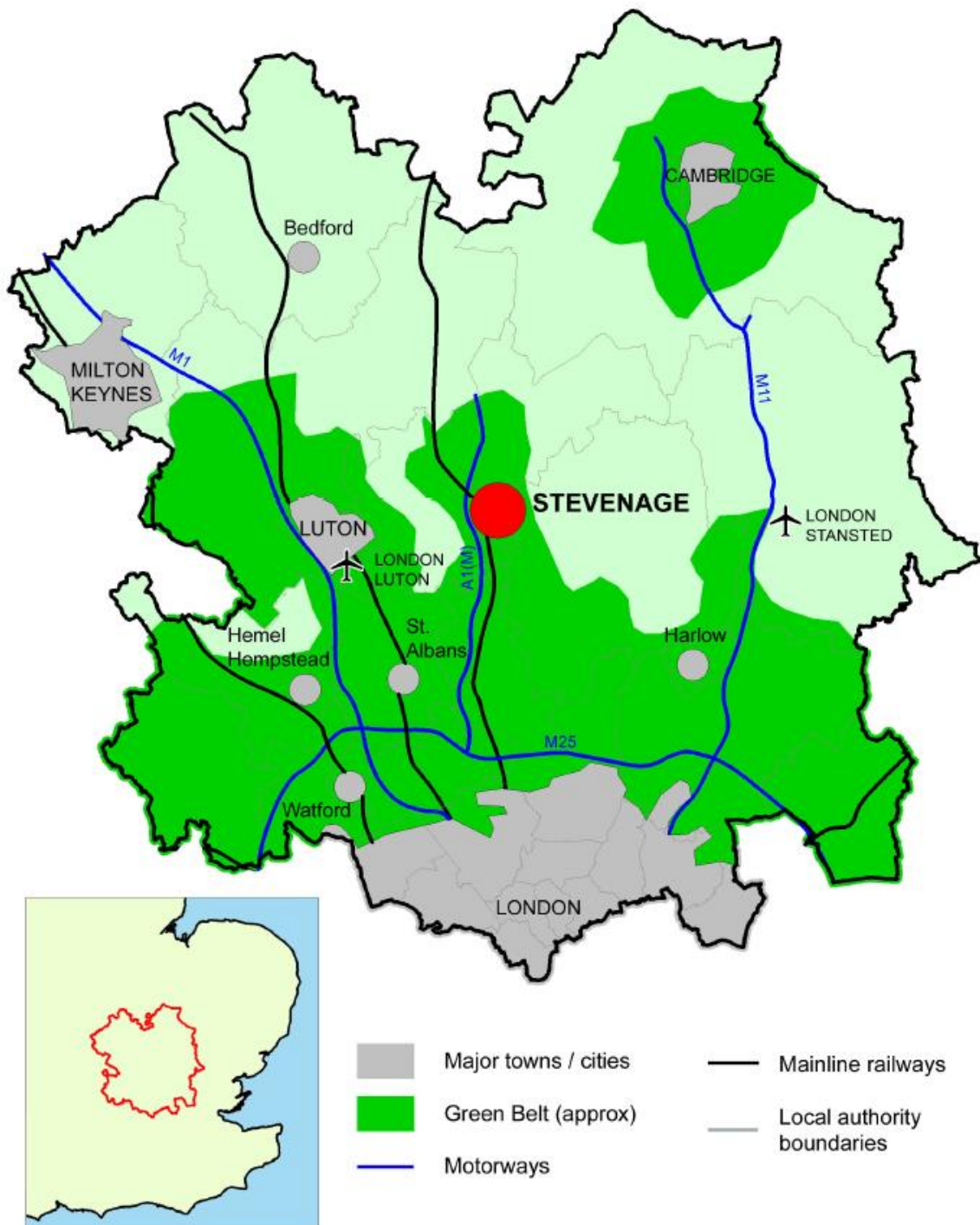
3.4 Hertfordshire itself does not have one, dominant population centre. Instead there are a number of historic market towns, garden cities and new towns. Larger urban areas such as Milton Keynes, Luton and Cambridge lie outside of the county but within this area of influence.

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?

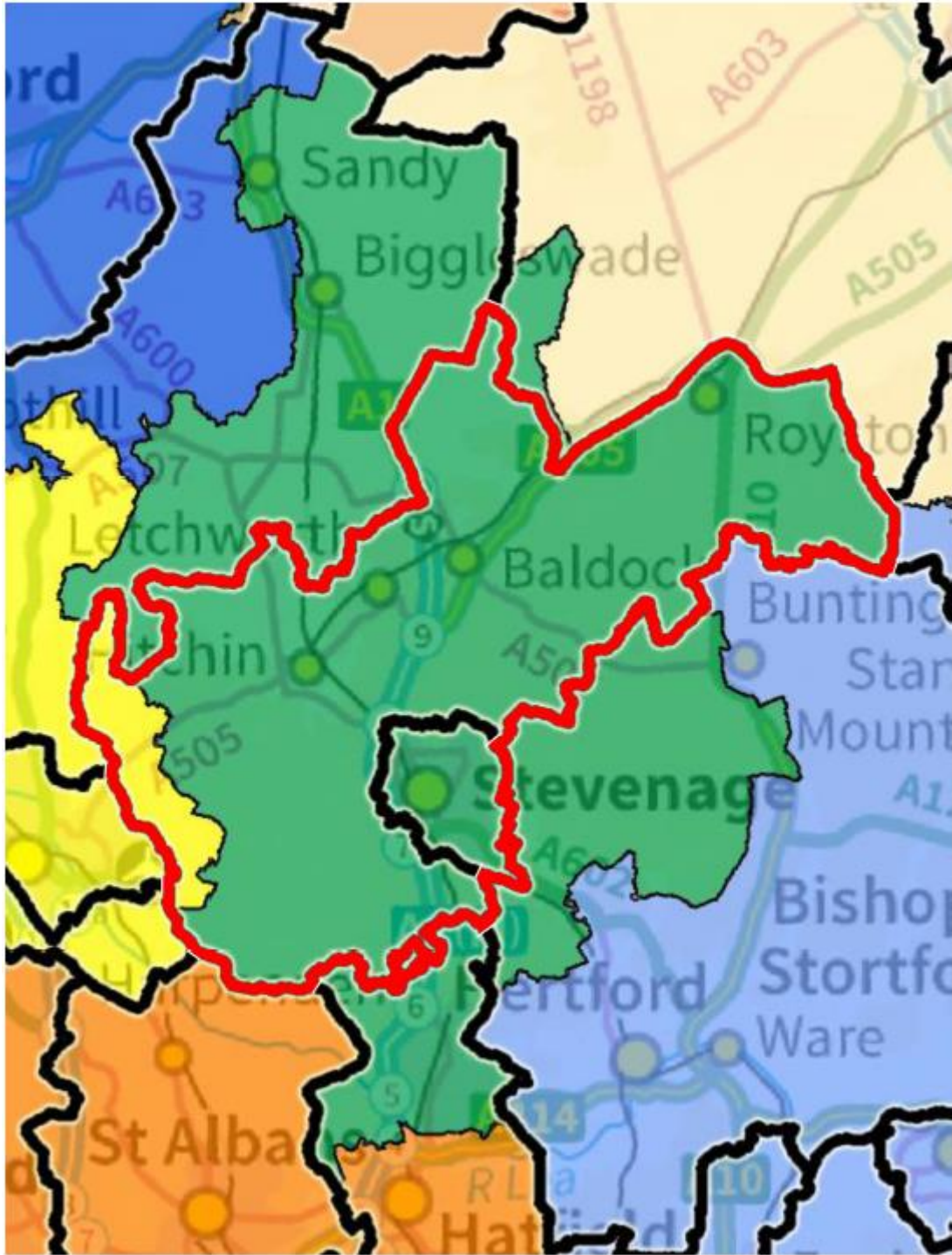
3.10 In preparing this plan, the following issues have proved particularly important:

- 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.

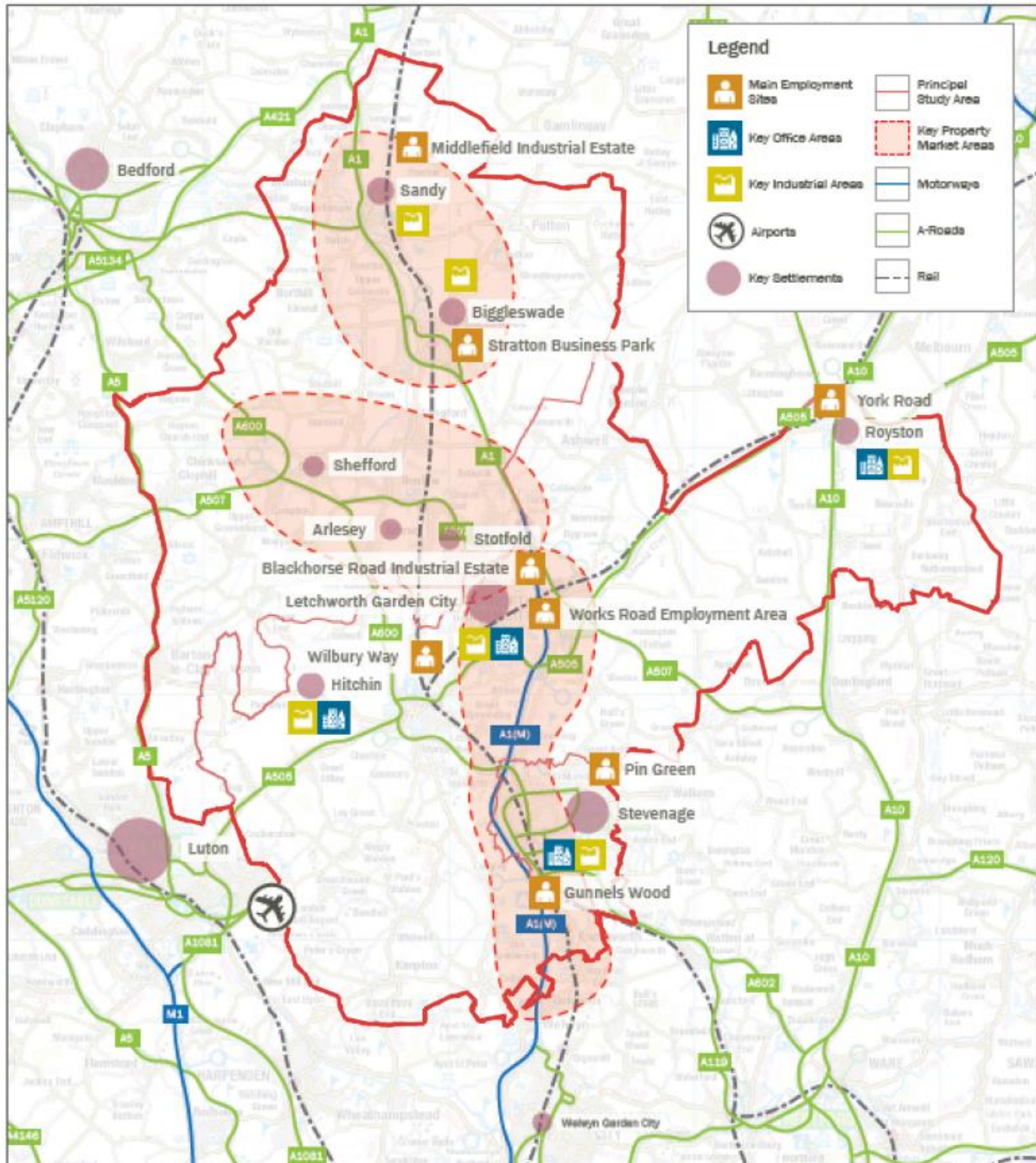
3.18 Stevenage Borough is small. It is completely surrounded by North Hertfordshire and East Hertfordshire. This means that the decisions we make and the decisions our immediate neighbours make are particularly closely related. Our three authorities will have to ensure that our respective Local Plans 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. 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.

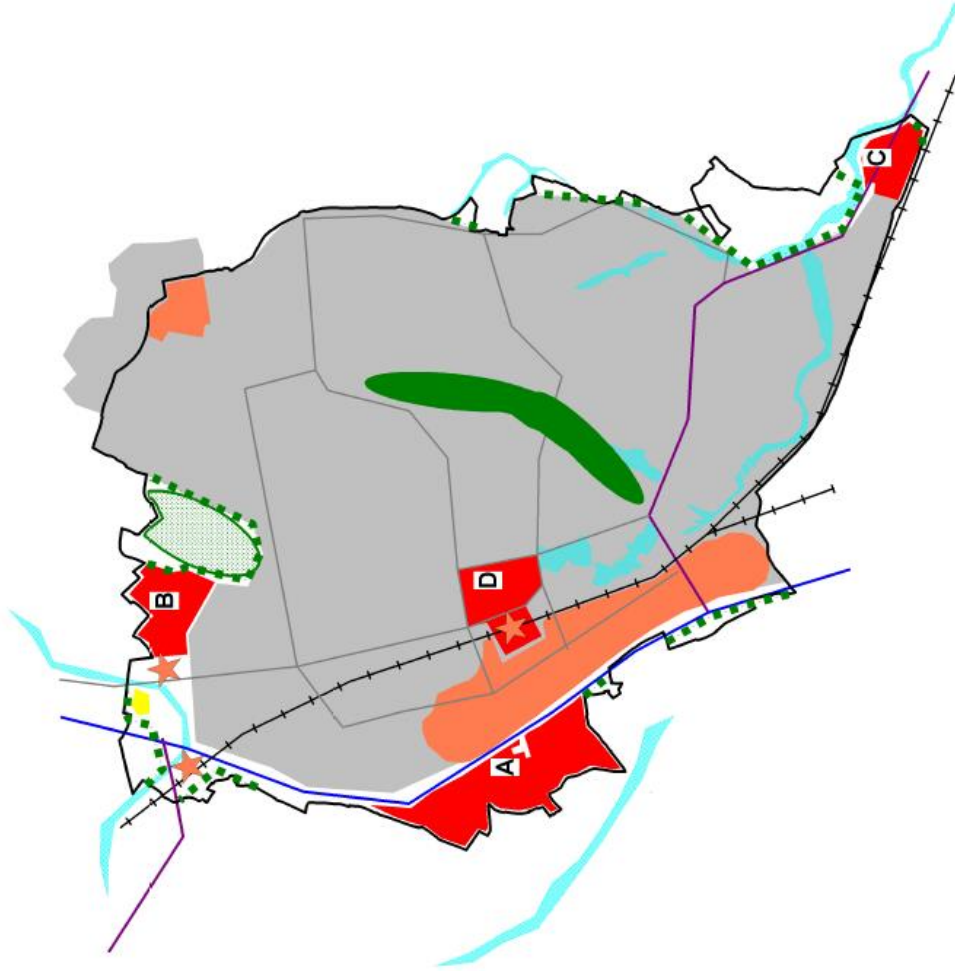
4.36 The key projects, stakeholders, agencies and partnerships are identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and progress will be monitored against targets set in the Monitoring and Delivery chapter. This sets out what we expect to happen, who we

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.

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-  Borough boundary
-  Urban area
-  Employment Areas
-  New employment sites
-  Major housing sites
-  **A** Stevenage West - 1,350 homes
-  **B** North of Stevenage - 800 homes
-  **C** South East Stevenage - 550 homes
-  **D** Town Centre - 2,000 homes
-  Gypsy and Traveller site
-  Strategic Open Space
-  New Strategic Open Space
-  Green Belt boundary
-  Road and rail network
-  Areas of flood risk



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 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;~~
- ~~b-c.~~ ensure that any on-site shortfall against emission reduction targets is offset by an alternative off-site proposal ~~or through the operation of the Council's Carbon Offset Fund;~~
- ~~e-d.~~ apply water usage targets to developments, seek rainwater harvesting and grey water recycling, and encourage water neutrality;
- ~~d-e.~~ encourage the sustainable use of all other resources throughout the development life-cycle;
- ~~e-f.~~ support the use of decentralised energy networks, district heat networks, and intelligent energy systems in developments;
- ~~f-g.~~ support the use of ultra-low and zero carbon combined heat and power systems in developments;
- ~~g-h.~~ 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;
- ~~h-i.~~ protect the ~~Borough's existing~~ borough's significant carbon sinks, support the creation of new carbon sinks, and encourage developments to deliver net gains in carbon sequestration;
- ~~i-j.~~ encourage urban greening, particularly through the use of green roofs and walls;
- ~~j.~~ ~~reduce the need to travel by ensuring that developments provide for the installation of high-speed digital network infrastructure;~~
- k. promote a green economy through the provision of local green jobs, local food production, and supporting the principles of a circular economy; ~~and~~
- ~~l.~~ ensure site waste is disposed of as sustainably as possible; ~~and~~
- ~~l-m.~~ 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 gases 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, 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 contribution will be refused.

¹² United Nations, 2024.

¹³ Met Office, 2020.

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

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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 ~~and~~, 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.

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.

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

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)

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.

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.

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)

5.27 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. An extended and regenerated train station will be the focus of an enlarged Stevenage Central area, within which six Major Opportunity Areas will be designated to promote distinct mixed-use redevelopment schemes.
- c. Retain the primary retail frontages in both the Town Centre Shopping Area and the High Street Shopping Area as the focus of major comparison shopping.
- d. Support the provision of up to 7,600 m² net of additional convenience floorspace within the Borough boundary by 2031 to meet the needs of the expanded town. This will include:
 - i. 1,500m² for extensions to existing centres in the retail hierarchy, then other stores in accordance with the sequential test;
 - ii. A Local Centre in the west of Stevenage development in the order of 500m² to meet the day-to-day needs of the residents of the new neighbourhood;
 - iii. A Local Centre in the north of Stevenage development in the order of 500m² to meet the day-to-day needs of the residents of the new neighbourhood;
 - iv. A Neighbourhood Centre in the south-east of Stevenage development of no more than 500m² with a convenience store and other related small-scale Use Class 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. 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. ~~This store should not be trading until 2023, 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; ~~sheltered~~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.

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²⁶ Appropriate Assessment Screening Opinion (SBC, 2015).

Policy SP6: Sustainable transport

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

- ~~a. Support~~ reduce the need to travel by directing new development to the most accessible locations;
- ~~b. require developments to first prioritise active travel in the layout of sites and by providing connections to surrounding pedestrian and cycle networks;~~
- ~~c. require developments to provide appropriate cycle parking and supporting facilities, having regard to the supplementary planning documents and relevant Hertfordshire County Council guidance;~~
- ~~d. require 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;~~
- ~~a.e.~~ support the provision of new ~~town-centre~~ high-quality sustainable transport facilities, including:
 - ~~i. New bus termini and waiting facilities;~~
 - ~~i. New~~ schemes identified in local transport plans and other relevant plans and strategies;
 - ~~ii. new~~ pedestrian and cycle links, with particular emphasis on connections particularly between the ~~Town-Centre and town centre,~~ the Gunnels Wood employment area, and Old Town; ~~and~~
 - ~~iii. A~~ a new borough-wide cycle hire scheme;
 - ~~iv. new bus termini and waiting facilities; and~~
 - ~~iii.v.~~ a remodelled railway station that reflects Stevenage's position on the network and wider regeneration ambitions;
- ~~b. Direct high density residential and commercial uses, and other developments that generate significant demand for travel, to the most accessible locations;~~
- ~~c. Support the provision of sustainable transport schemes as identified in local transport plans and other relevant plans and strategies;~~
- ~~f. Refuse~~ reduce car dependency by limiting the provision of car parking according to site accessibility;
- ~~d.g.~~ refuse permission where development proposals fail to provide any relevant plans or assessments relating to transport;
- ~~e. Assess proposals against the car and cycle parking standards set out in the Supplementary Planning Documents; and~~
- ~~f. Require new development to make reasonable on-site, off-site or financial~~ seek any necessary developer contributions, in accordance with Policy SP5 ~~including (but not limited to):~~
 - ~~i. The creation or improvement, to achieve all of routes to, from or in the vicinity of the site;~~

- ~~ii. The provision of crossings, underpasses, bridges or other appropriate means of traversing significant barriers for pedestrians and cyclists;~~
- ~~iii. The implementation of parking control measures within or in the vicinity of the development site; and / or~~
- ~~g.h. The implementation of other transport schemes identified in our delivery plan the above.~~

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 Gunness 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 Gunness 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.

²⁷ NPPF Paragraph 29

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

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

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

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

5.62 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.
- b. Deliver these through the sites and broad locations identified in this plan that allow for at least:
 - i. 2,950 new homes in and around the Town Centre;
 - ii. 1,350 new homes in a new neighbourhood on undeveloped land to the west of the town within the Borough boundary;
 - iii. 1,350 new homes to the north and south-east of the town on land removed from the Green Belt;
 - iv. 1,950 new homes elsewhere in the Borough; and
 - v. 11 new, permanent Gypsy and Traveller pitches on a new site close to Junction 8 of the A1(M).
- c. Ensure at least 60% of new homes completed within the Borough boundary between 2011 and 2031 are on previously developed land.
- d. Make sure there is always enough land to build homes for the next five years.
- e. Support applications for housing development on unallocated sites where they are in suitable locations and will not exceed our environmental capacity.
- f. Build a full range of homes in terms of tenure, type and size. This plan positively addresses housing needs and existing imbalances in the housing stock by setting targets for:
 - i. At least 20% of all new homes over the plan period to be Affordable Housing with an aspiration to deliver up to 40% affordable housing where viability permits;
 - ii. An appropriate mix of housing sizes, in line with the most up-to-date evidence of need; and
 - iii. At least 3% of new homes over the plan period to be 'aspirational' to deliver a more balanced housing stock; and
 - iv. At least 1% of new homes on the urban extensions to be self-build.
- g. Supplement these homes through the provision of up to 200 bed spaces in supported accommodation subject to up-to-date evidence of need; 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. Our evidence identifies a requirement for Stevenage of 7,300 homes over the period 2011-2031. This takes into account migration trends over a 10-year period and also includes adjustments in response to market signals in line with Government 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.

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

5.70 Notwithstanding this point, we have worked with other authorities to define the functional HMA in which Stevenage lies (see Chapter 3)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.

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.

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

5.71 Taking into account completions and permissions since 2011, this target will require development to accelerate to a rate of around 450 homes per year over the remainder of the plan period. This is above long-term development rates since the Development Corporation was wound up. However, the development industry supports our belief that this level of delivery can be achieved³⁵.

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 study³⁶ identifies sufficient sites within the Borough to meet our housing requirement to 2031. In trying to meet these needs, whilst ensuring sustainable development, we have chosen sites for development in the order shown below:

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

5.74 A technical paper³⁷ has been produced to explain how we have decided which sites from the land availability assessment to take forward and allocate within this plan.

5.75 Since 2011, 593 homes have been completed, and a further 1,758³⁸ are already in the planning process. This means that land for a further 5,249 homes needs to be identified.

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

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

consistent with the policies of the Framework. The Housing Technical Paper (SBC, 2015) considers provision across this wider area.

³⁵ Housing completions in the 20- and 30-year periods to 2011 averaged 300 per year. The required rate represents an uplift of around 50%

³⁶ Strategic Land Availability Assessment: Housing. Update 2015

³⁷ Housing Technical Paper (SBC, 2015)

³⁸ Excludes some schemes that we know are unlikely to come forward in their current form, to avoid double-counting.

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 evidence³⁹ suggests that just over 45% of future housing could be built on PDL. Overall, we expect that approximately 60% of all housing completions over the period 2011-2031 will be on PDL.

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

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

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

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

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

5.82 The homes that are delivered from the sites identified in this plan, and through other permissive regimes, will be supplemented by windfalls. These are the sites that are brought forward which have not been specifically identified for development.

³⁹ Housing Technical Paper (SBC, 2015)

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 community⁴⁰. 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 2031⁴¹. There is some uncertainty around the precise level of future requirements because of the small size of the existing community and the difficulties of projecting their needs over a long time period. We will ensure that the minimum requirement identified is met and will keep our evidence under regular review to ensure that appropriate levels of provision are made over the period to 2031. Our existing site at Dyes Lane has been developed to the limits of the existing land ownership and this plan identifies a new site at the north-west of the Borough to meet future requirements.

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

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

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

5.88 Similarly, we need to ensure the right sorts of provision are made for older residents. Much of this can be accommodated within the housing stock though the data suggests up to 200 bed spaces of specialist accommodation is likely to be required⁴². However, it is important to be flexible in this regard. The ways in which

⁴⁰ In accordance with Government advice in Planning policy for traveller sites (DCLG, 2015)

⁴¹ Stevenage Borough Council Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Study (David Couttie Associates (DCA), 2013); Housing Technical Paper (SBC, 2015)

⁴² 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.

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.

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~~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~~require significant developments to be masterplanned to ensure the delivery of high-quality schemes;
- c. ~~Set~~set out detailed design criteria and require applicants to have regard to ~~Supplementary Planning Documents~~supplementary planning documents and other relevant guidance;
- d. ~~Implement~~implement the ~~Government's~~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; ~~and~~
- e. ~~Support~~require developments to be safe and secure, reducing crime and the fear of crime; and
- e.f. ~~support~~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.

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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 obesity⁴³.

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.

⁴³ 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 evidence⁴⁴ 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.

⁴⁴ 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 Plan⁴⁵, 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.

⁴⁵ Stevenage District Plan Second Review, 1991-2011 (As amended 2004)

5.124 This plan is informed by a Green Belt Review⁴⁶.

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 judgement⁴⁷ 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 paper⁴⁸. 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 evidence⁴⁹ 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)

⁴⁶ 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)

⁴⁷ Calverton Parish Council v Nottingham City Council & Ors [2015] EWHC 1078 (Admin) (21 April 2015)

⁴⁸ Green Belt Technical Paper (SBC, 2015)

⁴⁹ 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 and pollution

We will work to minimise flood risk 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.

5.137 Some small areas of the Borough are at risk from flooding⁵⁰. 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.

⁵⁰ 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 location⁵¹. 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.

⁵¹ 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 infrastructure⁵².

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.

⁵² 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.

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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'⁵³. 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.

⁵³ 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

Development proposals must demonstrate how they will maximise reductions in greenhouse gas 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.

Minor development

~~Minor~~Major development proposals must achieve ~~a 35% improvement upon the relevant~~net zero regulated operational emissions rate⁵⁴ required by Part L of the Building Regulations.

At the application stage, an energy statement must be submitted to demonstrate how the proposal will meet ~~this~~the net zero target.

Post-permission, planning conditions will be used to ensure that the net zero target is met in practice.

Major development

~~Major development proposals 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 or a legal agreement will be used to:~~

- ~~a. Ensure that the net zero target is met in practice; and~~
- ~~b. Ensure that building fabric performance has been optimised.~~

Large scale major development

~~Large~~Outside of the town centre⁵⁵, large scale major development proposals⁵⁶ must be whole-life carbon net zero⁵⁷.

⁵⁴ ~~Dwelling emissions rate (DER) or building emissions rate (BER), as applicable.~~

⁵⁵ ~~As defined by Policy TC1.~~

⁵⁶ Defined as proposals involving the creation of more than 150 dwellings or 15,000m² of non-residential floor space.

⁵⁷ 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 ~~or a legal agreement~~ will be used to:

~~Secure~~ secure an updated WLC assessment, using actual emissions figures; and

~~a. Ensure that building fabric performance has been optimised.~~

Carbon offsetting

Where it is clearly demonstrated that a development proposal cannot fully meet the relevant target on-site, ~~any~~the shortfall ~~must~~may be offset by ~~either an alternative off-site proposal but only where the proposal has already been identified and delivery is certain.~~

~~a. A cash in lieu contribution to the Council's Carbon Offset Fund (COF); 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.~~

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 development must meet the emissions targets set by Policy CC1.

6A.2 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.

6A.3 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 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 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 ~~requirement to consider~~benefits of combining them with green roofs ~~under Policy CC6~~to create bio-solar roofs.

6A.6 Applicants will be expected to include details of how their proposal will comply with Policy CC1 as part of their submission. The level of detail required will be proportionate to the scale and complexity of the proposal, with large-scale major development proposals being required to include a WLC assessment⁵⁸ as part of their energy statement. Householder and minor development ~~is~~are excluded from the policy.

6A.7 In practice, ensuring that ~~building fabric has been optimised~~the policy is effective will require the ~~monitoring and~~ reporting of energy demand and emissions post-construction. ~~Submissions~~This should also include details be done once for each development (or phase of how this will be carried out, to cover a period of five years from build~~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 ~~must~~may be offset ~~by~~on a ~~cash contribution to~~different site. ~~However,~~ the ~~Council's COF.~~ The price for council will only consider this where the offsetting emissions will be published in a separate documentscheme has already been identified and regularly reviewed. ~~its delivery can, for all intents and purposes, be guaranteed.~~

~~6A.9—As an alternative to a contribution to the COF, applicants may put forward proposals to offset emissions on a different site. However, the council will only consider these where it can be demonstrated that the scheme will be equally or more effective in reducing emissions than a cash contribution and delivery of the scheme can, for all intents and purposes, be guaranteed.~~

~~6A.9~~

~~6A.10~~ 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.

⁵⁸ Produced in accordance with a nationally recognised standard.

Policy CC2: Heating and cooling

Development proposals should minimise demand for energy dependent cooling systems, ~~through the application of~~ with consideration for the following ~~cooling hierarchy~~:

- a. ~~Balance~~ Balancing solar gain and solar shading
- b. ~~Minimise~~ Minimising internal heat generation
- c. ~~Manage~~ Managing the heat within the building
- d. ~~Provide~~ Providing passive ventilation
- e. ~~Provide~~ Providing mechanical ventilation
- f. ~~Provide active cooling systems~~

~~Minor and major~~

Major development proposals must demonstrate how ~~this buildings~~ will be ~~achieved through~~ 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.

6A.11 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. It is important that new development is designed to mitigate this risk.

6A.12 Active cooling systems, such as air conditioning, have significant energy requirements and also require maintenance. For these reasons, they are not a sustainable solution. Instead, the risk of overheating should, first and foremost, be mitigated through building design.

6A.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.14 Therefore, the challenge is to ensure that buildings remain comfortable and safe throughout the year, including during periods of extreme temperatures, without increasing energy demand. Policy CC2 explains how new development should approach this challenge.

6A.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.

6A.16 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.17 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.18 For ventilation, passive ~~methods should be favoured over~~ mechanical methods, ~~although external noise should be considered in determining the most~~ may be appropriate ~~solution. It is also more difficult, depending on the approach to~~ passively ventilate building design and site context. In any case, single-aspect dwellings, ~~which~~ 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.20 For ~~minor and~~ major development proposals, applicants will be expected to include details of how Policy CC2 will be complied with as part of an energy statement at the point of application submission. Applicants for householder and minor development proposals 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.

Development proposals involving the creation of new dwellings must additionally incorporate rainwater harvesting schemes unless there are clear and convincing reasons for not doing so.

All non-residential development must provide for the recycling of grey water unless there are clear and convincing reasons for not doing so.

Development proposals which demonstrate water neutrality will be strongly supported.

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.

6A.22 Proposals for new dwellings must ensure that potable 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.23 Proposals for new dwellings must also incorporate rainwater harvesting 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.

6A.24 All non-residential development must provide for the recycling of grey water 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.25 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.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. 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

Development proposals which create, utilise, or facilitate connection to decentralised energy networks (DENs) or district heat networks (DHNs) will be strongly supported.

The use of ultra-low and zero carbon combined heat and power (CHP) systems will also be strongly supported.

Developments that produce local ultra-low and zero carbon renewable energy with surplus injected into the grid will be strongly supported.

The implementation of Intelligent Energy Systems (IES) is strongly encouraged.

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.

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.

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 and will seek to work with neighbouring authorities, energy companies and developers to implement any necessary supporting infrastructure within the borough boundary.

6A.31 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 existingsignificant 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 ~~likely to be the most significant carbon sinks but hedgerows, allotments and gardens also play a role.~~

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 ~~the most important 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. ~~The council will publish separate guidance on how carbon sequestration and storage should be calculated.~~

Policy CC6: Green roofs

Development proposals ~~should incorporate green roofs unless there are clear and convincing reasons for not doing so. Where appropriate, development proposals~~ which incorporate biosolar green roofs, blue-green roofs, bio-solar roofs or green walls will be strongly supported.

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 ~~order to realise recognition of~~ these benefits, Policy CC6 ~~requires new development to incorporate~~ 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 are clear and convincing reasons for not doing. 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.39 The policy applies to all developments but. Given the wide array of potential benefits in providing green roofs, the council will recognise that for many smaller scale and householder developments, the installation of a green roof would be impractical. For larger scale proposals, the incorporation of green roofs should be seen as the starting point and factored in at the outset of the design process.~~

~~6A.37 For the avoidance of doubt, financial cost will not, in and of itself, be accepted as a reason for failing to install green roofs. However, where the cost of installing green roofs 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 the policy.~~

~~visual~~

~~6A.38 Visual considerations are also unlikely to be accepted as reasons for not installing when proposals incorporating green roofs are assessed. Buildings which incorporate green roofs are currently the exception rather than the rule and in order for the policy to be effective to facilitate more widespread adoption, some degree of divergence from established character will be necessary.~~

~~Applicants However, applicants should note that the incorporation of a green roof this does not necessarily mean a entail greater acceptance of flat roof designs, since solutions for pitched green roofs are now widely available.~~

~~6A.39 Visual considerations may will be taken into account 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. Proposals for It is expected that proposals involving listed buildings or within conservation areas will generally not be expected to utilise green roofs but the council will support them where they are incorporated sensitively.~~

~~6A.40 Given that this plan strongly encourages the production of renewable energy, the council will take a balanced approach to proposals which incorporate solar panels instead of green roofs. Solar panels have the potential to deliver much greater reductions in greenhouse gas emissions through the production of clean electricity and/or hot water, whilst green roofs deliver a wider array of benefits, notably for flood risk and biodiversity. Applicants should therefore provide an assessment of the relative benefits and drawbacks of each solution as part of their submission.~~

~~6A.41 Applicants should also consider that green roofs and solar panels are not mutually exclusive. "Biosolar" roofs combine the benefits of green roofs and solar panels and when designed properly, can actually improve the effectiveness of both the green roof (by providing shade) and the panels (by providing cooling). Proposals incorporating biosolar roofs will be strongly supported.~~

~~6A.42 Green walls provide many of the same benefits as green roofs but are harder to install and maintain, particularly in terms of irrigation. For this reason, developments will not be required to incorporate green walls but the council will be supportive of proposals that include them.~~

DRAFT

A green economy

Policy CC7: ~~Digital connectivity~~

~~Development proposals should ensure that sufficient ducting space for full fibre connectivity infrastructure is provided to all end users unless an affordable alternative 1Gb/s capable connection is made available.~~

~~6A.43 High-speed digital connectivity is essential in today's economy and is perhaps as important to the proper functioning of development as energy, water and waste management services. It also has a role to play in driving down greenhouse gas emissions by allowing people to work and access services effectively from home, thereby limiting the need to travel.~~

~~6A.44 A typical broadband connection involves running fibre cables from the exchange to a box on the street, with the final connection to premises made with copper wire. Full fibre, also known as fibre to the premises (FTTP), is where fibre optic cables connect premises directly to the exchange and is the fastest and most reliable type of connection, offering speeds around 30 times faster than a typical connection.~~

~~6A.55 As of June 2024, only about 43% of premises in Stevenage benefit from access to full fibre connection, well behind the UK average of 67%. In order to address this, new development will be required to provide sufficient ducting space for a full fibre connection to be installed, unless an affordable alternative capable of similar speeds is made available.~~

A green economy

Policy CC8: The green economy

Development proposals which demonstrate consistency with the principles of a circular economy will be strongly supported.

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 provision or enhancement will be strongly supported.

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.

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 development will be accompanied by a site waste management plan.

6A.58 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.

6A.59 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.60 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	12,000m 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 lines⁵⁹.

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.

⁵⁹ <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 redeveloped⁶⁰. 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.

⁶⁰ 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 period⁶¹.

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 resisted⁶². 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 development⁶³. 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.

⁶¹ Employment Technical Paper (SBC, 2015)

⁶² As a guide, plot ratios (the relationship between site area and floorspace) of 50-100% will normally be expected.

⁶³ 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 roundabouts⁶⁴. 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.

⁶⁴ 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 permitted⁶⁵. 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.

⁶⁵ 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.

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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 evidence⁶⁶ 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 identifies⁶⁷ 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

⁶⁶ Stevenage Retail and Leisure Capacity Study (CACI, March 2013)

⁶⁷ 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 Gunnel's 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 civic hub;
- d. A linear park running east-west parallel to Six Hills Way; and
- e. A new primary school on the Eastgate car park

Applications should address the following design and land use principles:

- i. Landmark buildings should be created in prominent locations;
- ii. New residential development on the south side of Southgate Park should have habitable rooms orientated to face southwards over the new linear park;
- iii. Pedestrian linkages southwards to North Hertfordshire College should be improved;
- iv. Southgate should be re-opened as a trafficked street in the form of a shared surface;
- v. Danesgate should be widened along its length from Lytton Way to Danestrete, and the corner with Danestrete eased to allow buses to negotiate the corner more easily;
- vi. Tower Road should be removed;
- vii. The Plaza site should be redeveloped into the new public sector hub, fronting onto Town Square; and
- viii. Heritage assessment and design work to preserve and enhance the significance of the Town Square Conservation Area and the contribution made by its setting.

7.23 Stevenage's original police station, The Towers residential block and its associated car parking, the Southgate Health Centre, NHS Southgate West, the central library, the Borough Council's Southgate surface car park, Matalan and The Plaza are the current principal uses in this area.

7.24 The NHS and the central library are expected to be relocated into a new public sector hub within the redeveloped Plaza site. This clustering of public sector services in a modern, fit-for-purpose building will improve the quality of service that can be offered. The removal of the NHS and the central library from their current buildings will release them for residential redevelopment.

7.25 The new residential opportunity should aim to create a high density residential community with a southward facing aspect, overlooking the new linear Southgate Park. A new development site will be created by the removal of the Lytton Way/Six Hills Way roundabout, as a part of the reconfiguration of Lytton Way. This would be south of the current McCarthy and Stone scheme. We anticipate that this would be a suitable site for a high-density development of either residential or offices. Car parking for these developments may be in multi-storey and/or basement format. Alternatively, the Borough Council is open to proposals for car-free provision.

7.26 A new primary school, in a suitable urban (as opposed to edge-of-town) form, will be located on the Borough Council's current Southgate car park to serve the needs not only of the new Southgate Park residents but also of the larger new residential community proposed in and around Stevenage Central.

7.27 There is a 2015 resolution to grant outline planning permission for a major redevelopment of the Matalan site and adjacent land, comprising over 500 high-density residential units, ground floor retail and leisure uses, supporting semi-basement car parking and a landscaped central area. When detailed planning permission is being negotiated, the Borough Council will seek the transfer to it of sufficient land on the Danesgate boundary to allow for two-way traffic along the whole of this section of road, and the easing of the Danesgate/Danestrete junction to allow buses to negotiate this corner in both directions more easily.

7.28 The Southgate Park MOA lies adjacent to the Town Square Conservation Area. Developments in the vicinity of the conservation area will need to preserve and enhance the surroundings and the setting of the conservation area.

7.29 The key to delivering this site successfully will be the successful re-provision of the central library and NHS clinics onto a redeveloped Plaza site.

Policy TC3: Centre West Major Opportunity Area

Within the Centre West Major Opportunity Area, as defined on the Policies Map, planning permission will be granted for:

- a. High-density Use Class C3 residential units;
- b. Replacement Use Class 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. A taxi rank; and
- h. A series of interlinked public squares and open spaces;

Applications should address the following design and land use principles:

- i. Redevelopment of the large surface-level car park and the creation in its place of a new urban street form;
- ii. High quality place-defining buildings should be located in appropriate, prominent locations;
- iii. The creation of an attractive new east-west pedestrian link from a significant new public square in the heart of the site through the train station precinct towards Town Square;
- iv. Commercial and leisure uses to be focused to the east of the site, close to the train station;
- v. Residential uses to the east of the site will only be permitted above first floor level and will require appropriate noise mitigation due to its proximity to the East Coast Main Line;
- vi. Provision for a taxi rank in proximity to the train station;
- vii. Traffic calmed car/pedestrian shared surfaces; and
- viii. Reservation for additional pedestrian/cycle routes in the longer term to allow greater, and more direct, access through to Gunnels Wood Road and the wider Gunnels Wood Employment Area.

7.30 Centre West is currently the site of the Stevenage Leisure Park, which comprises a large surface car park and a mixture of Use Class 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; ~~and~~
- e. New Use Class E(a) and Use Class E(b) restaurant and cafe uses; and
- e-f. New Use Class E(g)(ii) research and development.

Applications should address the following design and land use principles:

- i. 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. Creating an exemplar, low carbon “urban village” with climate change consideration in all developments;
- iii. Demolition of the Arts & Leisure Centre to facilitate better east-west integration and create new development sites in the environs of the train station;
- iv. The provision of replacement sports and theatre facilities elsewhere within Stevenage Central;
- v. A significantly regenerated and enlarged high quality dual-frontage train station with associated facilities;
- vi. New public squares and the inclusion of green infrastructure on the eastern and western frontages of the train station;

- vii. High-quality, mixed-use developments within a short walking distance of the train station to unlock economic and employment opportunities;
- viii. Improved cycle connectivity and parking plus drop-off space to specifically serve train customers;
- ix. Celebrate the heritage of the town in the fabric, layout and design of the Station Gateway;
- x. Establishment of an attractive east - west pedestrian route across the East Coast Main Line; and
- xi. High-quality gateway and arrival experience to create a positive image of Stevenage for all rail visitors.

7.36 The Station Gateway area currently comprises the 1970s train station, the Arts and Leisure Centre (including the Gordon Craig Theatre), a series of surface level car parks and the southern section of Lytton Way. The train station is one of the top three busiest stations in Hertfordshire, alongside St Albans and Watford Junction. To ensure that such facilities continue to meet local shopping needs we will consider removing Permitted Development rights and / or using legal agreements under Policy SP4 to retain any new units in E(a) 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.

7.38C Within this policy context, high-level policy 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;
- ~~Green~~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.

7.38F 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 drop-off facilities should be 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 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)⁶⁸.

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:

- a. High-density Use Class C3 residential units;
- b. New Use Class E(a), E(b) and sui generis shop, bar, restaurant and cafe uses;

⁶⁸ <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/planning-policy/consultation-documents/stevenage-station-gateway-aap-preferred-options-report.pdf>

- 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;
- v. Provision will be made for new green space within an enlarged Town Square;
- vi. A new municipal theatre and art gallery on the north-eastern edge of the enlarged Town Square;
- vii. New development should include active ground floor frontages to principal streets;
- viii. The layout of new streets and squares should facilitate east-west pedestrian access and create sequential views and vistas between the train station and Town Square;
- ix. High quality development with landmark buildings in appropriate locations, including fronting onto Town Square;
- x. High-rise buildings; and
- xi. Heritage assessment and design work to preserve and enhance the significance of the Town Square Conservation Area and the contribution made by its setting.

7.43 The Central Core currently comprises the buildings surrounding Town Square, the Borough Council's Danestrete and Swingate offices, Mecca bingo, the magistrates courts, surface car parking and Use Class E(a) 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) and sui generis 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.

7.50 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) 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) and sui generis 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.

7.54 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 will be permitted at ground floor level, including Use Classes E and C1, as well as some other sui generis uses.

~~Within the TCSA, the following premises and areas are identified as Primary Frontages at ground floor level:~~

~~27–29 (odd) Town Square;
40–50 and 66–96 (even) Queensway;
41–73 and 79–101 (odd) Queensway;
6–22 (even) The Forum;
1–11 (odd) The Forum; and
The Westgate Centre.~~

~~Within the Primary Frontages, planning permission will be granted only for Use Class E(a) (shops). Planning permission will be granted for other uses within the Primary Frontages where:~~

~~a. The proposal is for use class E(b) (restaurants & cafes) at the following locations:~~

- ~~• 50–56, 60–64 & 75 Queensway~~
- ~~• 2–6 & 20–22 The Forum and 98 & 103 Queensway;~~

~~b. In other locations, the benefits to the overall vitality and viability of the town centre would equal or outweigh those that would be provided by an E(a) or E(c) use in the equivalent location. This will be considered having regard to whether:~~

- ~~• The proposal will retain an active frontage;~~
- ~~• The proposal will generate footfall equivalent to, or greater than, an E(a) or E(c) use in the equivalent location; and~~
- ~~• The unit has been unsuccessfully marketed for E(a) or E(c) use, or has remained vacant, for at least six months.~~

7.59 The Major Opportunity Areas and the Town Centre Shopping Area are largely mutually exclusive, with the exception of a small area on the north side of the bus station (which lies within the Central Core MOA), Park Place (which lies in the Marshgate MOA) and the Tesco Extra store (which lies in the Northgate MOA). Within the existing shopping streets, the Council intends to protect the principal comparison shopping areas, whilst allowing greater freedom and flexibility in secondary and tertiary areas. Consequently, the retail streets are broadly protected by the Town Centre Shopping Area designation, whilst the best ground floor retail frontages are given extra protection through the Primary Frontages designation. The Council is keen to offer the opportunity for the Town Centre to become an all-day destination - by permitting cafes, bars, restaurants and public houses in appropriate locations.

7.60 Shopping is now a leisure activity and Stevenage needs to respond to that change. Consumers have a choice of shopping destinations and experiences available to them and are often prepared to travel considerable distances to enjoy a new or distinctive experience. Our evidence suggests that people from within Stevenage's catchment are travelling to enjoy centres such as St Albans, Milton Keynes and Luton. The retail parks in Stevenage also provide significant competition for the Town Centre. Stevenage Town Centre once again - as it did in the 1960s - needs to become a centre of choice for people from a wide catchment.

7.61 It is hoped that the significant numbers of people living in the new residential community proposed in the Major Opportunity Areas will stimulate a change in the retail offer available in the Town Centre. This is what happened at the southern end of the High Street when a number of new medium to high density residential schemes were permitted in that vicinity. Private-sector investment in new restaurants, bars and shops - responding to the presence of significant numbers of people living locally - led to a significant regeneration of the southern part of the High Street without the need for public-sector investment. The Borough Council intends to create a set of circumstances in the Town Centre whereby a similar market-led regeneration of the retail offer can occur. A more open and permissive attitude will generally be taken to stimulate positive change, whilst retaining sufficient control within a planned framework to regulate negative changes.

Old Town High Street

Policy TC9: High Street Shopping Area

The spatial extent of the High Street Shopping Area (HSSA) is defined on the policies map.

Within the HSSA, planning permission for development of a scale appropriate to the High Street's location in the retail hierarchy and which falls into Use Classes 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; and
- b. Does not propose Class-E uses outside of the High Street Primary Frontages.

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.

~~Policy TC10: High Street Primary and Secondary Frontages~~

~~Within the High Street Shopping Area are defined Primary and Secondary Frontages, as shown on the policies map.~~

~~The following premises and areas are identified as Primary Frontages at ground-floor level:~~

- ~~• 70–92a High Street~~
- ~~• 35–75 High Street~~
- ~~• Middle Row~~

~~The following premises and areas are identified as Secondary Frontages at ground-floor level:~~

- ~~• 26–68 and 94–132 High Street~~
- ~~• 15–23, 29–33 and 77–129 High Street~~

~~Within the High Street Shopping Area, planning permission will be granted for Use Classes E(a), E(b), E(c) or drinking establishments where:~~

- ~~a. At least 60% of the Primary Frontages, as measured by both units and floorspace, will remain in Class E(a) use should the proposal be implemented;~~
- ~~b. The main ground floor shopping frontage will face onto either High Street or Middle Row; and~~
- ~~c. Any additional Use Class E(b) or drinking establishment uses will not adversely affect the character of the centre or otherwise result in a detrimental over-concentration of such uses in the vicinity of the application site.~~

~~Planning permission will be granted as an exception to these criteria where there are overriding benefits to the overall vitality and viability of the High Street, having regard to whether:~~

- ~~• The proposal will retain an active frontage;~~
- ~~• The proposal will generate footfall equivalent to, or greater than, a normally acceptable E-class use in the equivalent location; and~~
- ~~• The unit has been unsuccessfully marketed for normally acceptable uses or has remained vacant for at least six months.~~

7.64A

~~The amalgamation of existing premises to create larger units or the conversion of upper floors to provide additional floorspace in the same use class will not be permitted.~~

~~Within the High Street Shopping Area, further hot food takeaway uses will not be permitted.~~

~~7.65—Whilst the High Street fulfils a number of different retail roles, including making an important contribution to the Borough's leisure offer and providing opportunities for more specialist shopping and services not catered for in the Town Centre Shopping Area, one role that is particularly valued is its ability to meet a range of local convenience shopping needs for people in the immediate locality. For this reason, this plan identifies a Primary Frontage in the High Street where Class E(a) uses are protected.~~

~~7.66 The integrity of the small area of Primary Frontage, as the focus of convenience and comparison retailing in the High Street, is paramount. The Secondary Frontages offer opportunities for a broader mix of uses.~~

7.67 Given the already strong mix of cafes, sandwich shops, supermarkets, newsagents and take-aways (often offering food of limited nutritional value), coupled with the location of two large secondary schools at the northern end of the High Street, the Borough Council has determined not to permit any further 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.

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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: Retail 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 anyall 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 wider area, up to five years from the time that the application is made. For major schemes, where the full impact will not be realised in five years, the impact should also be assessed up to ten years from the time that the application is made.~~ 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—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.

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8 Infrastructure and transport

Infrastructure and developer requirements

Policy IT1: Strategic development access points

The preferred vehicular access points to strategic development sites from the existing road network are shown on the policies map:

- To land west of Stevenage via the existing road network at Bessemer Drive and Meadway; To land north of Stevenage from B197 North Road approximately 250 metres north of the junction with Granby Road;
- To land south-east of Stevenage from a new roundabout on the A602 approximately 200 metres east of the junction with Bragbury Lane;
- To Stevenage Leisure Park from Argyle Way and Six Hills Way; and
- To Stevenage town centre from reconfigured junctions between:
 - Fairlands Way and Lytton Way; and
 - Six Hills Way, Lytton Way and London Road

Planning permission will be granted where proposals demonstrate:

- a. That these preferred access points have been incorporated into the scheme design; ~~and~~
- b. That new junctions adequately consider the needs of all users, including bus priority; and
- b-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)⁶⁹. 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 area⁷⁰. 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:

- Traffic flows to / from the development;
- Traffic flows across the wider highway network;

⁶⁹ 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)

⁷⁰ Infrastructure Delivery Plan (SBC, 2015)

- 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 homes⁷¹, 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 issues⁷². 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 works⁷³. 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.

⁷¹ Including smaller developments being brought forward in phases that will cumulatively exceed this threshold

⁷² Infrastructure Delivery Plan (SBC, 2017)

⁷³ 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 impact upon highway safety;
- b. Development reflects the principles of the Stevenage Mobility Strategy;
- c. Schemes exceeding the relevant thresholds are accompanied by a satisfactory Transport Statement or Assessment, which demonstrates that the residual cumulative impacts of development are not severe; and
- d. Developments exceeding the Transport Assessment thresholdrelevant 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 required⁷⁴. Site-specific circumstances might result in an assessment or statement being requested for developments below these:

⁷⁴ Roads in Hertfordshire – A Guide for New Development (HCC, 2011)

	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 Supplementary Planning Document-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 guidance⁷⁵. Proposals should have regard to these and demonstrate how they have been taken into account. These will be regularly reviewed over the plan period to ensure they are in conformity with relevant national or local guidance and reflect local patterns of car ownership.

8.32 Some schemes may propose undercroft, or gated parking provision to make appropriate provision. In these cases, the Council will take reasonable steps to ensure such provision is useable and to prevent parking from being displaced onto surrounding streets. This may include requiring any such provision is provided free of charge in perpetuity for residents or employees or using covenants (or other relevant mechanisms) to ensure car owners make use of provided spaces.

8.33 Existing parking provision in the town is a valuable asset. Even small schemes can have a big impact. The conversion or sub-division of a modest number of houses in a street can 'tip the balance' in terms of the number of cars versus the number of available spaces. Similarly, schemes which result in the physical loss of existing provision need to be closely monitored. Schemes which take these matters into account will be permitted. Where it can be demonstrated that appropriate replacement provision has been made, or that existing provision is simply no longer able to accommodate modern vehicles, the loss of spaces will be allowed.

8.34 As well as making appropriate provision for cars, it is important to ensure that new developments are easily accessible, especially for walkers, cyclists and passenger transport users. Proposals will be required to demonstrate how they integrate with and, where appropriate, enhance the existing networks around Stevenage. A number of priority schemes are identified in this plan (see Policy IT7) to aid consideration of this policy requirement.

Policy IT6: Sustainable transport

⁷⁵ Parking Provision SPD (SBC, 2012)

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 station⁷⁶. 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 Rail⁷⁷. 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.

⁷⁶ Network Specification: London North Eastern and East Midlands (Network Rail, 2015)

⁷⁷ <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 work⁷⁸. 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) corridor⁷⁹. 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;

⁷⁸ Stevenage Central Town Centre Framework (DLA, 2015)

⁷⁹ 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 distances⁸⁰. 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.

⁸⁰ 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.

DRAFT

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. Our target is for at least 7,600 homes to be built within the area covered by this plan between 2011-2031.

9.2 We have already made significant progress towards this target. At 1 October 2015, around 2,350 homes had been completed or granted planning permission. This leaves us with a residual requirement of 5,429 new homes to be developed.

9.3 Policy HO1 includes sufficient sites to meet the target, whilst also allowing for some flexibility if any of these sites do not come forward. Sites have been allocated where we think at least five homes can be built.

9.4 Our evidence⁸¹ shows that we have exhausted all potential brownfield sites before greenfield or Green Belt sites were considered for allocation in this plan. The main opportunities for brownfield development come from the redevelopment of the neighbourhood centres and the regeneration of the Town Centre.

9.5 The housing numbers in this policy are indicative. Schemes on these sites should aim to achieve the highest possible net density appropriate to the character of the area, passenger transport accessibility and other relevant plan policies.

9.6 Many of the allocated sites have particular site-specific considerations to take into account. These might be environmental, social or local infrastructure issues. The table on the following page sets out the criteria that should be considered for each site. All of the sites have been assessed within our SA. The appraisal results have been used to help identify the site-specific considerations for developers.

9.7 The information set out against each proposal allocation is not a formal development brief. Any proposals coming forward on these sites will be assessed against all Local Plan policies and other material considerations relevant at the time of application. We may require developers to provide more information or include measures that are not specifically identified in the table below.

9.8 Policies HO2 to HO4 will provide the basis for developing the new neighbourhoods and detailed policies to guide town centre development are located in Section 7 of this plan.

9.9 The homes that are delivered from the sites identified in this Policy will be supplemented by windfalls. These are the sites that are brought forward which have not been specifically identified for development. They will be supported in principle where they help maintain our supply of deliverable sites and will not have an adverse impact. Policy HO5 sets out the criteria against which applications on windfall sites will be assessed.

Site Name	Site specific considerations
Bedwell Crescent neighbourhood centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Flood Risk Assessment required for any development of 1 hectare or more.

⁸¹ Housing Technical Paper (SBC, 2015)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community facilities to be retained or reprovided, or their loss justified. • Garages to be retained or reprovided, unless it can be demonstrated that they are no longer required to meet resident needs or others are available nearby, or they no longer meet operational requirements. • No loss in overall levels of parking provision, unless it can be demonstrated that a lower level will still meet the needs of the centre.
Bragbury End sports ground car park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within Area of Archaeological Significance - assessment will be required. Flood Risk Assessment required - within flood risk area. • Preserve or enhance the setting of adjacent listed buildings. • Emphasis on high quality landscaping within and / or around the development to reduce impact of greenfield development and create transition to Green Belt beyond. • Satisfactory vehicular access will need to be ensured. • Special consideration to sustainable transport measures due to edge-of-town location. • An Ancient Lane runs along the site boundary. • Suitable location to provide aspirational housing.
Burwell Road neighbourhood centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community facilities to be retained or reprovided, or their loss justified. Garages to be retained or reprovided, unless it can be demonstrated that they are no longer required to meet resident needs or others are available nearby, or they no longer meet operational requirements. • No loss in overall levels of parking provision, unless it can be demonstrated that a lower level will still meet the needs of the centre.
Dunn Close garage court	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific measures identified. • Garages to be retained or reprovided, unless it can be demonstrated that they are no longer required to meet resident needs or others are available nearby, or they no longer meet operational requirements.
Ex-play centre, Scarborough Avenue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community facility to be retained or reprovided, or its loss justified.
Former Pin Green school playing field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The loss of sports facilities will need to be mitigated.
Fry Road day nursery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community facility to be retained or reprovided, or its loss justified.
Ken Brown car showroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate whether previous uses have led to any contamination of site.
Kenilworth neighbourhood centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community facilities to be retained or reprovided, or their loss justified. Potential relocation of sub station and underground power cables. • No loss in overall levels of parking provision, unless it can be demonstrated that a lower level will still meet the needs of the centre.
Land at Eliot Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve or enhance the adjacent Green Link to ensure minimal impact.
Land West of North Road (Rugby Club)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flood Risk Assessment required for any development of 1 hectare or more. Replacement sports facilities in a suitable location, and of equivalent, or better, quantity and quality will be required, prior to development. • Special consideration to sustainable transport measures due to edge-of-town location. • Public Rights of Way run along the boundaries of the site.
Marymead neighbourhood centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve or enhance the conservation area

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community facilities to be retained or reprovided, or their loss justified. Existing employment provision should be reprovided. • No loss in overall levels of parking provision, unless it can be demonstrated that a lower level will still meet the needs of the centre. • Garages to be retained or reprovided, unless it can be demonstrated that they are no longer required to meet resident needs or others are available nearby, or they no longer meet operational requirements.
Scout hut, Drakes Drive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community facility to be reprovided or its loss satisfactorily justified.
Shephall Centre and adj. amenity land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within Area of Archaeological Significance - assessment will be required. Preserve or enhance the conservation area • Community facility to be reprovided or its loss satisfactorily justified. • Suitable location to provide aspirational housing.
Shephall View	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfactory vehicular access will need to be ensured.
The Glebe neighbourhood centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flood Risk Assessment required for any development of 1 hectare or more. An archaeological assessment will be required. • Investigate whether previous uses have led to any contamination of site Community facilities to be retained or reprovided, or their loss justified. Garages to be retained or reprovided, unless it can be demonstrated that they are no longer required to meet resident needs or others are available nearby, or they no longer meet operational requirements. • Existing employment provision should be reprovided. • No loss in overall levels of parking provision, unless it can be demonstrated that a lower level will still meet the needs of the centre.
The Hyde neighbourhood centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An archaeological assessment will be required. • Flood Risk Assessment required for any development of 1 hectare or more. Investigate whether previous uses have led to any contamination of site. Community facilities to be retained or reprovided, or their loss justified. • No loss in overall levels of parking provision, unless it can be demonstrated that a lower level will still meet the needs of the centre.
The Oval neighbourhood centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archaeological and transport assessments will be required. • Flood Risk Assessment required for any development of 1 hectare or more. Investigate whether previous uses have led to any contamination of site. Community facilities to be retained or reprovided, or their loss justified. Open space, including the children's playground, should be retained or reprovided. • No loss in overall levels of parking provision, unless it can be demonstrated that a lower level will still meet the needs of the centre.

Table 3 Site specific considerations for housing allocations identified in Policy HO1

Policy HO2: Stevenage West

Land to the west of Stevenage, as defined by the policies map, is allocated for the development of approximately 1,350 dwellings.

A Masterplan for the whole site will be required as part of any planning application. The Masterplan must be approved prior to the submission of detailed development proposals for the site.

Development proposals will be permitted where the following criteria are met:

- a. The applicant can demonstrate that development can be expanded beyond the Borough boundary in the future, into safeguarded land within North Hertfordshire;
- b. The development incorporates employment floorspace of 10,000m², in accordance with Policy EC1;
- c. Improvements to existing access routes across the A1(M), via Bessemer Drive and Meadway, are provided, which link effectively into the existing road, cycleway and pedestrian networks;
- d. The scheme is designed to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport;
- e. An appropriate buffer to mitigate against noise impacts from A1(M) is included;
- f. At least 5% aspirational homes are provided in line with Policy HO9;
- g. Plots to accommodate at least 1% new homes are made available for self-build purposes;
- h. 30% affordable housing is provided in line with Policy HO7;
- i. Provision for supported or sheltered housing is made in line with Policy HO10;
- j. A primary school is provided in line with the most up-to-date evidence of need;
- k. Local facilities to serve the community are incorporated, including a GP surgery, subject to demand;
- l. Sports facilities are provided on-site, in line with Policy HC8, including, but not limited to:
 - i. A skate park or MUGA for children; and
 - ii. Land to accommodate a new cricket facility;
- m. A full archaeological assessment is undertaken;
- n. A full flood risk assessment is undertaken;
- o. The scheme incorporates a network of green infrastructure, with an emphasis on high quality landscaping within and around the development to reduce the impact of the development on the surrounding greenfield / Green Belt land;
- p. Existing Public Rights of Way retained and incorporated, where possible;
- q. The impact of noise pollution from London Luton Airport is mitigated; and
- r. Electric car charging points are provided at an easily accessible location within the site.

It is recognised that the site may be delivered by a number of different developers. In this case, any phase of development would be required to demonstrate that it would enable the delivery of the policy objectives for the

development as a whole and those relevant to that phase, and enable an expanded scheme within North Hertfordshire District Council. Community facilities should be provided in a location that allows them to be expanded to meet the needs of the site as a whole.

9.10 The development site known as Stevenage West was originally released from the Green Belt in the District Plan⁸² to allow for a large-scale residential-led scheme. This formed part of a wider cross-boundary allocation, which extended into North Hertfordshire. However, the land within North Hertfordshire was never released from the Green Belt.

9.11 Development on this site has been subject to a long planning history, resulting in the most recent application being withdrawn in 2013. Notwithstanding this, Stevenage West still provides a significant opportunity for development within both Stevenage and North Hertfordshire.

9.12 The allocation of Stevenage West provides the only opportunity within the Borough to accommodate a new urban extension, without compromising Green Belt land. As such it is crucial in terms of meeting our housing target.

9.13 The site's close proximity to Gunnels Wood Employment Area also means it offers an ideal opportunity to meet some of our employment needs. A mixed use scheme will be required, incorporating around 10,000m² of new employment land. This should be located towards the eastern edge of the site, adjacent to the main access point at Bessemer Drive.

9.14 A scheme is now being pursued to bring forward this part of the site within the Borough boundary independently from the North Hertfordshire land. This will allow it to be developed at an earlier stage within the plan period and using the existing access points across the A1(M). Further land is likely to be safeguarded by North Hertfordshire to enable the scheme to be expanded beyond the Borough boundary, to provide another 3,000 homes after 2026. Any development proposal will be required to demonstrate that it can be fully integrated with this wider scheme in the future. The approval of a Masterplan will be required prior to the submission of detailed development proposals for the site.

9.15 Two access points already exist to serve the site, allowing movement under the A1(M) at Meadway and Bessemer Drive. The entrance to the site at Meadway will require enhancements to provide satisfactory vehicular access, but no additional access points will be required at this stage. The developer will need to work with the Highways Authority to ensure any improvements required to the road network are provided. A major new access point will be required to serve the wider, cross-boundary scheme. Land to facilitate this is safeguarded by Policy IT2.

9.16 The NPPF is clear that significant development should be focused in locations which are or can be made sustainable⁸³. Part of this means ensuring that the residents of new developments have access to appropriate local facilities. The

⁸² District Plan Second Review, 1991 - 2011 (as amended)

⁸³ As set out in Paragraph 17 'Core Planning Principles'.

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 evidence⁸⁴ 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.

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.

⁸⁴ Aspirational Housing Research (SBC, 2010)

A Masterplan for the whole site will need to be submitted as part of an outline planning application. The Masterplan must be approved prior to the submission of detailed development proposals for the site.

Development proposals will be permitted where the following criteria are met:

- a. The applicant can demonstrate that development can be expanded beyond the Borough boundary, and fully integrated with a wider, cross-boundary scheme;
- b. Satisfactory vehicular access is provided. At least two access points to and from the site will be required, which link effectively into the existing road, cycleway and pedestrian networks;
- c. The scheme is designed to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport;
- d. At least 5% aspirational homes are provided in line with Policy HO9;
- e. Plots to accommodate at least 1% new homes are made available for self-build purposes;
- f. 30% affordable housing is provided in line with policy HO7;
- g. Provision for supported or sheltered housing is made in line with Policy HO10;
- h. Local facilities to serve the community are incorporated, including a GP surgery, subject to demand;
- i. A primary school is provided in line with the most up-to-date evidence of need;
- j. A skate park or MUGA for children is provided on-site;
- k. A full archaeological assessment is undertaken;
- l. A full flood risk assessment is undertaken;
- m. The proposal seeks to preserve or enhance the conservation area, including the setting of adjacent listed buildings. The following mitigation measures should be incorporated;
 - i. As much of the requirement for aspirational homes (criteria d) as possible should be met on the part of the site that lies within the conservation area. Development within this area should also be heavily landscaped to reduce the visual impact of development;
 - ii. Existing hedgerows should be maintained and additional screening implemented to reduce the visual impact of the development;
 - iii. Tall buildings will not be permitted. Building heights will be a maximum of two storeys within the eastern part of the site;
 - iv. No vehicular access to the site will be permitted from the east of the site, across the open fields;
 - v. Existing Public Rights of Way are retained and designed into the development, where possible, and diverted where necessary; and
 - vi. Building styles and layout within the conservation area to the east of the site should reflect the key features of the conservation area.

- n. The scheme incorporates a network of green infrastructure, with an emphasis on high quality landscaping within and around the development to reduce the impact of the development on the surrounding greenfield / Green Belt land;
- o. An appropriate buffer around existing power lines is incorporated; and
- p. Electric car charging points are provided at an easily accessible location within the site

As part of any development proposal, we will require the open space to the east of the boundary to be retained as such, either via a Legal Agreement or through the transfer of land to the Borough Council.

9.22 Land to the north of Stevenage, east of the B197 North Road, has been removed from the Green Belt to enable the development of around 800 new homes. The large, relatively unconstrained site offers the opportunity to create an urban extension north of the existing urban area.

9.23 This site forms part of a wider potential development opportunity which stretches beyond the Borough boundary. North Hertfordshire have consulted on delivering a further 1,000 homes to the north of Stevenage. Any prospective developer should liaise with North Hertfordshire and adjacent landowners / developers to ensure that proposals on this site can be fully integrated with a wider scheme in the future. The approval of a Masterplan will be required prior to the submission of detailed development proposals for the site.

9.24 There is currently no vehicular access to the site. The primary access route can be taken from North Road. An additional access point is likely to be required for phases of development beyond 300 units (or equivalent traffic generating uses). The developer will need to work with the Highways Authority to ensure any required improvements to the road network are undertaken.

9.25 As with Stevenage West, the location of the site, on the edge of the town, means that new facilities will be required to ensure that residents can meet their day-to-day needs. This will also ensure that these significant developments broadly reflect the ethos and planning principles that underpin the existing neighbourhoods of the town. Facilities will include a primary school (exact requirement to be confirmed by Hertfordshire County Council), a doctors surgery and local convenience retail provision.

9.26 New facilities which meet the general parameters for local or neighbourhood centres will be treated as such. New facilities which do not will be treated as local shops. Any applications for subsequent development or changes of use will be considered against the criteria of the relevant policy.

9.27 Sports facilities will also be required, in line with policy HC8. Our evidence identifies a need for a skate park / alternative youth facilities to be provided on site.

9.28 Our evidence⁸⁵ 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 evidence⁸⁶ 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 evidence⁸⁷ 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 E.M. Forster and Rooks Nest House⁸⁸. 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.

⁸⁵ Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SBC, 2015)

⁸⁶ Aspirational Housing Research (SBC, 2010)

⁸⁷ Heritage Impact Assessment - North Stevenage (SBC, 2015)

⁸⁸ Open Space Strategy (SBC, 2015)

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.

Policy HO4: South East of Stevenage

Land to the South East of Stevenage, as defined by the policies map, is allocated for the development of approximately 550 dwellings. The site will be developed as two separate parcels:

- North of the A602 (150 dwellings)
- South of the A602 (400 dwellings)

Development proposals will be permitted where the following criteria are met:

- a. Satisfactory vehicular access to both sites is provided from a single point of access off the A602, in line with Highways Authority requirements;
- b. The schemes are designed to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport;
- c. At least 5% aspirational homes are provided in line with Policy HO9;
- d. Plots to accommodate at least 1% new homes are made available for self-build purposes;
- e. 30% affordable housing is provided in line with policy HO7;
- f. Provision for supported or sheltered housing is made in line with Policy HO10;
- g. Existing Public Rights of Way are incorporated, where possible;
- h. The Ancient Lane along Aston Lane will be preserved or enhanced;
- i. A full archaeological assessment is undertaken;
- j. A full flood risk assessment is undertaken;
- k. The proposals seek to preserve or enhance the setting of adjacent listed buildings;
- l. The schemes incorporate a network of green infrastructure, with an emphasis on high quality landscaping within and around the development to reduce the impact of the development on the surrounding greenfield / Green Belt land;
- m. The tree boundary on the site to the North of the A602 is retained as far as possible; and
- n. Electric car charging points are provided at an easily accessible location within the site.

The following will also be required to be provided within the parcel south of A602, unless demonstrated that these facilities are more satisfactorily accommodated on the northern part of the site:

- i. Local facilities to serve the community, including a GP surgery, subject to demand; and
- ii. On-site sports facilities in line with Policy HC8, including, but not limited to, the provision of a MUGA or Skate Park for children.

9.35 Land to the south east of Stevenage, at Bragbury End, has been removed from the Green Belt to enable the development of around 550 new homes. The site is split into two parts. The land to the south of the A602 is the larger of the two sites, and is relatively unconstrained. This site will accommodate around 400 of the new dwellings. The site to the north will accommodate the remaining 150 homes.

9.36 There is currently no vehicular access to either of the sites. The Highways Authority has previously confirmed that a new roundabout on the A602 to serve both sites is critical to the delivery of new housing in this area⁸⁹.

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 Strategy⁹⁰ recognises that these facilities no longer have community use and have been redundant for some years. The assessment shows that we have an over-supply of playing fields across the town and that sufficient space will still remain even with the growth set out within this plan. As such, the sports provision does not require replacement. However, developers' contributions will be required towards improvements to existing public playing field sites in Stevenage, as part of the requirement for sports provision arising from Policy HC8. A skate park or MUGA for children will also be required.

9.39 The location of the site, on the edge of the town, means that new facilities will be required to ensure that residents can meet their day-to-day needs. This will also ensure that these significant developments broadly reflect the ethos and planning principles that underpin the existing neighbourhoods of the town. Facilities will include a doctors surgery and local convenience retail provision.

9.40 New facilities which meet the general parameters for local or neighbourhood centres will be treated as such. New facilities which do not will be treated as local shops. Any applications for subsequent development or changes of use will be considered against the criteria of the relevant policy.

9.41 Our SHMA identifies the need for more larger homes to balance out our housing mix. Due to the edge of town location of these sites, and their proximity to surrounding Green Belt / greenfield land, our evidence⁹¹ 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.

⁸⁹ Infrastructure Delivery Plan (SBC, 2015)

⁹⁰ Stevenage Sports and Facilities Strategy (Nortoft, 2015)

⁹¹ Aspirational Housing Research (SBC, 2010)

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.

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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
- 30% of new homes elsewhere.

Planning permission will only be granted where these targets are not at least achieved if:

- a. Developers robustly demonstrate that the target cannot be achieved due to site-specific constraints resulting in higher than normal costs, which affect its viability; or
- b. Meeting the requirements would demonstrably and significantly compromise other policy objectives.

Where a development is phased or a site is either divided into separate parts or otherwise regarded as part of a larger development, it will be considered as a whole and the appropriate target will apply.

Residential or mixed-use schemes that are not compliant with the above targets 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 assistance⁹². 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 developers⁹³. 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 writing⁹⁴.

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

⁹² Housing Technical Paper (SBC, 2015)

⁹³ NPPF Paragraph 173

⁹⁴ Whole Plan Viability Study including Community Infrastructure Levy (HDH Planning & Development, 2015)

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 review of this plan.

9.58 The NPPG sets thresholds for sites on which affordable housing provision can be required. Currently, affordable housing can only be sought on sites of over 10 dwellings. Should these thresholds be withdrawn in the future, the targets set out in Policy HO7 will apply to all schemes.

9.59 The Council will issue supporting guidance and advice as necessary to provide additional information to prospective applicants.

Policy HO8: Affordable housing tenure, mix and design

Where affordable housing is secured through Policy HO7, planning permission will be granted where those dwellings:

- a. Are provided by the developer on site with at least 70% of the units being for rent and the remainder consisting of other tenures to be agreed with the Council's Housing team;
- b. Meet the requirements of Policy HO9;
- c. Are physically indistinguishable from other types of homes and are distributed across the site to avoid over-concentration in any particular area; and

- d. Will remain at an affordable price for future eligible households.

Exceptions to criterion a. will only be considered where it would result in the delivery of new affordable housing within a similar timescale and

- i. It would be demonstrably preferable for planning or management reasons to secure land, off-site provision or a financial contribution; or
- ii. The proposed affordable housing units respond to a specific, identified need that justifies a departure from the normal tenure requirements.

9.60 As well as maximising the overall levels of affordable housing provision, it is equally important to ensure that the appropriate mix of homes are provided. The Council will seek the majority of new homes for rent, with the remainder in other appropriate tenures.

9.61 Our presumption is strongly in favour of on-site provision. However, the provision of land, off-site units or financial contributions will be considered in reasonable circumstances and where it will deliver comparable outcomes - in terms of the timing of housing delivery and number of dwellings. In exceptional circumstances, schemes may be able to contribute towards specific needs or tenure types that would justify a departure from the normal approach.

9.62 Commuted provision is most likely to be acceptable where:

- The application of the targets in Policy HO7 would result in particularly low numbers of affordable units, including on schemes of less than four homes;
- The provision of on-site units would result in specific and demonstrable management issues, which might include abnormal management costs or the provision of units in a leasehold scheme; or
- It could assist in the delivery of priority housing and regeneration schemes.

9.63 To provide mixed communities, new affordable homes should be distributed across development sites.

9.64 Affordable housing is usually secured in perpetuity, making sure that the benefits are passed on to future generations of occupiers. There can be exceptions to this. Many affordable homes have been sold through Right to Buy while some shared equity schemes provide the opportunity to gain 100% ownership of the property by 'staircasing' over time. The sale of high-value units, in line with Government requirements, may allow for greater than 1:1 re-provision off-site. We will not unreasonably interfere with statutory requirements and rights in our application of criterion d.

Policy HO9: Housing types and sizes

Planning permission for residential schemes will be granted where:

- a. An appropriate range of market and affordable housing types and sizes are provided taking into account:
 - i. Structural imbalances in the existing housing stock;
 - ii. The housing needs of the Borough, as informed by up-to-date and relevant evidence;
 - iii. The location and accessibility of the application site; and
 - iv. Recent completions, existing permissions and sites in the five-year land supply;
- b. The resultant scheme would provide a density and character of development appropriate to its location and surroundings. Significantly higher densities should be achieved in easily accessible locations; and
- c. Aspirational homes are provided in appropriate locations including, but not necessarily limited to:
 - i. New neighbourhoods to the north, west and south-east of the town;
 - ii. Suitable suburban, edge-of-town sites;
 - iii. The town centre, Old Town and other highly accessible locations; and
 - iv. Other appropriate sites where aspirational homes would complement the prevailing character

9.65 Providing an appropriate mix of homes that meet the requirements of all sectors of society is an integral element of sustainable development. New development should deliver an appropriate range of house types and sizes.

9.66 The overriding ambition of this policy is to address longstanding structural issues with the town's housing offer. The original masterplans for Stevenage did not incorporate a balanced mix of housing. As a result, Stevenage has a high proportion of terraced and, in particular, three-bed housing. These dominate the market⁹⁵.

9.67 Alongside this, the requirements suggested by up-to-date housing and population projections and other relevant demographic evidence will be taken into account. Recent trends suggest a significant need for houses over flats. Particularly, there are very few large family homes. Only 1 in 100 homes in Stevenage are in the highest Council Tax brackets⁹⁶.

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.

⁹⁵ 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)

⁹⁶ Properties in Council Tax Bands G and H. Data from Valuation Office website, <http://cti.voa.gov.uk/cti/>, October 2015.

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 units⁹⁷; and
- Internally finished to a high specification⁹⁸.

9.72 These are generally considered to be minimum criteria. It may be appropriate to exceed these guidelines. On suitable sites of 0.5ha or more, around 10% of dwellings can be delivered as aspirational homes without prejudicing the efficient use of land. We will use this figure as a starting point for negotiation recognising that:

- On large sites this could require a significant number of aspirational homes that might not be desirable in a single location. A lower proportion of homes will be acceptable in these instances;
- On some smaller, windfall sites it may be appropriate to permit up to 100% aspirational homes. These would be an exception to general guidance and will only be allowed where they meet other relevant policy requirements and complement the prevailing character, diversify existing stock or otherwise lead to the best solution for the site; while
- In accessible locations where purely flatted developments are proposed, the proportion of aspirational homes that can be achieved will largely be determined by the proposed building height(s) and footprint(s).

9.73 Affordable housing unit mix will be agreed by negotiation with the Council's Housing team having regard to evidence of need. The range of market accommodation being proposed will also be taken into account to ensure a coherent development scheme is delivered.

⁹⁷ 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.

⁹⁸ Aspirational Housing Research (SBC, 2010)

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.

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. ~~This is consistent with national trends as the 'baby boom' generation reach retirement age and beyond.~~ The housing needs of this age group will vary considerably depending on circumstances. Many will be able to continue living in their own homes with minimal, or no, adaptation or support. Others will require some degree of care or assistance.

9.75 Other groups will also have specific support needs, including people of all ages with physical or learning disabilities or the homeless.

9.76 A number of different models exist to meet the housing needs that this creates:

- Housing with care can include extra care, sheltered housing and assisted living. This is normally delivered in the form of self-contained accommodation that is provided within a purpose-built block or small estate where all residents have similar support needs. Care is provided for those who cannot live completely on their own, or would like the comfort of knowing assistance is available, but do not need significant levels of personal care. An example might include self-contained sheltered accommodation with an on-site warden.
- Care or nursing homes provide a higher degree of personal care and / or long-term medical treatment for those who cannot live independently.

9.77 Self-contained accommodation with a modest level of care, or single dwellings providing care for up to six people, will normally fall within Use Class C3. Accommodation with greater levels of communal facilities, support and / or care will normally fall within Use Class C2. The distinction between these uses can be a fine one. A number of court and appeal decisions have considered this issue at length and have considered indicators including the presence of individual front doors, or the weekly level of care received in coming to a view.

9.78 The population and household projections which underpin this plan suggest that around 200 people will require C2-style accommodation over the plan period.

This is in addition to the requirement for 7,300 homes recognised in that work. It is similarly recognised that this approach assumes a fixed proportion of those aged 75 or over will require such accommodation⁹⁹.

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.

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.

⁹⁹ This is a standard statistical assumption derived from the approach used in Government forecasts. Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Housing Market Assessment Update (ORS, 2015)

9.85 Replacement provision may be on the same site or in an alternate location.

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. 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 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).

9.87B Our most up-to-date evidence¹⁰⁰ 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 homes¹⁰¹. These plans have yet to come forward.

9.87C In contrast, our previous evidence¹⁰² 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.

¹⁰⁰ Strategic Housing Market Assessment (Opinion Research Services, 2023)

¹⁰¹ Raising accessibility standards for new homes: summary of consultation responses and government response (DLUHC, 2022)

¹⁰² Housing Technical Paper (SBC, 2015)

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). This applies to major developments which are entirely residential and major mixed-use developments which include a residential component.

9.87E 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.

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Gypsies and Travellers

Policy HO12: Gypsy and Traveller provision

The following site, as shown on the policies map, is allocated for permanent accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers (including those who have ceased to travel permanently):

Site	Capacity
HO12/1 Land north of Graveley Road	11-16 pitches

Planning permission for the allocated use will be granted where:

- i. An identified need continues to exist at the time of any application; and
- ii. The site-specific considerations are properly addressed and / or incorporated into the proposal.

Planning permission for any other uses will be refused. The council is willing, if necessary, to consider using its Compulsory Purchase Order powers under section 226 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, if it appears that the site is not otherwise going to be delivered.

Site name	Site considerations
Land north of Graveley Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider phased development and release of site to meet future needs across the plan period; • Investigate need for removal, relocation or incorporation of adjacent bus stop to facilitate site access; • Mitigation of any surface water flood risk through use of SuDS or other appropriate mechanisms; • Retention and / or enhancement of screening to create a strong boundary, particularly along the northern edge of the site; • Appropriate internal layout including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrating that appropriate guidance and standards have been taken into account • Ensuring an appropriate balance between privacy of individual pitches and natural surveillance across the site as a whole • Room for vehicular circulation, including the movement of caravans; Minimise risk of conflict between vehicles and people; • Consideration of health and safety including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ appropriate separation distances; and ○ safe areas for play • Appropriately scaled amenity (or other) buildings; • Maximise the use of trees, hedgerows or other appropriate soft landscaping to define site boundaries and, where practicable, to demarcate internal areas. The extensive use of high walls or close-board fencing will not be considered appropriate.

Site specific considerations for Gypsy and Traveller allocation identified in Policy HO12

9.90 Gypsies and Travellers are people who have a nomadic way of life. Some groups travel more than others. Our evidence suggests a requirement for between 11 and 16 additional permanent pitches over the plan period to 2031¹⁰³. 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 2014¹⁰⁴. 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 requirements¹⁰⁵.

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

¹⁰³ Stevenage Borough Council Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Study (DCA, 2013)

¹⁰⁴ Gypsy and Traveller Site Search (SBC, 2014)

¹⁰⁵ 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 accessibility¹⁰⁶. 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

¹⁰⁶ 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.

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Houses in multiple occupation

Policy HO14: Houses in Multiple Occupation

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 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 a 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 implement¹⁰⁷. 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. Proposals and has remained under constant review since that time. All proposals should have regard to the advice the latest version of the document contains and the quantitative standards suggested. The standards will be kept under review over the lifetime of the plan. The Council may. Going forward, the council will consider the introduction and use of other appropriate guidance, such as of design codes. Where adopted, these will be a material consideration and supplementary plans as a long-term replacement for this guidance.~~

Policy GD2: Design certification

Development proposals which demonstrate that they have been designed to achieve a rating of excellent or higher against the 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 will be strongly supported.

Residential development proposals which demonstrate that they have been designed to achieve the BRE Home Quality Mark will also be strongly supported.

¹⁰⁷ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/421515/150324_-_Nationally_Described_Space_StandardFinal_Web_version.pdf

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) (shops) 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) (shops) 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 changes¹⁰⁸. 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.

¹⁰⁸ 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) (shops) use¹⁰⁹. We will seek to maintain this share. Our baseline monitoring shows that only Marymead does not meet this figure¹¹⁰. 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) 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

¹⁰⁹ Stevenage Retail Study (Applied Planning, 2014)

¹¹⁰ 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) (shops) - led floorspace in a parade containing between two and six units;
- Unit sizes of between 50 and 500m²;
- Residential accommodation in flats above the shops; and
- May include a pub and / or community centre.

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) (shops) will be granted where:

- a. Satisfactory on- or off-site provision is made to replace a loss of use(s);
- b. It can be demonstrated that there is no longer a need for a particular facility or that alternate facilities are available locally;
- c. The particular facility, or any reasonable replacement is not, and will not, be viable on that site;
- d. The proposals provide overriding benefits against other objectives or policies in the plan; or
- e. It can be demonstrated that a unit has been unsuccessfully marketed for its existing use, or has remained vacant, 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 units¹¹¹. 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.

¹¹¹ 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.

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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 Borough¹¹² 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

¹¹² 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 evidence¹¹³ identifies the highest priority (in relation to providing for healthy communities) for the council as being the replacement of facilities within the Arts and Leisure Centre and Stevenage Swimming Centre. This facility has high refurbishment costs and it is not financially beneficial to retain the facility. It recommends a new wet and dry leisure facility is provided within the town centre area, which can accommodate a slightly larger swimming pool and replace and expand the other sports facilities, as required.

11.40 As the theatre is located within the Arts and Leisure Centre, this will also require reprovision. A site for this facility has been identified within Policy TC7.

11.41 A number of other new facilities are also recommended by the Sports Strategy. These include new sports hall provision, skate parks and/or youth facilities at each of the urban extensions and a new cricket ground at Stevenage West. Many of the existing facilities also require refurbishment or expansion to meet future needs. For playing pitches, in particular, although sufficient capacity exists to support future needs, many require improvement works, and pitches may need to be remarked to serve alternative age-ranges. There is also a need to secure Community Use Agreements on all school sites.

11.42 Due to their size and nature, sports facilities often cannot be provided on-site. However, money is still required to improve, expand and provide new facilities to meet the needs of new residents.

¹¹³ Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy 2014-2031 (Nortoft, 2015)

11.43 The Council's sports facility standards are set out in the table below¹¹⁴. 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.

¹¹⁴ 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 Strategy¹¹⁵ 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;

¹¹⁵ 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 space¹¹⁶.

¹¹⁶ 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 evidence¹¹⁷ identifies a need for larger, aspirational homes (4+ bedrooms). Our research on aspirational homes¹¹⁸ 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.

¹¹⁷ Strategic Housing Market Assessment, 2014

¹¹⁸ Aspirational Homes Research, SBC, 2010

13 Flooding and pollution

Water management and flood risk

Policy FP1: Sustainable drainage

All major and minor development proposals must incorporate sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) unless there are clear and convincing reasons for not doing so.

SuDS proposals must:

- a. be designed to ensure that peak discharge rates from the site will not increase;
- b. on greenfield sites, achieve greenfield run-off rates;
- c. on brownfield sites, aim to achieve greenfield run-off rates;
- d. be designed in accordance with the surface water disposal hierarchy, as shown in Table 4; and
- e. 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 must:

- a. Ensure that flood risk is not increased, 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;
- e. Protect the integrity of adjacent flood defences and allow sufficient space for access, maintenance and, future upgrades and new flood defence schemes;

¹¹⁹ In accordance with NPPF footnote 59.

¹²⁰ In accordance with NPPF paragraph 174 and footnotes 59 and 60.

- 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.

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 overall¹²¹. 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 evidence¹²² identifies different areas of flood risk in the town, categorised as:

- Flood Zone 3, which is further subdivided into
 - Flood Zone 3b - functional floodplain
 - Flood Zone 3a - high probability
- Flood Zone 2 - medium probability
- Flood Zone 1 - low probability

13.11 The latest flood risk maps should be referred to for detailed zone locations.

13.12 We will steer new development to areas of the lowest probability of flooding by applying the sequential approach identified in our Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. Preference will be given to development located in Flood Zone 1 (the area with the lowest risk of flooding).

13.12A 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

¹²¹ NPPF (2012)

¹²² Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (AECOM, 2016)

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 ~~de-culverting~~ 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 Stevenage¹²³.

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

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.

¹²³ Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (AECOM, 2016)

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'¹²⁴

13.28 National guidance¹²⁵ notes that the only appropriate uses for land in Flood Zone 3b is water-compatible uses and essential infrastructure.

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¹²⁴ NPPF: Technical Guidance (2012)

¹²⁵ 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 evidence¹²⁶ 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.

¹²⁶ 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.

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14 The natural and historic environments

Green infrastructure

Policy NH1: Principal Open Spaces

The following sites, as defined on the policies map, are designated as Principal Open Spaces:

Principal Parks

NH1/1 Fairlands Valley Park*	NH1/6 Peartree Park*
NH1/2 Town Centre Gardens*	NH1/7 Ridlins Park*
NH1/3 King George V*	NH1/8 St. Nicholas Park*
NH1/4 Hampson Park*	NH1/9 Millennium Gardens
NH1/5 Shephalbury Park*	NH1/10 The Bowling Green

Principal Amenity Greenspaces

NH1/11 Chells District Park*	NH1/22 Archer Road*
NH1/12 Canterbury Way*	NH1/23 The Noke*
NH1/13 Meadway*	NH1/24 Ramsdell
NH1/14 Bandley Hill*	NH1/25 Clovelly Way A
NH1/15 Burymead*	NH1/26 Chester Road / Canterbury Way
NH1/16 Campshill Park*	NH1/27 Caernarvon Close / Balmoral Close*
NH1/17 Blenheim Way / Pembroke Gardens	NH1/28 Chepstow Close*
NH1/18 York Road B & C*	NH1/29 Shephall Green
NH1/19 Letchmore Road*	NH1/30 Blenheim Way / Stirling Close*
NH1/20 Trent Close	NH1/31 Holly Copse
NH1/21 Bedwell Park*	

Principal Woodlands

NH1/32 Whomerley Wood	NH1/44 Sishes Wood
NH1/33 Monks Wood	NH1/45 Shackleton Spring Woodland
NH1/34 Ridlins Wood	NH1/46 Sinks Spring
NH1/35 Lanterns Wood	NH1/47 Hanginghill Wood
NH1/36 Ashtree Wood	NH1/48 Wiltshire Spring Wood (west)
NH1/37 Wellfield Wood	NH1/49 Hertford Road Wood
NH1/38 Martins Wood*	NH1/50 Almond Spring
NH1/39 Great Collens Wood	NH1/51 Blacknells Spring Wood
NH1/40 South Pestcotts Wood	NH1/52 Whitney Drive Wood
NH1/41 Loves Wood	
NH1/42 Abbot's Grove	
NH1/43 Mobbsbury Park	

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 each¹²⁷. 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.

¹²⁷ 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 protection¹²⁸. 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

¹²⁸ 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)¹²⁹ 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 2013¹³⁰ and has been used to identify the sites that are protected through the Plan.

¹²⁹ Including any successor body

¹³⁰ 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 Way to Gresley Way)
NH3/20 Fairlands Way	NH3/24 Monkswood Way
NH3/21 Grace 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

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 retention¹³¹ will be refused unless:

¹³¹ Defined as category C or above according to BS 5837:2012 or equivalent.

- 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 woodland¹³² 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.

Post-permission, any compensation will be secured by conditions or legal agreement.

¹³² 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.

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 development¹³³ 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:
 - i. The quality and accessibility of the open space;
 - ii. The existence, or otherwise, of any interventions to improve quality or access;

¹³³ With the exception of residential development falling within use classes C2 and C2A.

- 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 below¹³⁴. It is recognised that providing open space on small sites can lead to spaces that are not functional or valued in the communities they are intended to serve and difficult to maintain. As a result, and in an effort to encourage the better use of land (avoiding the prospect of having 'space left over after planning' adopted as open space), the Council will only require the on-site provision of formal open space above the defined thresholds.

	Borough-wide standard per 1,000 population (ha)	Minimum thresholds for on-site provision	
		Development population	Open space size¹³⁵
Parks and gardens	0.88ha	5,000	4.40ha

¹³⁴ As established in the Green Space Strategy (SBC, 2015)

¹³⁵ 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.

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 plan¹³⁶.

Dwelling size	Private housing	Affordable housing
Studio or 1-bed	1.4 persons per dwelling	1.2 persons per dwelling
2-bed	1.9	2.2
3-bed	2.5	2.9
4+ bed	3.1	3.9

14.49 Notwithstanding the advice in this policy, contributions towards open space may still be required under the general provisions of other policies in this plan. Similarly, areas of incidental open space and landscaping will be encouraged to

¹³⁶ Source: 2011 Census, Table DC4405EW / SBC analysis

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 Nest¹³⁷ and the surrounding land inspired his writings. The Rectory Lane & St Nicholas Conservation Area was widened in 2007 to embrace this setting. The open area that remains within both the conservation area boundary and the Green Belt measures over 45 hectares.

14.51 The Council will seek to protect the openness and accessibility of this area, potentially through the means of a country park. This protection will recognise the literary connection of the land to E.M. Forster. 'Forster Country' is presently agricultural land outside the built-up area of the town traversed by a number of public rights of way but with no formal facilities. As such, it is not included in the analyses of open spaces in the Green Space Strategy. Pursuing a more formal management regime on this land may provide scope for (parts of) it to be considered as amenity greenspace and / or natural and semi-natural open space.

14.52 The provision of new public open space in this area will comprise the open space provision for the North of Stevenage development allocated under HO3, but could also allow for some offsetting of open space requirements arising from other developments in the plan period, or from the town as a whole, and any proposals will be viewed in this context. This includes consideration of any developments beyond the borough boundary in North Hertfordshire adjacent to the northern edge of the town.

14.53 The land to the west of the revised Green Belt boundary is allocated for housing development. Any scheme should demonstrate that both the land allocated from development and this area has been considered holistically, from North Road to Weston Road. In doing so, it is recognised that:

- The land within the conservation area would be unsuitable for intensive recreational use (such as sports pitches) or intensive management regimes (such as conversion to formally laid-out parkland); while
- The quantity of open land here is well in excess of that which would be required of any new development to the north of Stevenage following application of the open space standards in Policy NH7.

¹³⁷ Now known as 'Howards'

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.

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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.

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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 England¹³⁸. 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.

¹³⁸ 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 and identifies a series of interventions¹³⁹.

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

¹³⁹ 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)
<u>Climate change</u>	<u>Carbon emissions</u>	<u>Operational / WLC net zero</u>	<u>Energy statements</u>
	<u>Heating and cooling</u>	<u>No new energy-dependent cooling systems</u>	<u>Energy statements</u>
	<u>Water efficiency</u>	<u>For residential water consumption to not exceed 110L per person per day</u>	<u>Planning permissions</u>
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
	Reserve the Primary Frontage for E(a) Use	For at least 80% Primary Frontage to be in E(a) Use	E(a) Retail
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	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
			Affordable housing completions

	To deliver up to 40% affordable homes, where viability permits	For at least 20% of all new homes to be affordable	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	-	
Climate change, flooding and pollution	Reduce or mitigate against flood risk	For all Flood Storage Reservoirs to be retained	Number of Flood Storage Reservoirs
		To grant no permissions against Environment Agency advice	Environment Agency advice
		For all schemes to incorporate SUDS	Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems
Green infrastructure and the natural environment	Protection of Principal Open Spaces	No reduction in the total area of Principal Open Space	Principal Open Spaces
	Protection of wildlife sites	No reduction in the number or area of designated sites through development	Wildlife Sites
	Protection of Green Corridors	No reduction in the total area of designated sites through development	Green corridors
	Protection of Green Links	No reduction in the total area of designated sites through development	Green Links
The historic environment	Preserve and enhance conservation areas	For no conservation areas to be 'at risk'	Conservation areas
	Preserve and enhance listed buildings	For no listed buildings to be 'at risk'	Listed Buildings

15.11 One of the key elements of our monitoring work is an extensive survey of residential and commercial developments, to identify completion rates across the Borough. We also produce a SLAA each year to update the supply of land that is available to meet the targets of our Plan.

15.12 If there is an insufficient supply of land, or other policy targets are not being met, it may be necessary to carry out a review or a partial review of the Local Plan.

15.13 The Council will continue to work with neighbouring planning authorities, to enable their Plans to come forward, and to ensure strategic needs are being met. The results of this work will be recorded within the AMR.

15.14 We will also monitor the wider effects of the plan through the SA. The SA sets out a list of indicators that we will use to measure the social, economic and environmental impacts of the plan. Some of these indicators may also form part of the monitoring framework for the plan.

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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

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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 education¹⁴⁰. 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.



¹⁴⁰ 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 Gunnels Wood employment area easily access their place of work.

Through the Thameslink expansion, Stevenage will be directly connected, by fast services, to the heart of central London and a variety of destinations south of London, including Gatwick Airport. Services will also stop at Farringdon for easy connections onto the Elizabeth Line (i.e. Crossrail) to Heathrow, Canary Wharf and beyond. With new trains on both commuter and intercity services, by 2018 there will be a step change in the accessibility and attractiveness of travel by rail to/from Stevenage. The Local Plan identifies (Policy TC4 iv) a proposal for a radically improved Stevenage railway station, with National Rail having plans for a 5th platform, as part of a broader central area regeneration scheme. This will also help to drive a shift in travel onto rail.

Car Parking strategy

Proposed Strategy

Parking is no longer a stand-alone issue, but has become a key aspect of both transport and land use planning. Control over the availability of parking spaces is a key policy instrument in influencing car trips. The supply and pricing of car parking has a fundamental influence on the way people

travel. Research has shown that even where good alternatives to the car exist, if cheap and convenient car parking is available then people with access to a car will tend to choose this mode of travel.

The 2004 Parking Strategy will be updated as part of the development of the Stevenage Mobility Strategy as a tool for encouraging greater activity in the town centre whilst minimising the demand for commuter car parking.

Stevenage Borough Council will take the lead in this by critically reviewing and managing its own staff car parking strategy.

Car Sharing

Existing Situation

Hertfordshire County Council currently operates a Liftshare car-pooling scheme, which has over 1,000 members.

Proposed Strategy

Stevenage Borough Council will develop car-pooling within the Stevenage community, and expect new development, where appropriate, to invest in the development and encouragement of this type of mobility. It will stay abreast of the significant emerging European research in this field, and seek the implementation of the most effective elements of this growing, and particularly socially inclusive, method of mobility.

Workplace Travel Planning

Existing Situation

2011 Census data provides an insight into the main modes of travel for people working in Stevenage. This shows that 69% of people who work in Stevenage drive a car, 11% travel by public transport and 13% walk or cycle.

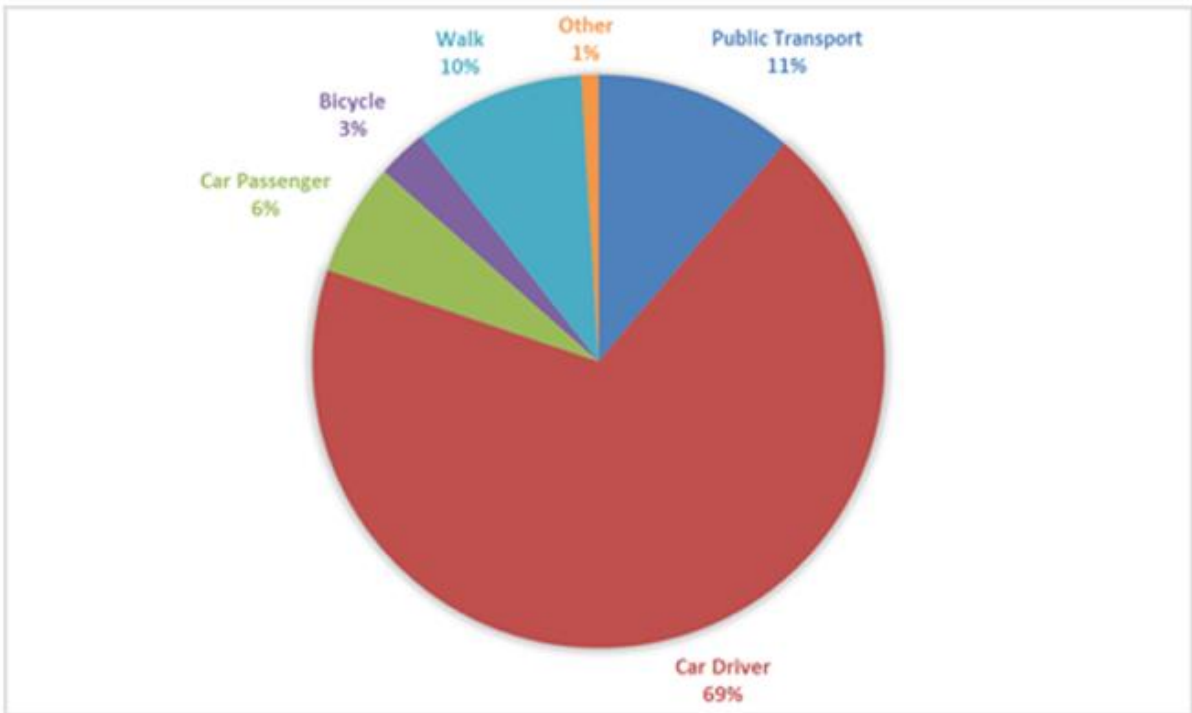


Figure 4.2 Mode of Travel to Work for People Working in Stevenage (2011 Census)

The Hertfordshire 2015 Household Survey provides a useful insight into how far people travel to work and by which mode. Of particular interest are those trips that are under 3 miles, and therefore have the easiest potential to be made by sustainable modes. Figure 4.3 illustrates the mode share of journeys to work under 3 miles.

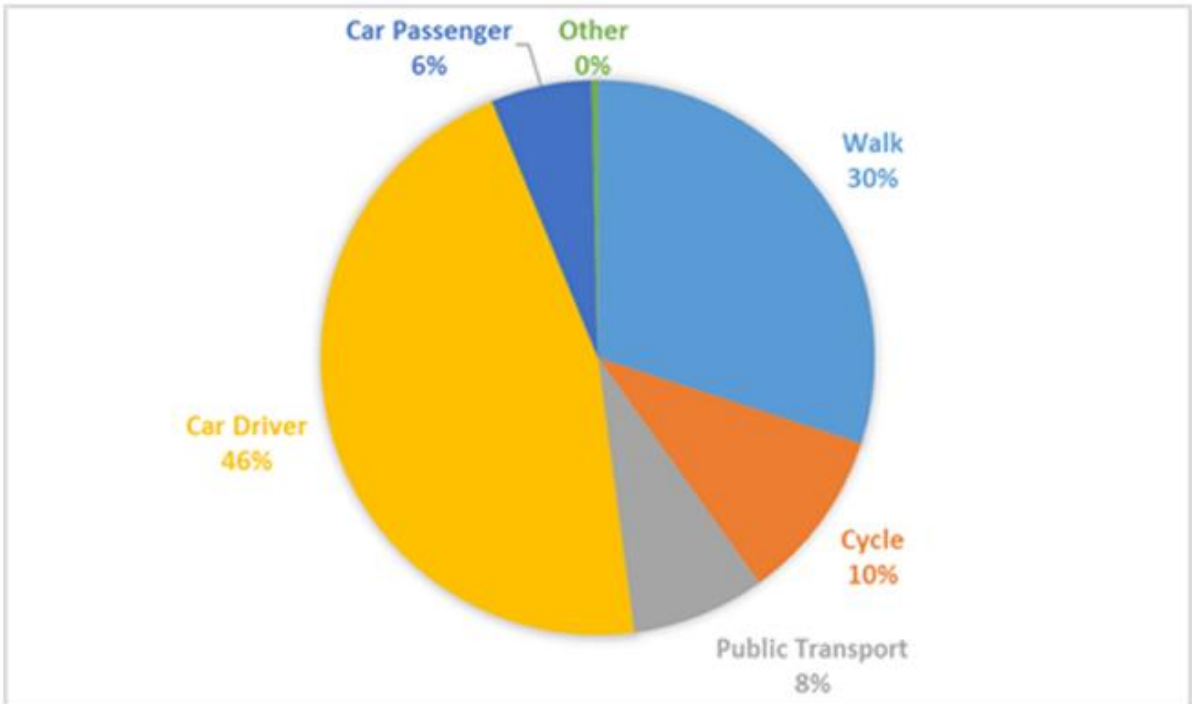


Figure 4.3 Mode of Travel for Journey to Work Trips under 3 miles

The survey showed that 22% of journeys to work in Hertfordshire are within 3 miles and that over half (52%) of these journeys are made by car. There is a significant potential for mode shift for these short trips to be made by active travel, public transport or more efficient use of the car.

Proposed Strategy

Gunnels Wood, between the A1(M) and the town centre, is by far the largest employment site in Stevenage. The area is made up of a large range of businesses, from small and medium businesses through to some very large employers including GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) and MBDA. Around 19,000 employees work on the estate for approximately 300 different businesses and it is set to intensify as part of the Local Plan.

The concentration of this many people, makes it an ideal area to target travel behaviour change through a range of travel planning measures. Major employers in this area, including GSK, are already part of the SmartGo Stevenage scheme, which offers a range of travel benefits and services to help make travel cheaper and easier for employees.

The strategy is to concentrate infrastructure and behavioural influence initiatives in these concentrated areas of employment, which include the Council office in Stevenage. There are some significant mobility benefits to be had in this way, and a strong evidential basis already in the UK for the effectiveness of this.

Education Travel Planning

Existing Situation

With regards to education trips, the Hertfordshire 2015 Household Survey shows that 40% of trips (all school ages) are made by car and the remaining 60% by non-car modes.

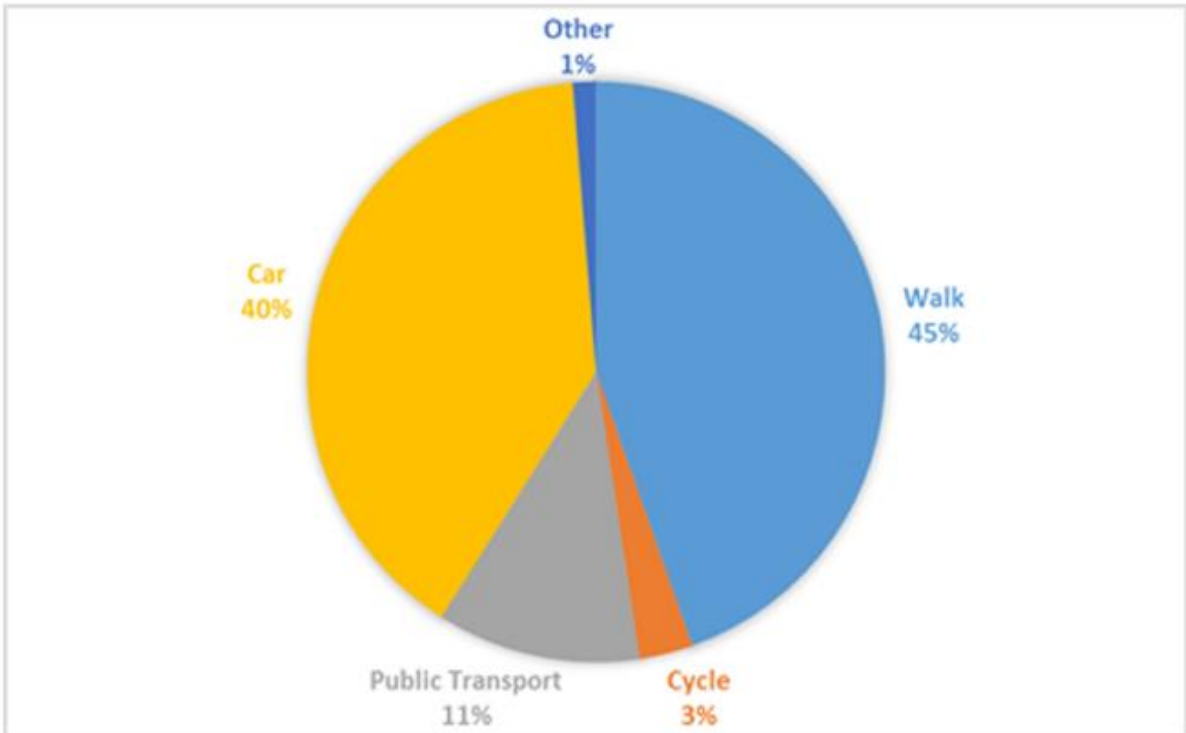


Figure 4.4 Mode of Travel for Education Trips (All School Ages)

Short car trips have the greatest propensity to change to active travel. The short educational trips (under 3 miles) make up the vast majority of education related trips (over 70%) and, 30% of these are currently made by car. Therefore, any shift away from the car for these trips would have a positive effect on travel, particularly in the morning peak period.

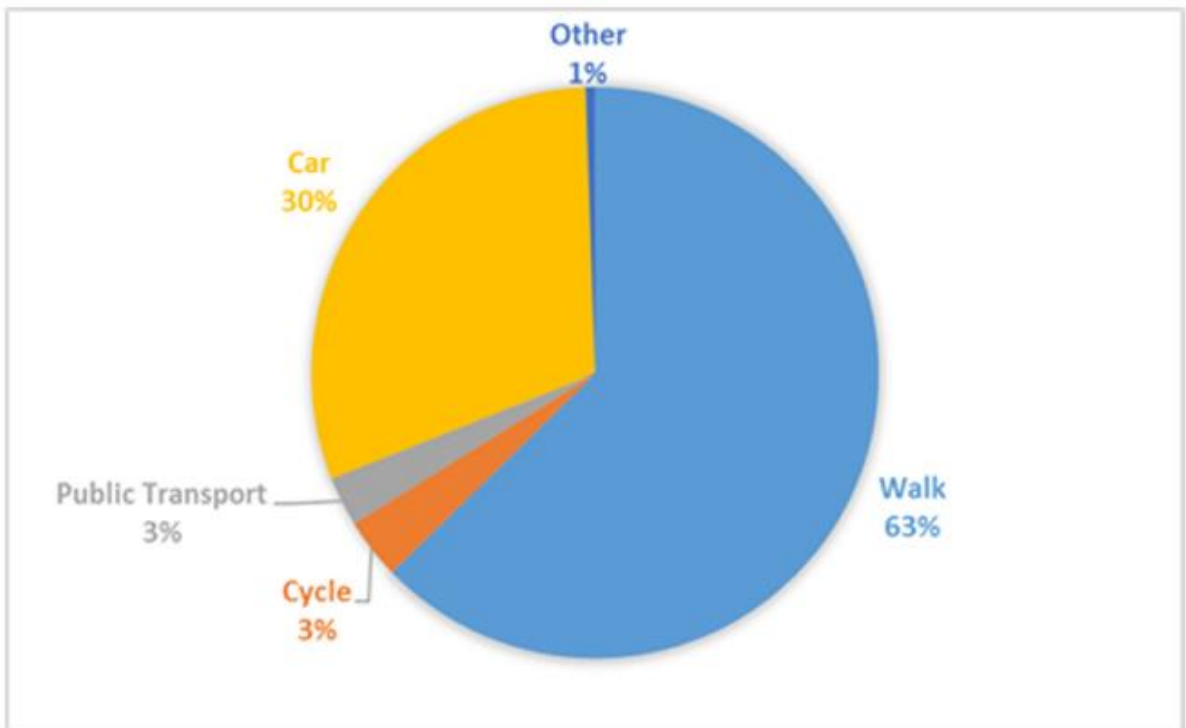


Figure 4.5 Mode of Travel for Education Trips under 3 miles

Proposed Strategy

The Transport Strategy for Stevenage will focus on encouraging a change in behaviour away from the car for education trips. There is a good evidential base¹⁴¹ 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

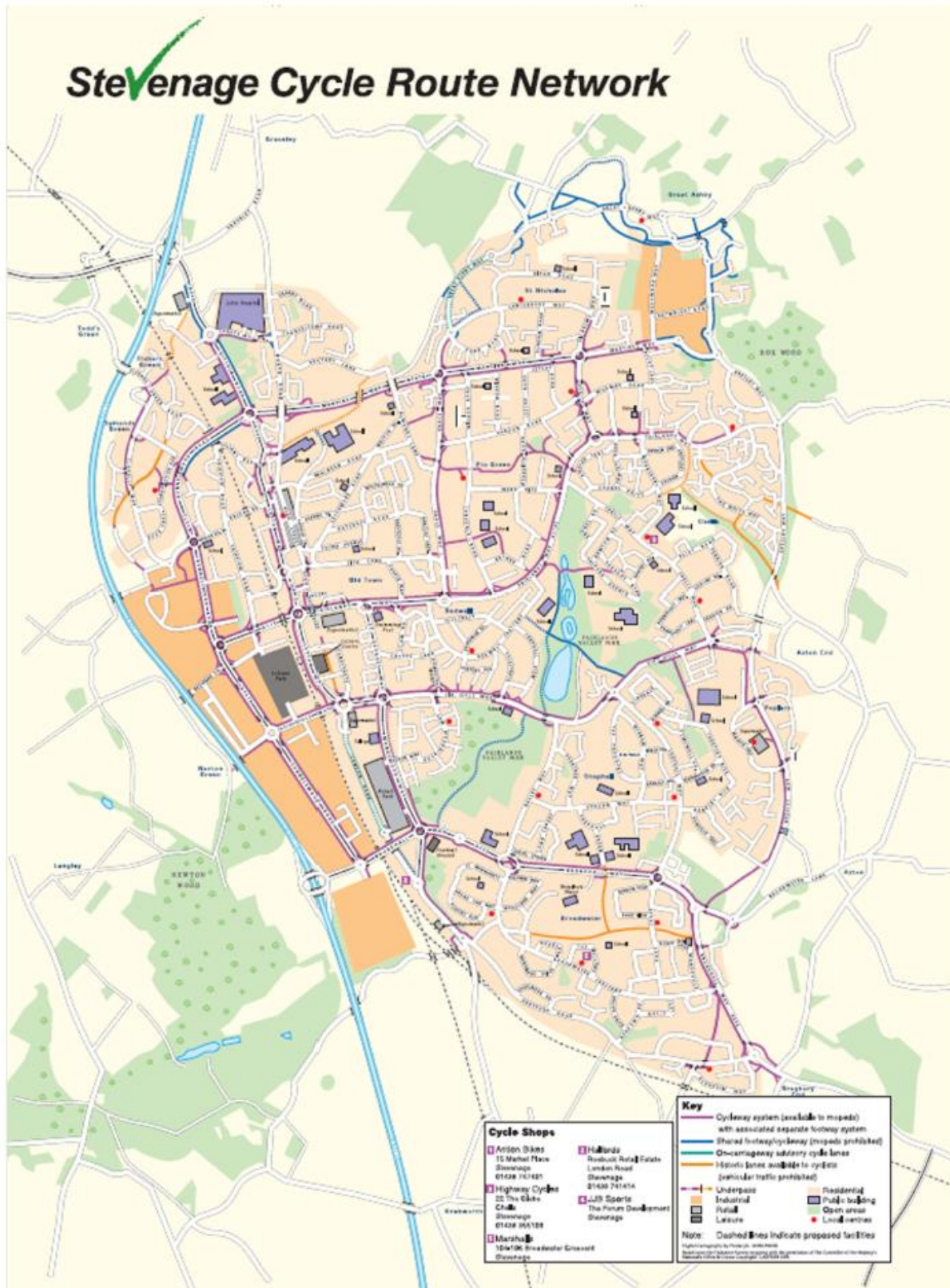
For car travel in Stevenage to be sustainable, many people will need to travel by other means. It is unrealistic to expect traffic to flow unimpeded at peak times, or to design to accommodate that desire.

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.

¹⁴¹ 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 implement¹⁴². 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:

¹⁴² 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

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D Glossary

Accessible and adaptable dwelling: A dwelling complying with requirements M4(2) of the Building Regulations.

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 accommodation¹⁴³; 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.

Permitted development: Development which has planning permission by reason of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).

Smaller HMO: Use as a house in multiple occupation falling within class C4.

Sheltered housing: Housing with a resident warden.

¹⁴³ In excess of 100m² GIA for penthouse-style accommodation and in excess of 85m² GIA in all other cases.

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.

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