

Ware Urban Extension

Retail Assessment, New District Centre

Ware Urban Extension

Retail Assessment, New District Centre

May 2014

Indigo Planning Limited

indigo

Indigo Planning Limited
Swan Court
Worple Road
London SW19 4JS

Tel: 020 8605 9400
Fax: 020 8605 9401

info@indigoplanning.com
indigoplanning.com

Ware Urban Extension

Retail Assessment, New District Centre

Contents	Page
1. Introduction	1
2. Context	2
Site and Surroundings	2
Proposed Urban Extension	2
3. Key Retail Planning Policy Considerations	3
National Planning Policy Framework	3
National Planning Policy Guidance	3
The Development Plan	4
Summary	6
4. Retail Evidence Base	7
East Herts Retail and Town Centres Study Update 2013	7
Summary	8
5. The Case for a District Centre	9
Quantitative Assessment	9
Consideration of additional expenditure generation	12
Form of the District Centre	13
Summary	13
6. Response to key retail planning policy considerations	14
7. Conclusions	17

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This report has been prepared by Indigo Planning on behalf of Leach Homes and Ptarmigan Planning, to consider the appropriate scale of retail floorspace to be provided as part of a new centre within a residential-led urban extension on land to the north and east of Ware, Hertfordshire.
- 1.2. It considers the case for a new retail centre against relevant retail planning policy considerations, including the tests set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and local policy documents, and relevant considerations from the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG), in the context of the proposals for a new urban extension.
- 1.3. This report has been informed by a high-level, bespoke quantitative retail analysis and consideration of relevant national and local policy goals and objectives. Indigo Planning has not contacted the local planning authority to discuss the prospects for a new retail centre for the purposes of preparing this report.
- 1.4. The level of assessment provided in this report is appropriate and sufficient for assessing the scale and nature of new retail facilities to support the urban extension, as part of the masterplanning process. More detailed assessment can be undertaken for the purposes of subsequent planning applications, when the precise form and scale of new housing is known.
- 1.5. This assessment is structured as follows:
 - Section 2 describes the site's context;
 - Section 3 sets out the key retail planning policy considerations;
 - Section 4 examines the findings of the retail evidence base;
 - Section 5 provides a quantitative assessment for new retail floorspace and considers the optimum scale, form and type of centre retailing;
 - Section 6 provides a response to the identified key retail planning policy considerations; and
 - Section 7 provides our summary and conclusions.

2. Context

Site and Surroundings

- 2.1. The site comprises three parcels of land located within the administrative boundary of East Hertfordshire District Council (EHDC), to the north and east of the existing built up area of Ware. As the site immediately adjoins the existing settlement, it represents a logical urban expansion. The land is currently within the Green Belt but is indicatively shown in emerging local policy documents as a Broad Location for Development.
- 2.2. The site is largely comprised of arable fields. The northern part of the site is located to the east of the A10/A1170 which provides the principal access to the site. The eastern part of the site can be accessed via the B1004 at Widbury Hill. To the south is the existing settlement of Ware. The site is otherwise surrounded to the north, west and east by further greenfield land.

Proposed Urban Extension

- 2.3. All three parcels of land have been promoted for residential development through emerging policy with some success, and currently represent the shortlist of potential residential land in Ware. All other potential residential sites in and around Ware have been dismissed by the Council as unsuitable.
- 2.4. The Council has also identified very challenging housing targets for the new plan period, and a likely shortfall in the short term which will need to be addressed over the period 2021 – 2031. The urban extension at the land to the north and east of Ware provides a valuable opportunity to contribute to the realisation of the housing targets, and the delivery of significant new housing development as part of a high quality, sustainable and integrated urban extension.
- 2.5. Leach Homes and Ptarmigan Planning are promoting the site for major new urban development. As explained further in later sections of this report, the Council has identified the site as capable of accommodating between 200 and 3,000 new dwellings. Where significant new residential development is pursued (i.e. more than 200 dwellings), there will be major new infrastructure requirements, including new sewer provision, an A10/A1170 link road and new/improved school provision.
- 2.6. New retail facilities are also envisaged to meet the needs of the new residential community. The scale of the new retail facilities is the focus of this report. However, it is envisaged that a new District Centre will be appropriate if the site's housing potential, 3,000 dwellings, is achieved within the urban extension.
- 2.7. The scope of this report is to consider the scale of facilities which can be supported by the new residential community and which are appropriate to adequately meet their shopping needs in the context of the local retail hierarchy. The location, siting, design and likely tenants of any new retail facilities will be determined at a later stage in the masterplanning process.

3. Key Retail Planning Policy Considerations

- 3.1. This Section briefly considers national and local planning policy guidance of relevance to the retail element of the proposed urban extension. Ultimately, the planning decisions made in respect of the new urban extension will be made in accordance with the provisions of the up-to-date development plan for the site, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 3.2. The key planning policies of relevance to this report are those set out in the following planning policy and policy guidance documents:
- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (March 2012);
 - The National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) (March 2014);
 - The adopted East Herts Local Plan (2007) (as saved); and
 - The emerging East Herts District Plan to 2031.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 3.3. The NPPF replaced the previous range of Planning Policy Statements including PPS4 on Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth. It adopts a positive approach to growth and introduces a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 14).
- 3.4. Planning should proactively drive and support sustainable economic development, to deliver the homes, business facilities and infrastructure needed to create thriving local places. Every effort should be made to meet the development needs of an area in full. Planning is to deliver sufficient community facilities and services to meet local needs (paragraph 17).
- 3.5. Existing town centres are to be protected. A sequential approach to site selection must be followed when retail development is proposed for an out of centre site that is not in accordance with an adopted planning strategy. Further, the impact of development proposals not in accordance with an up-to-date Local Plan and on sites outside of town centres, must be examined through a formal impact assessment. This should include the impact on existing and planned investment in a centre in addition to the vitality and viability of town centres (paragraph 26).
- 3.6. Planning decisions are to plan positively for the provision of community facilities such as local shops and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments. Planning decisions are to ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services (paragraph 70).

National Planning Policy Guidance

- 3.7. The NPPG was launched on 6 March 2014. The intention is that this online resource will be updated as and when planning policy and law changes. The NPPF and the NPPG need to be read together.
- 3.8. The NPPG states that local planning authorities should plan positively, to support town centres to generate employment, allow them to be competitive and create attractive places. It confirms that needs for main town centre uses, which includes retail uses, should be met in full.

- 3.9. A positive strategy for town centres, articulated through the Local Plan, is key to ensuring successful centres, which enable sustainable economic growth and provide a wide range of social and environmental benefits. It is appropriate that, within this strategy, a realistic role and function for each centre is identified, recognising that smaller centres within residential areas have an important role in the wider network of centres.

The Development Plan

- 3.10. The East Herts Local Plan Second Review was adopted in April 2007. It continues to be used in the determination of planning applications in the District, insofar as it is consistent with the policies of the NPPF. The Plan is, however, becoming substantially out of date, and therefore less weight can be attached to some of its policies and objectives. It is, however, saved until such time that it is replaced by a new district plan (which is under preparation) and other supporting local planning policy documents.

East Herts Local Plan Second Review (2007)

- 3.11. Ware is an attractive, historic settlement, with considerable heritage value in its buildings, gardens and riverside setting. Its development and expansion is constrained by the surrounding Metropolitan Green Belt. Demand for further residential development is strong.
- 3.12. Ware is defined as a Minor Town Centre in the East Herts retail hierarchy. At the top of the local hierarchy is Bishops Stortford as a Minor Sub-Regional Centre, followed by Hertford as a Town Centre. Ware is one of four Minor Town Centres. One District Centre and a number of Local Centres complete the local retail hierarchy.
- 3.13. Minor Town Centres provide a basic range of shopping facilities for the surrounding rural communities. Ware is the largest of the Minor Town Centres and is distinguished as a 'larger centre' for the purposes of shopping frontage policy.
- 3.14. Policy STC 6 relates to out-of-centre and out-of-town retailing. It specifies that if no suitable sites are available, or could be made available, for new retail proposals in town centres following the sequential approach, then out-of-centre developments may be permitted where:
- a) there is a demonstrable need for the development;
 - b) the development will not significantly affect the vitality or viability of other nearby centres;
 - c) the proposal complements the role of town centres; and
 - d) the proposal would be safely and easily accessible by a choice of means of transport.
- 3.15. Policy STC 6 specifies that proposals for out-of-town developments will not be permitted.
- 3.16. Policies GBC 1 – 3 protect land within the Greenbelt and the rural area beyond the Greenbelt from inappropriate development.
- 3.17. Housing policies address the housing requirement over the period 1991 – 2011. This policy period has now expired and new housing requirements supersede these policy expectations. New housing requirements are considered in the emerging East Herts District Plan.

Emerging East Herts District Plan

- 3.18. The emerging East Herts District Plan (Preferred Options) is on consultation between 27 February and 22 May 2014. Minor Amendment consultation is anticipated in Summer/Autumn 2014. Stages which follow include Submission (providing a further opportunity for public comment and involvement), Public Examination by a Planning Inspector and Adoption. The emerging East Herts District Plan has, therefore, some way to go in its preparation before it is adopted for development purposes.
- 3.19. The site is identified as a Broad Location for Development on the emerging District Plan Proposals Map.
- 3.20. Policy DSP 1 refers to the District's development strategy. Policy DSP 1 and paragraph 3.2.4 identifies that the District faces challenging housing growth targets. Evidence indicates a need for a further 15,000 dwellings within the District over the period 2011 – 2031, representing an average annual rate of 750 dwellings per year. The development strategy also anticipates considerable jobs growth and the need for new employment land, and an increase in retail floorspace across the District. Paragraph 3.2.11 confirms a need for a further 7,600m² new convenience floorspace and 6,100m² new comparison floorspace over the period to 2031. Policy DSP 1 reflects these growth requirements.
- 3.21. Paragraph 3.2.15 confirms that new retail provision will be encouraged within major urban extensions in order to support new and existing communities. It specifies that these will be neighbourhood centres or local parades as appropriate and will complement town centres.
- 3.22. Policy DSP 2 relates specifically to housing provision and confirms the need for at least 750 dwellings per annum over the plan period. It identifies that a shortfall will occur within the first five years which will need to be addressed over the remaining ten years. In the period 2021 – 2031, Policy DSP 2 confirms that housing needs will be met at the Broad Locations for Development including at the land to the north and east of Ware.
- 3.23. Policy DPS 3 identifies specific housing allocations. It identifies an indicative housing supply of 1,800 dwellings at the land to the north and east of Ware. Supplementary notes to the allocations confirms that housing supply figures will be further refined and that housing delivery at the sites is likely to extend beyond 2031.
- 3.24. It is anticipated that the Broad Locations for Development will be brought forward through a Development Plan Document (DPD), which will specify the sites' acceptable amount of development; outline a detailed policy framework; and identify infrastructure requirements and a delivery framework. Policy DSP 4 outlines the policy requirements in respect of the Broad Locations for Development.
- 3.25. Policy DSP 7 confirms the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as outlined by national policy, and the local authority's intention to work proactively to support proposals that secure improvements to social, economic and environmental conditions.
- 3.26. Policy GBR 1 protects the Green Belt from inappropriate development.
- 3.27. The development strategy for Ware recognises the existing constraints on the town and the town centre. Where strategic scale expansion comes forward on the land to the north and east of Ware, it is expected that appropriate infrastructure will be provided. This includes an A10/A1170 link road, a new primary and/or secondary school, new sewer facilities, and new retail facilities in that location. Figure 9.1 Key Diagram for Ware anticipates a new district centre as part of the development of the land to the north and east of Ware.
- 3.28. Policy WARE 1 identifies that between 200 and 3,000 new homes will be provided on the land to the north and east of Ware.
- 3.29. Policy WARE 3 specifies that further testing is required through masterplanning and the

preparation of a DPD to address the range of issues associated with strategic-scale housing development on the land to the north and east of Ware.

- 3.30. Policy RTC 1 seeks to protect the town centre function and services within existing town centres and encourages development within appropriate use classes. It confirms that the sequential and impact tests are relevant to new retail proposals in accordance with the NPPF. It applies lower impact assessment thresholds. In Ware, that threshold is 500m² (gross).
- 3.31. District centres are envisaged to comprise a group of shops with at least one supermarket or superstore, together with a range of non-retail services and public facilities (paragraph 15.6.2).

Summary

- 3.32. In short, emerging policy documents support the development of land to the north and east of Ware for major new housing development, subject to appropriate infrastructure provision. This includes the provision of new retail facilities, potentially as a new district centre in this location. This report has been prepared to establish the case for a district centre as part of the urban extension on land to the north and east of Ware.
- 3.33. Future proposals for new retail development in this location will be assessed against the retail policy outlined in this Section. It is prudent, in these early planning stages, to consider how proposals for new retail development might address key retail matters such as:
- a. Will the retail development represent sustainable economic development.
 - b. Will the retail development sufficiently meet local needs.
 - c. What appropriate scale of retail floorspace can be supported.
 - d. Would a new district centre satisfy the requirements of the sequential test.
 - e. Is the impact on the vitality and viability of Ware town centre likely to be acceptable.
 - f. Is the impact on planned town centre investment likely to be acceptable.
- 3.34. A detailed response to each of these matters is provided in Section 6 of this report.

4. Retail Evidence Base

- 4.1. This Section considers the findings of the retail evidence base which underpins the emerging East Herts District Plan and its retail policy, in the context of the prospect of promoting new retail development at the land to the north and east of Ware.
- 4.2. The East Herts Retail and Town Centres Study Update (EHRTCU) was published by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (NLP) in November 2013. It updates previous retail studies undertaken within the District in 2008 and 2004.

East Herts Retail and Town Centres Study Update 2013

- 4.3. An audit of the health of Ware town centre is contained in Appendix 4 of the EHRTCSU and provides a useful context for the consideration of future retail provision in the town.
- 4.4. As outlined in Section 3, Ware functions as a Minor Town Centre within the local retail hierarchy and the audit of the centre concludes that Ware fulfils this function appropriately. Its role is focussed on providing for day to day shopping and service needs and the composition of the town centre reflects this. It has a good convenience provision, and the existing Tesco store is an important anchor in this regard. Service provision is also above national averages, with a particular focus on cafes and restaurants. Comparison provision is lower than average, although all categories of comparison goods are represented in the centre, indicating an appropriate balance has been achieved. Vacancy rates are below national averages and there are no indications of clusters of decline.
- 4.5. The centre also benefits from good levels of accessibility, and can be accessed by a variety of means of transport including private vehicle, public transport (including bus and train), cycling and walking. Overall, there are a number of positive indicators of health and vitality within the centre and it is functioning at an appropriate level within the local retail hierarchy.
- 4.6. The findings of the EHRTCSU 2013 confirm that the existing Tesco store is trading strongly, at around 30% above company average levels. This level of over-trading indicates a need for new convenience floorspace, and this will only increase over time unless new floorspace is provided.
- 4.7. In assessing need for new retail development within the District over the plan period, the EHRTCSU 2013 splits the District into 5 zones. Ware is contained within Zone 2. An up-to-date household survey, undertaken in June 2013, underpins the EHRTCSU 2013. Population data is taken from Experian and the 2011 Census which means that it does not, therefore, take into account local housing allocations such as the urban extension at the land to the north and east of Ware.
- 4.8. The quantitative retail assessment of convenience capacity takes into account a number of existing convenience commitments, including the new Asda store in Ware. There are also committed extensions to the Tesco store in Hertford and Waitrose store in Bishops Stortford, and permission for a new Aldi store in Bishops Stortford.
- 4.9. Taking into account commitments, the findings of the EHRTCSU 2013 indicate capacity for new convenience floorspace of 1,060m² (net) in the District over the period 2016 – 2021 and up to 7,120m² (net) in the period up to 2031.
- 4.10. In terms of comparison goods capacity, major new commitments, particularly in Bishops Stortford are expected to absorb most of the existing capacity for new comparison floorspace within the District. However, in the longer term, there is an estimated capacity for a further 5,787m² (net) comparison floorspace to 2031.

- 4.11. Floorspace capacity findings are summarised in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: EHRTCSU 2013 Floorspace Capacity Projections

District Capacity	2013	2021	2031
Convenience (m ² net)	728	1,060	7,120
Comparison (m ² net)	n/a	-5,757	5,787

- 4.12. Recommendations for accommodating future retail floorspace in Ware recognise the space constraints within the existing town centre (paragraph 5.16). If the committed Asda store comes forward, there may be a reduced requirement for new convenience floorspace in Ware over the plan period. Even if the amount reduces, there would still be good planning reasons to ensure that new facilities, in the form of planned centres, form part of the Local Plan's strategy to allow new residential areas to be supported and develop sustainably. However, if the Asda store does not come forward, there will then be a particular need to provide new convenience floorspace and this, most likely, would have to be provided outside of the existing town centre boundary.
- 4.13. Where significant new housing growth is to be accommodated in Ware, it is recommended that provision is made within the new housing location to meet local retail needs, given the limited opportunities elsewhere in Ware.

Summary

- 4.14. Taking into account existing commitments, there is reasonable capacity for new convenience and comparison floorspace provision within the District over the plan period. In terms of convenience capacity, there is a need to accommodate a further 7,120m² (net) across the District by 2031. Additional floorspace will be required if existing commitments are not delivered and if there is substantial new housing growth through new urban extensions such as the opportunity at land to the north and east of Ware.
- 4.15. The retail evidence based confirms that, in Ware, it is appropriate to provide for new retail needs within the housing growth location, given the limited opportunities to accommodate new retail floorspace in Ware town centre.
- 4.16. In short, there is capacity for additional convenience floorspace within the District over the plan period and this is likely to be increased where major new residential development, such as the proposed urban extension, comes forward. It is appropriate to positively plan for the provision of new retail facilities to meet, in full, the needs of new and existing residents.

5. The Case for a District Centre

- 5.1. Significant new housing growth is being promoted at the land to the north and east of Ware. It is recognised, by emerging local planning policy documents and the site's promoters, that new housing growth in this location will also require significant new infrastructure provision, including new retail facilities. Depending on the quantum of new housing developed, it is envisaged that a new District Centre could be supported in this location. This Section examines the case for a new District Centre on land to the north and east of Ware.
- 5.2. District Centres are recognised within local policy documents as providing for everyday service and shopping needs, comprising at least one supermarket together with a range of other shops, services and community facilities. The provision of comparison retailers in a District Centre is, typically, limited. An appropriate scale of convenience provision is important to adequately meet local needs, reduce the expenditure leakage and limit car-borne travel to access day to day services. Convenience facilities should anchor the centre and provide for a sufficient range to meet weekly shopping needs. Service and community facilities normally complement the convenience function of the centre.
- 5.3. We examine below the convenience retail floorspace that could be supported solely by the planned new community.

Quantitative Assessment

- 5.4. In order to assess the capacity for convenience retail floorspace within an urban extension, we have adopted a straightforward and well-used methodology which examines likely expenditure potential generated by the likely housing development at the land to the north and east of Ware, and translating this into the quantum of floorspace which could be supported.
- 5.5. Emerging Policy WARE3 identifies that the land to the north and east of Ware could accommodate between 200 – 3,000 new homes. Emerging Policy DSP 3 includes an indicative capacity of 1,800 homes on the site in the period up to 2031, although recognises that this may not represent the total capacity of the site and that further housing could be delivered after 2031. In the absence of a definitive answer on the scale of housing to be delivered at the site, we have considered three scenarios when assessing the extent of retail floorspace which could be supported at the land to the north and east of Ware:
- Scenario 1 - 200 homes
 - Scenario 2 - 1,800 homes
 - Scenario 3 - 3,000 homes
- 5.6. The latest population and household estimates derived from the ONS indicate that the average number of persons per household in the UK is 2.42 persons. On this basis, we can estimate the population of the new Ware community depending on the quantum of new housing delivered. This is shown in Table 5.1 below.
- 5.7. In order to estimate the likely spending potential of this new community, the latest per capita expenditure estimates for the local area have been derived from the EHRTCSU 2013 estimates (refer Table 2, Appendix 2). Taking into account the likely phasing of new housing at the site, we have applied per capita expenditure estimates on the following basis:
- Scenario 1 – 2016
 - Scenario 2 – 2021
 - Scenario 3 - 2031

- 5.8. Table 5.1 outlines the assumptions under each scenario and gives an estimate of the total spending potential of the new community.

Table 5.1: Land to the North and East of Ware Urban Extension - Expenditure Potential

Scenario	Population	Conv. Spend Per Capita (£)	Comp. Spend Per Capita (£)	Total Conv. Spend (£m)	Total Comp. Spend (£m)	Total Spend Potential (£m)
1) 200 homes	484	1,982	3,340	0.96	1.62	2.58
2) 1,800 homes	4,356	2,029	3,725	8.84	16.23	25.07
3) 3,000 homes	7,260	2,179	4,940	15.82	35.86	51.68

- 5.9. If the full extent of housing is delivered, the new community to the north and east of Ware will have a population in the order of 7,260 people and generate some £16m of new convenience expenditure by 2031. It will generate up to almost £52m of new retail expenditure in total. This represents around a 40% increase to the size of the existing Ware community and will put considerable pressure on existing retail facilities within the town centre if new facilities are not provided.
- 5.10. The next step is to translate spending potential into floorspace capacity. As above, a District Centre is typically anchored by convenience retail facilities, usually including a supermarket, whilst comparison retail floorspace is usually directed to higher order centres in the retail hierarchy. This assessment has, therefore, focused on the potential to include convenience retail floorspace as part of the planned new centre.

Convenience Floorspace Capacity

- 5.11. Floorspace potential can be calculated by comparing spending potential with the likely sales density (£/m²) of the floorspace. This is most accurately estimated when an operator is known, as company average sales densities are available for each of the large retailers. In this case, future tenants are not yet known. However, it is expected that a new supermarket in this location would be attractive to any one of the five large foodstore operators; Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda, Waitrose or Morrisons.
- 5.12. Indigo have sourced company average sales densities from the latest data published by Verdict in its Food and Grocery Retailers Report 2012. Given the way in which the data is reported, the data is adjusted by Indigo Planning to take account of non-retail sales coming from petrol and café sales and to separate out the convenience and comparison elements.
- 5.13. Using this information, we have calculated an average convenience sales density for Tesco, Sainsbury's, Waitrose, Asda and Morrisons (in 2011 prices) of £11,947/m².
- 5.14. Based on the estimated convenience expenditure generated by the new Ware community and the sales density estimate, Table 5.2 translates the convenience expenditure potential into floorspace capacity for each scenario.

Table 5.2: Convenience Floorspace Capacity at land to the north and east of Ware

Scenario	Convenience Spend Generated (£m)	Sales density (£/m ²)	Net Floorspace Capacity (m ²)
1) 200 homes	0.96	11,974	80
2) 1,800 homes	8.84	11,974	738
3) 3,000 homes	15.82	11,974	1,321

- 5.15. It is estimated that a new community on the land to the north and east of Ware would generate sufficient convenience expenditure to support a new foodstore comprising some 1,320m² net convenience floorspace.

- 5.16. Modern food stores also typically provide an element of complementary comparison floorspace, including everyday comparison goods items such as paper towels and toilet paper, health and beauty items such as personal toiletries, kitchen utensils and seasonal products. Assuming a further 20% comparison floorspace provision, a foodstore of circa 1,600m² (net) could be supported. This translates into a gross floorspace of circa 2,300m².
- 5.17. A store of 2,300m² would enable the provision of a supermarket capable of meeting weekly shopping needs and as we have already established, District Centres typically include at least one supermarket, together with a number of small retail and other non-retail units. The new community would, therefore, support new convenience floorspace of a scale which is appropriate within a new District Centre.

Comparison Floorspace Capacity

- 5.18. In contrast to convenience spending which is often largely spent at local facilities, a smaller proportion of comparison goods expenditure is typically spent locally, and is more likely to be drawn to higher order centres. In this case, higher order centres would include Hertford or Bishops Stortford, or even centres further afield such as Stevenage, Hatfield or St Albans. In other words, the majority of the comparison expenditure generated by the new community would not be spent locally. Notwithstanding this, it is clear that, given the level of expenditure that will be generated by the new community (circa £36m at 2031), complementary new comparison goods facilities (including the 280m² within the new supermarket) at the District Centre could easily be supported.
- 5.19. To demonstrate this, we have assessed the indicative comparison floorspace which could be supported by the new community in Table 5.3. To do so, we have assumed the same comparison sales densities as adopted by the EHRTCSU 2013, which allow for improvements in floorspace efficiency over time.

Table 5.3 Comparison Floorspace Capacity at land to the north and east of Ware

Scenario	Comparison Spend Generated (£m)	Sales density (£/m ²)	Net Floorspace Capacity (m ²)
1) 200 homes	1.62	5,275	307
2) 1,800 homes	16.23	5,767	2,814
3) 3,000 homes	35.86	6,893	5,202

Note: Sales density taken from Table 12, Appendix 3, EHRTCSU 2013

- 5.20. Table 5.3 indicates that there will be capacity for a further 5,200m² comparison goods floorspace, generated by the Ware urban extension, if the full extent of housing is delivered by 2031. We expect that this is a conservative estimate, as Table 3.2 of the EHRTCSU 2013 confirms that average comparison sales densities in Ware are around 30% lower than the District average. Therefore, if the sales density is lower, the floorspace that could be supported will be higher. In any case, this level of provision is likely to exceed the requirements for a new District Centre at the land to the north and east of Ware.
- 5.21. The size and scale of this provision should be considered in more detail at later stages, taking into account the precise form of development and market forces at the time. However, we suggest that it is reasonable to expect a provision in the order of 500 – 750m² (net) of comparison floorspace (including 280m² to be provided as part of the supermarket) would be an appropriate starting point for the provision of comparison floorspace at the District Centre. This translates into around 650 – 1,000m² gross floorspace.

Other Retail and Service Uses

- 5.22. In order to fulfil its District Centre function, it would also be appropriate to allow for some Class A2 – A5 uses. Table 4.3 of the EHRTCSU 2013 outlines the existing mix of uses within East Herts existing centres, and shows that within Ware and the smaller centres of Buntingford and Sawbridgeworth, Class A2 – A5 uses typically comprise 25 – 30% of existing provision. This provides a guide for future provision. However, again, the size and scale of this provision should be considered in more detail at later stages, taking into account the precise form of development and market forces at the time.

Local Retail Hierarchy

- 5.23. In order to complete this analysis, it is useful to compare the size of the proposed District Centre with existing provision within the local retail hierarchy. Table 2.2 of the EHRTCSU 2013 summarises the retail floorspace within existing centres within the District. These are compared in Table 5.5 below.

	Convenience (net m ²)	Comparison (net m ²)	Total (net m ²)
Bishops Stortford	10,858	20,025	30,883
Hertford	6,459	14,483	20,942
Ware	2,779	4,750	7,529
Buntingford	1,716	1,259	2,975
Sawbridgeworth	861	975	1,836
Bishops Stortford – Thorley	1,968	700*	2,668
New District Centre	1,320	500 - 750	1,820 - 2,070

Note: * Thorley Centre comparison floorspace is Indigo estimate and includes Sainsbury's comparison floorspace

- 5.24. This demonstrates that the indicative retail provision identified for the new District Centre would ensure it remains entirely consistent with its role and function within the local retail hierarchy.
- 5.25. A full line supermarket, supported by a range of complementary retail and non-retail uses dedicated to meeting the local and everyday needs of the local community would ensure that the District Centre fulfils its role appropriately.

Consideration of additional expenditure generation

- 5.26. These floorspace parameters do not assume that any additional expenditure, beyond that generated by the new community, is needed to justify a new District Centre. The floorspace range identified is clearly of an appropriate scale to support a District Centre and will be supported by residents of the urban extension.
- 5.27. This high-level analysis assumes that the new community will spend all of their convenience expenditure at the District Centre supermarket. For the purposes of masterplanning for the urban extension, this is an appropriate methodology. In reality, the new residents on the land to the north and east of Ware will also access other stores to meet their convenience shopping needs, including the Tesco store in the town centre and the new Asda store (when it is delivered). This will be a positive impact on these existing businesses and centres.
- 5.28. Similarly, it is likely that the new supermarket will draw an element of trade from existing Ware residents, particularly those in adjacent residential areas, for whom the new facilities might be more convenient. The District Centre is not intended to be of a size or scale to draw significant numbers from outside the urban extension. However, in reality, convenience shopping patterns and habits often blur lines of development and are largely dictated by convenience and ease of accessibility.

- 5.29. Therefore, for the purposes of this assessment, the approach taken appropriately assesses the likely scale of new convenience floorspace that could be supported by an urban extension at the land to the north and east of Ware. It is reasonable, at this stage, to rely on the floorspace estimates, while acknowledging that there will be both leakage and inflows of convenience expenditure from the new community which can be examined more closely once the exact form and scale of new housing development at the site is known.

Form of the District Centre

- 5.30. Whilst the District Centre will be anchored by a new foodstore, it could be supported by a range of other services and facilities, to form a focus for the new community and be capable of meeting local people's day to day service and shopping needs. It is proposed that the District Centre accommodates a supermarket, a parade of smaller retail and service units, and space for associated facilities such as community uses, the detail of which would be determined and assessed at detailed design stage. It is appropriate to place these facilities locally and in an accessible location for the new residential population that they are seeking to serve.
- 5.31. The occupiers of the proposed units will, to a large extent, be determined according to market demand at the appropriate time. It is proposed that the final form of the District Centre is determined at detailed design stage and that the masterplanning processes instead identify a range of acceptable land uses with floorspace parameters. This would allow the developers the opportunity to be flexible and responsive to future operator interest and to changes in market conditions at the appropriate time.

Summary

- 5.32. It has been demonstrated that the proposed development could support new convenience retail net floorspace of circa 1,320m² (net), assuming the full 3,000 houses are delivered. While convenience shopping patterns are often complex and influenced by various factors, it is relevant that the convenience retail floorspace estimates can be supported entirely by expenditure which will be generated by the new population. The new community will also support a complementary element of comparison retailing and other retail service uses to ensure that the full range of retail and local needs are met.
- 5.33. In planning positively for the needs of the new community, it is clear that the proposed convenience floorspace is of an appropriate size and scale to meet the everyday and local shopping needs of the new residential community and can be supported without requiring diversion of expenditure from other established retail facilities. The anticipated scale and mix of retail floorspace will contribute to providing a sustainable mix of uses at the land to the north and east of Ware.

6. Response to key retail planning policy considerations

- 6.1. This Section considers the provision of a new District Centre at the land to the north and east of Ware against the retail policy considerations, as set out in national planning guidance and local planning policy, and as summarised in Section 3.
- 6.2. The relevant retail planning policy matters identified were:
- a. Will the retail development represent sustainable economic development.
 - b. Will the retail development sufficiently meet local needs.
 - c. What appropriate scale of retail floorspace can be supported.
 - d. Would a new district centre satisfy the requirements of the sequential test.
 - e. Is the impact on the vitality and viability of Ware town centre likely to be acceptable.
 - f. Is the impact on planned town centre investment likely to be acceptable.

Sustainable economic development

- 6.3. The planning system operates on the basis of a presumption in favour of sustainable development. A key part of this is ensuring that new homes, business facilities and infrastructure are delivered in such a way that thriving local places are created.
- 6.4. A District Centre, with a range of retail facilities and services, would form an important focus for the planned new community in Ware, and would be particularly important in ensuring that the Ware urban extension achieves high quality public realm and a community focus, and contributes to the overall quality and appeal of the new residential environment.
- 6.5. A District Centre would provide important economic development in the local area; would generate employment and support opportunities for social interaction; would cater to local shopping needs and reduce the need to travel to stores and centres elsewhere; would support the viability of the overall urban extension and is of a scale that will ensure that the planned new community is sustainable and inclusive.

Meeting local needs

- 6.6. The planning system should ensure that the development needs of an area are met in full. This means that new residential developments should be supported by sufficient community facilities and services to allow daily needs to be met. This is recognised in emerging local planning policy documents.
- 6.7. The provision of a District Centre at the Ware urban extension represents a positive planning response to provide for the needs of new residents, including providing community facilities, such as local shops and services, to enhance the sustainability of the new community and residential environments. It is envisaged that the District Centre will be designed in such a way that it will accommodate facilities that will meet the everyday needs of the local community in an accessible location.

Appropriate scale

- 6.8. New retail development needs to be appropriate in nature and scale to its location. We have considered the size and scale of the new community within the Ware urban extension to determine the scale of retailing which should be provided. The provision of a District Centre is appropriate in the context of the size and scale of the new community and conforms with the expectations of emerging local planning documents.
- 6.9. A new District Centre would form an important part of the local retail hierarchy and its scale and form needs to be consistent in this context. The only other District Centre within the District at present is the Thorley Centre in Bishops Stortford which comprises a 2,315m² (net) Sainsbury's foodstore plus a good range of convenience, comparison and service facilities across some 16 units. Emerging policy confirms that District Centres are expected to comprise at least one supermarket, supported by a range of other local shopping, service and community facilities in separate units. The floorspace estimates of Section 5 are appropriate in the context of the local retail hierarchy and existing provision.
- 6.10. For it to function effectively as a District Centre, the foodstore must be of a sufficient scale to cater for main food shopping needs, to reduce the need for residents to travel further afield for grocery needs, and to cater to everyday service and community needs. It should become a focus for the community, providing opportunities for interaction and socialising, as well as contributing to community identity.
- 6.11. The precise form and occupation of the District Centre would be determined at detailed design stage.

Sequential site assessment

- 6.12. In seeking to apply the sequential approach to development site selection, the local planning authority would look first at locations in existing centres, followed by sites on the edge of those town centres, followed by out-of-centre sites, with preference given to sites which are, or will be, well served by a choice of means of transport and which have the strongest prospects of forming links with the centre.
- 6.13. We do not consider that there is a requirement to undertake this exercise as the principle of needing to provide a new District Centre is derived specifically from the need to support the new residential population and community at land to the north and east of Ware. Further, local policy documents confirm that there are very limited opportunities to accommodate new retail floorspace within Ware town centre and encourage the provision of retail floorspace to meet local needs within the new housing growth location.

Impact on the vitality and viability of Ware town centre and planned investment

- 6.14. Paragraph 26 of the NPPF requires an impact assessment if the development is above a locally set threshold, or over 2,500m² gross if none is set. It is likely that a District Centre at the land to the north and east of Ware would exceed this threshold.
- 6.15. The impact of a new District Centre would need to be considered in detail once the precise form of development is determined. However, based on our estimates at Section 5, a foodstore of the size and scale identified is estimated to have a turnover in the order of £16m at 2031. As mentioned, this turnover is expected to be largely supported by new expenditure generated but may also draw trade from other nearby stores such as Tesco within Ware town centre and the new Asda store (when it is delivered). It is possible that the store will have an impact to some extent on Ware town centre.
- 6.16. This impact is not, however, expected to be significant. The findings of the EHRTCSU 2013 confirm that Ware town centre is healthy and vital and functions appropriately within its role.

The existing Tesco store, on which any impact will largely fall, is currently trade above company average levels and this is likely to increase over time unless new floorspace is provided. As the new foodstore will be largely supported by its new community, the trade diversion from Tesco will be limited and it is, in any case, in a position to withstand some impact given its strong trading position.

- 6.17. The Asda store will serve an important role in central Ware as a food shopping destination. It will provide important consumer choice and competition to the current Tesco store, and it will have established a trading pattern by the time that the strategic housing areas are delivered and occupied. A District Centre store in north-east Ware would not directly compete with established central stores.
- 6.18. Emerging retail policy recognises the limited opportunities for the expansion of Ware town centre and seeks to encourage the provision of appropriately located convenience facilities within new housing growth locations. In other words, it recognises the need for additional facilities and accepts that there will be changes in shopping patterns as a consequence. The existing town centre cannot cater to the needs of the new community and if the scale of new convenience provision is in line with the expenditure likely to be generated, any impact on existing centres is unlikely to be significant.
- 6.19. The new residential community at the land to the north and east of Ware will generate a significant amount of comparison retail expenditure (approximately £35m). The new District Centre will not absorb a material proportion of this spending. The expenditure, therefore, will be available in principle to Ware town centre and the wider area. This will have a positive impact on Ware town centre.
- 6.20. There is no planned investment in Ware town centre which is likely to be impacted by a new District Centre at the land to the north and east of Ware.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1. This assessment examines the case for new retail floorspace to support an urban extension on land to the north and east of Ware in East Hertfordshire District.
- 7.2. The site is a greenfield and Green Belt location. However, it is identified within emerging local policy documents as a Broad Location for Development, with an indicative capacity for some 3,000 new dwellings. As part of this housing development, significant new infrastructure will be required, including new retail provision to meet the shopping and service needs of the new community.
- 7.3. This retail assessment considers the scale of new retail floorspace, and in particular, new convenience floorspace, which can be supported by the new residential community. It is demonstrated that the new population could support a foodstore of some 2,300m² (gross) by itself. It has been demonstrated that convenience retail provision of this scale is of an appropriate size and scale for a new District Centre and a new District Centre in this location accords with emerging local policy expectations. Importantly, the new convenience floorspace would not rely on significant trade diversion from retail facilities elsewhere, including in Ware town centre, to support it.
- 7.4. The new resident population would also generate significant new comparison retail expenditure. District Centres do not typically comprise a significant comparison element, although it would be appropriate to include a comparison element (including within the new supermarket). The amount of expenditure generated by the new population will clearly be sufficient to support a modest provision at the new District Centre. However, importantly, the residual comparison expenditure is likely to be spent at other facilities within the District, including Ware, Hertford and Bishops Stortford town centres. This would have a positive impact on these centres.
- 7.5. A new District Centre of the size and scale identified is unlikely to have a significant adverse impact on Ware town centre, or other centres in the surrounding areas. This has been fully explained in Section 5. The new District Centre will be largely supported by the new community and will not need to divert significant trade from other stores to support it.
- 7.6. We do not consider that there is a requirement to undertake a sequential site assessment as the principle of needing to provide a new local centre is derived specifically from the need to support the new residential community on the land to the north and east of Ware.
- 7.7. Whilst the District Centre will be anchored by a new convenience store, it should be supported by a range of other services and facilities, to form a focus for the new development and be capable of meeting local people's day to day needs.
- 7.8. There are good planning reasons to ensure that facilities and services are provided in a convenient location for new residents. A new District Centre will ensure that an appropriate amount and range of facilities are provided in an easily accessible location for all new residents.
- 7.9. Overall, these findings indicate a clear case to support a new District Centre at the urban extension at the land to north and east of Ware. The proposed facilities are a key part of the supporting infrastructure necessary for a planned new community and are typical of the nature of facilities that are sought from a residential development of this scale. They will contribute materially towards effective place making and ensuring the overall development represents sustainable economic development.