

## 2.SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

### 2.1 Introduction

**2.1.1** Chapter 1 (Introduction) sets the scene for the need to alter fundamentally the way we plan for, and control development in the District. It lays down the key sustainability aims for this Local Plan. This chapter converts the Strategy, Vision and Aims outlined in the previous chapter into specific planning policies. The overall aim and objectives of this chapter are outlined below;

#### Aim

To ensure that development in East Hertfordshire is the most sustainable in form as current knowledge and practicalities permit.

#### Objectives

1. Promote and encourage development which reduces the overall demand for, and makes the most efficient use of, resources including land, water, energy, and other resources.
2. Encourage the generation of renewable energy within the District.
3. Increase the level of energy efficiency in the District's towns and villages.
4. Increase the rate of carbon fixing through protecting existing, and increasing, plant cover (particularly trees).
5. Protect and enhance the air and water environment.
6. Protect and enhance biodiversity and features of geological interest, particularly critical environmental assets.
7. Reducing social exclusion and improving quality of life.

### 2.2 Making Development More Sustainable

**2.2.1** In determining planning applications tough new choices will have to be made. All development

proposals will have to meet the needs and requirements of the principles of sustainable development.

**2.2.2** This chapter relating specifically to sustainable development will form the bedrock of many other parts of the Local Plan, and contains policies that were not previously present. However, policies relating to sustainable development will not be solely contained within this chapter. Every policy in the Plan has been written using the aims and objectives set out in Chapter 1 (Introduction), which in turn were formed by the principles of sustainable development. As such, every policy in the Plan will seek to contribute to the objective of the District Council of ensuring the most sustainable pattern of development in the District as is currently practically possible.

**2.2.3** To make development more sustainable the Council will encourage development that contributes to, and restrict development that prejudices, the overall sustainability aim and objectives set out above.

**2.2.4** In order to focus attention and guide thought towards the sustainability implications of development the Council will expect all development proposals above a certain threshold to be accompanied by a Sustainability Statement in accordance with Policy SD1. Applicants may find that their application cannot be considered until such a Statement is submitted. For development below the threshold given, the District Council will encourage, but not insist on, the use of Statements.

**2.2.5** The content of the Sustainability Statement should focus on the efficient use of resources and how the particular development achieves the overall aims of sustainable development. The District Council has prepared a Supplementary Planning Document to assist developers in preparing Sustainability Statements and to provide information on sustainability issues.

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**2.2.6** When assessing applicants' Statements the Council will consider the degree to which sustainability ideas and principles have been incorporated into developments. Sustainability is a broad concept and the Council accept that it may not be possible to address every issue for every development. However, the Council is keen to ensure that opportunities are not missed when formulating schemes, particularly given that relatively minor adjustments to a development can stimulate more sustainable activities from the occupiers.

### SD1 Making Development More Sustainable

All proposals for development of 15 dwellings or more (or sites of 0.5 hectares or more irrespective of the number of dwellings), or for commercial development (including changes of use) of 250 sq metres floorspace or more, will be expected to be accompanied by a Sustainability Statement which explains how the proposed development will:

- create healthy, socially integrated communities;
- encourage sustainable movement patterns through design and transport infrastructures;
- achieve the sustainable use of resources such as land, water, energy, materials and waste;
- be physically well integrated and respond to local character and distinctiveness;
- protect and enhance the natural and built environment;
- create a flourishing and healthy local economy.

### 2.3 Sustainable Pattern of Development and Constraint

**2.3.1** It is Government policy to develop land within urban areas, particularly town centres and previously developed or brownfield sites in preference to greenfield sites. The County Council endorsed this approach by directing development,

through planned regeneration, to the named towns of Bishop's Stortford, Hertford, Ware, and Sawbridgeworth. The Structure Plan also enables Local Plans to select other settlements within and beyond the Green Belt where limited development may be appropriate to maintain the vitality of the area; the identification of these settlements being subject to a demonstration that sustainable objectives will be met by development which will subsequently take place (Structure Plan Policies 6 and 7). Policy SD2 confirms those towns within East Hertfordshire where development is to be concentrated. Stanstead Abbots and St Margarets is identified as such a settlement on the basis that additional development would support existing services and facilities and would be well-located in relation to sustainable transport modes, particularly rail, bus and cycling. Similarly, Buntingford is identified as a sustainable location for limited new development to support existing services and facilities and to provide for local need.

### SD2 Settlement Hierarchy

Development in the District will be concentrated in the main settlements of Bishop's Stortford, Hertford, Ware, and Sawbridgeworth. Some development will also be directed towards the settlements of Stanstead Abbots and St. Margarets and Buntingford. Their boundaries are defined by the Green Belt boundary as shown on the Proposals Map, except for Buntingford which, being beyond the Green Belt, has its settlement boundary defined on the Proposals Map. Development necessary to support local needs and services in the villages will be permitted in accordance with Policies OSV1 and OSV2.

**2.3.2** Those settlements within the Green Belt are specified as 'inset', i.e. they are excluded from the Green Belt and, accordingly, national, county and district policies for development within the Green Belt do not apply to them.

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**2.3.3** Further details of policies and proposals for each of the settlements listed in Policy SD2 can be found within their individual settlement chapters in Part II of this Plan. Details of development policies and proposals away from the settlements listed in Policy SD2 can principally be found in Chapters 4 and 17 (Green Belt and Countryside and Other Settlements - The Villages).

### 2.4 Renewable Energy

**2.4.1** There are two key areas in which planning can play a significant enabling role in this major area of sustainability:

- facilitate the generation of energy in ways that have less environmental impact;
- facilitate the reduction in the consumption of energy.

**2.4.2** Efficiency in the supply and use of energy, and the development of renewable energy sources, can make a major contribution to reducing emissions of greenhouse gases, these gases being the likely cause of global warming. As well as environmental benefits, energy efficient siting and design of buildings also gives economic and social benefits, such as saving money and reducing fuel poverty.

**2.4.3** Government guidance on renewable energy (PPS22) describes renewable energy as covering those energy flows that occur naturally and repeatedly in the environment - from the wind, the fall of water, the movement of the oceans, from the sun and also from biomass.

**2.4.4** Under the terms of the Kyoto Protocol (1997) the UK is committed to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of 12.5% below their 1990 level by 2008-2012. Over the longer term the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution recommend that the UK put itself on a course to achieve a 60% reduction in emissions by 2050. Energy production and consumption is a key contributor to these emissions and the Government has therefore set a target to ensure 10% of all UK electricity comes from renewable sources (presently only 2% comes from renewable sources).

**2.4.5** This target is given a regional context through the document 'Making Renewable Energy a Reality - Setting a Challenging Target for the Eastern Region', which set a renewable energy target for the region of 14%. The greatest potential for renewable energy in the region, and also in the county, is considered to be in wind energy and biomass energy schemes.

**2.4.6** In view of the agricultural background of the District the Council is keen to maximise the potential for generating energy from biomass crops. To achieve the target for biomass in the East of England approximately 140,000 hectares of land would need to be set aside for energy crops.

**2.4.7** According to a 1997 study undertaken for the Department of Trade and Industry, the potential for solar power generation in Hertfordshire is also very significant. This type of energy is ideally suited to being generated at the local level, particularly at the scale of a single dwelling. The East Herts Solar Club offers guidance on the installation of such systems, and can be contacted via the District Council offices.

**2.4.8** While it is not proposed to identify specific sites for renewable energy at this stage, proposals will be encouraged in principle subject to Policy SD3.

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### SD3 Renewable Energy

- (I) The development of facilities for the harnessing of renewable energy sources is supported in principle. Particular emphasis will be placed on promoting energy generation from biomass fuels and solar power on both a small scale and commercially.
- (a) In assessing proposals involving the use of biomass fuels particular regard will be paid to the impact on the local transport network, on nature conservation interests and on landscape and visual amenity. Such proposals should be accompanied by detailed information regarding the proposed raw materials (which should be locally sourced) and schemes to limit potential noise, smell and safety concerns.
- (b) Proposals for harnessing solar power will be judged primarily on their visual impact, particularly where it affects Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas or other areas of particular visual quality or sensitivity.
- (c) Proposals for wind power schemes have significant potential for energy generation but can also create problems of visual intrusion and loss of amenity. While such schemes will enjoy support in principle, they will need to be carefully located and employ all reasonable mitigating measures.
- (II) Proposals for other renewable energy schemes will be assessed in terms of their energy generation potential, environmental impact and effect on local amenity.

**2.4.9** The potential to harness renewable energy will be particularly relevant when new developments are being considered. The District Council will expect the consideration of renewable energy to be included as part of the 'Sustainability Statement' (see Policy SD1). The element of these

statements relating to renewable energy will vary considerably depending on the scale of development proposed. The District Council also acknowledges that the potential for renewable energy generation in new developments varies considerably depending on the location of the building(s). For example, an infill development in a prominent location within a Conservation Area will have other design considerations, which may well constrain the ability to harness renewable energy. However on larger or other more spacious sites the District Council will expect proposals to be put forward which achieve renewable energy exploitation. For example, all new developments will be expected to include an active thermal solar system unless there are clear and exceptional reasons why this should not be the case.

### 2.5 The Precautionary Principle

**2.5.1** The environmental implications of development are not always clear cut. It is in these instances that the precautionary principle should apply.

**2.5.2** An explanation of the precautionary principle is the one found in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (June 1992):

*"Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation."*

**2.5.3** In more simple terms the UK Sustainable Development Strategy explains that this means it is not acceptable to say "we can't be sure that serious damage will happen, so we'll do nothing to prevent it". The District Council endorses the above precautionary principle and will apply it in appropriate circumstances.

### 2.6 Sustainable Development and Nature Conservation

**2.6.1** The conservation, and where practicable enhancing of, our natural heritage (biodiversity and features of geological interest) is an essential element of sustainable development. Nature conservation also helps to sustain the distinctive character of local areas. Nature conservation

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interest is also not confined to greenfield sites, and the Council recognise that many brownfield sites can be of importance for nature conservation. While there are clear benefits to developing brownfield sites in preference to greenfield sites, such development must take full account of any nature conservation interest.

**2.6.2** Local planning authorities have an important role in furthering the conservation of biodiversity through the Local Plan process, such as protecting conservation sites. Chapter 8 (Environment and Design) has policies in this respect. However, our natural heritage is not confined to designated sites and the following overarching policy will protect the wider nature conservation interests of the District. In addition, Sustainability Statements submitted in accordance with Policy SD1 should give full consideration to nature conservation and enhancement.

### **SD4 Sustainable Development and Nature Conservation**

Development proposals are required to safeguard the integrity and continuity of landscape features of major importance for wild flora and fauna, and to include opportunities for encouraging habitat protection, enhancement and management.

#### *East Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan*

**2.6.3** East Herts District Council is a formal signatory of the Hertfordshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan and is working towards completion of the actions relevant to the District. Policy ENV17 in Chapter 8 (Environment and Design) addresses this issue in more detail.

### **2.7 Transport and Traffic Reduction**

**2.7.1** Transport and traffic are widely regarded as key issues to tackle in order to progress to a more sustainable lifestyle. The links with other areas of policy, both within and beyond planning, are wide and complex.

**2.7.2** Two issues are identified to be tackled:

- Reduce the need to travel
- If there is a need to travel, travel the shortest distance possible by the most efficient means possible.

**2.7.3** Chapter 5 (Transport) contains many new policies relating to development proposals, which are likely to involve traffic generation.

### **2.8 Pollution**

**2.8.1** Chapter 8 (Environment and Design) contains the District Council's policies with regard to light pollution (Policy ENV23) and hazardous installations (Policy ENV26).

**2.8.2** It is the Council's intention to guide development to previously developed land within the existing main settlements and this is likely to mean that some contaminated land will be developed. When considering proposals for such development the Council's Contaminated Land Strategy will be a consideration, together with the following Policy.

### **SD5 Development on Contaminated Land**

The Council will encourage proposals for the development and re-use of land which is or suspected to be contaminated. On such sites applications must be accompanied by a full site investigation establishing the level of contamination in the soils and/or groundwater/surface waters and identify appropriate remedial proposals in accordance with the proposed end usage. In considering whether planning permission should be granted, the Council will need to be satisfied that there will be no unacceptable risk to health or the environment arising from the remediation works. Where necessary, appropriate monitoring procedures to be undertaken prior to, during, and post, remediation will be agreed between the developer and the Council.