

14.SAWBRIDGEWORTH

14.1 Introduction

14.1.1 Sawbridgeworth is located in the south eastern corner of the District on the A1184, between Bishop's Stortford to the north, and Harlow in Essex to the south. It is the fourth largest settlement in the District with a population of approximately 7,900. The town is sited on undulating rising ground to the west of the River Stort.

14.1.2 Historically, the town has developed around the routes linking London with both Cambridge and East Anglia. The historic core of the town centre is based on a medieval grid of roads to the east of London Road.

14.1.3 The town has good transport connections, with a mainline railway station and road links to Bishop's Stortford and Harlow, providing routes to the M11 and M25, as well as Stansted Airport. These are heavily congested for an extended peak period each day.

14.1.4 This chapter sets out the planning issues specific to Sawbridgeworth, and the Council's policy intentions. These will seek to retain the existing character of the town, whilst making provision for appropriate development to meet the needs of the foreseeable future. The aims and objectives of the Local Plan for Sawbridgeworth are as follows:

Aims

- A. To maintain and enhance Sawbridgeworth as a pleasant place in which to live, grow-up, work, shop, and spend leisure time.
- B. To make appropriate provision for the necessary needs of the present and future generations, in a way which is consistent with the principles of sustainable development.
- C. To ameliorate the problems associated with traffic in the town.

- D. To prevent the further coalescence of the town with the surrounding settlements of Bishop's Stortford, Spellbrook, High Wych, Harlow and Lower Sheering.

Objectives

1. To ensure a sufficient supply of housing land is identified for Sawbridgeworth during the plan period, in accordance with the District Housing Provision Strategy, contained in Chapter 3 (Housing).
2. To ensure that development meets the principle of sustainable development, as set out in Chapters 1 (Introduction) and 2 (Sustainable Development) of this Local Plan.
3. To maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of the commercial centre, by encouraging a range of shops and services, and preventing erosion or dilution of its retail and service function.
4. To ameliorate the problems associated with traffic in the town, and improve walking and cycling links, access to and provision of passenger transport, and local provision of facilities.
5. To introduce traffic management and related "traffic calming" measures, so as to improve conditions of safety and comfort for local residents, pedestrians and other non-motorised user groups and stimulate reduction in car dependency.
6. To protect and enhance the River Stort and encourage its use for nature conservation, recreation, transport and other appropriate uses.

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14.2 Settlement Limits

14.2.1 Sawbridgeworth is one of four main towns in the District which is surrounded by the Metropolitan Green Belt, and where Hertfordshire Structure Plan 1991-2011 Policy 6 provides that development will be concentrated. The overriding planning aim of defining settlement limits has been, and will continue to be, the prevention of urban sprawl and the coalescence with nearby settlements, and the protection of the town's special character.

14.2.2 Where Green Belt land is released for new development, it will be on a controlled basis, which may involve phasing and planning obligations being sought, to inter alia, enhance the quality of adjoining countryside to compensate for the loss of green space, in accordance with Policy IMP1. In respect of the need to release Green Belt land for development, see paragraph 14.3.2.

14.2.3 The following Green Belt alterations, as shown on the Proposals Map, are proposed at Sawbridgeworth as part of this Local Plan Review. All proposals would result in land being taken out of the Green Belt.

Land at Cambridge Road/Crofters

This area comprises the southern part of the Leventhorpe School grounds, and the adjoining Sawbridgeworth Sports Association football ground at Crofters. It is proposed to exclude the area from the Green Belt and identify it as a Housing Site Allocation, in accordance with Policies SA1 and SA2.

Land East of Millfields and Lawrence Avenue

This area comprises land between existing development and the River Stort and is south of an allotment area. It is proposed to exclude the area from the Green Belt, and identify it as a Housing Site Allocation, in accordance with Policies SA1 and SA3.

SA1 Housing Allocations - Sawbridgeworth

In accordance with Policy HSG2 (II) the following sites as identified on the Proposals Map, are allocated for residential development:

In Phase 1:

Remaining Deposit Version Housing Allocations (included in Table 3.2 (h) in Chapter 3: Housing)

Location	Ref No	Brownfield/ Greenfield	Site Specific Policy	Estimated Number of Dwellings		
				Open Market	Affordable	Total
Land at Cambridge Road/Crofters	223.1	Greenfield	SA2	78	52	130
Land East of Millfields and Lawrence Avenue	173 & 305	Greenfield	SA3	24	16	40
			TOTAL	102	68	170

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14.3 Housing

14.3.1 Based on the Housing Provision Strategy, as detailed in Chapter 3 (Housing), Sawbridgeworth needs to make provision for a net additional 178 dwellings, on sites of a size capable of accommodating five or more dwellings, between 1999 and 2011. These dwellings will cater for the housing needs of the town and a proportion of the surrounding hinterland. It is expected that affordable housing will be provided in accordance with Policies HSG3 and HSG4 in Chapter 3 (Housing).

14.3.2 Despite efforts to limit the amount of greenfield land take, the District Council found little scope within Sawbridgeworth for further housing to be accommodated on previously developed ('brownfield') sites or through urban regeneration. In order to provide sufficient land for housing, therefore, some Green Belt greenfield sites have been allocated for residential development. The release of these sites will be in accordance with Policy HSG2 in Chapter 3 (Housing).

14.4 Housing: Site Specific Policies

14.4.1 Whilst the numbers allocated to specific sites are given in Policy SA1, there are certain sites which the District Council considers would benefit from specific policies, in order to guide future development and provide information for interested parties.

14.5 Cambridge Road/Crofters Site

14.5.1 This site comprises the southern part of the Leventhorpe School grounds and the adjacent Sawbridgeworth football ground at Crofters. The site is considered suitable for primarily residential development, together with leisure, recreation and community facilities. Some of these latter facilities may be able to be accommodated within the remainder of Leventhorpe School site.

14.5.2 The development of the site is expected to be subject to a Development Brief, prepared by or

approved by the District Council. Such a development brief should address, among other issues, the provision of leisure, recreation and community facilities, particularly their location either on the Cambridge Road/Crofters site (Policy SA2); on the adjacent school site identified as a Major Developed Site (Policy GBC4); or in the case of sports pitch provision, on land to the north of the school site (Policy SA4).

SA2 Cambridge Road/Crofters Site

- (I) The Cambridge Road/Crofters site is identified on the Proposals Map for residential purposes, together with leisure, recreation and community facilities.
- (II) The development of the site shall make provision for up to 40% affordable housing, in accordance with Policies HSG3 and HSG4.
- (III) Development of the site should not proceed until appropriate replacement sports pitch provision has been made in accordance with Policy SA4. Such provision shall be at least equivalent to that lost in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility.

14.6 Land East of Millfields and Lawrence Avenue

14.6.1 It is proposed to identify this site as a Housing Allocation for possible release after 2006, in accordance with Policies HSG2 (II), SA1 and site specific Policy SA3, and safeguard part of the site adjacent to the River Stort as open publicly accessible land. The development of the site is expected to be subject to a Development Brief, prepared by or approved by the District Council, and also a Flood Risk Assessment.

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SA3 Land East of Millfields and Lawrence Avenue

- (I) Land east of Millfields and Lawrence Avenue, as defined on the Proposals Map is identified for residential purposes in accordance with Policy HSG2 (II) and SA1. The layout of new development should include open space along the River Stort frontage to ensure that the river landscape and its biodiversity interests are protected.
- (II) The development of the site shall make provision for up to 40% affordable housing, in accordance with Policies HSG3 and HSG4.

14.7 Economic Development and Employment

14.7.1 There are no significant industrial or employment areas in Sawbridgeworth, other than local commercial, retailing and service businesses. There are, however, employment areas located adjacent to Sawbridgeworth in the settlement of Lower Sheering in Essex.

14.7.2 The District Council considers it important to retain and encourage local employment opportunities, where appropriate, as outlined in Chapter 6 (Economic Development and Employment). As there are no significant existing employment areas in Sawbridgeworth, it is not proposed to designate any such Employment Areas, under Policy EDE1. Also it is not proposed, as part of this Plan Review, to allocate any new land for such development.

14.7.3 Where proposals arise for employment development outside identified Employment Areas, these will be appraised on their individual merits, taking into account sustainability criteria and the impact on neighbouring occupiers and the local area, as set out in Policy EDE3.

14.8 Town Centre

14.8.1 Sawbridgeworth town centre is located to the east of London Road, the historic north-south route that runs through the town. The location of the town centre away from the main through road

has assisted the town in retaining its considerable period charm and character, as reflected in it being a designated Conservation Area.

14.8.2 The main commercial centre is located around Bell Street, Knight Street and The Square. An additional separate part of the shopping area is located at the corner of London Road and Bell Street, including Bells Walk.

14.8.3 The pleasant town centre contains a mix of small-scale occupiers - retail, business and residential. Most buildings front onto the highway giving the streets a narrow sense of enclosure.

14.8.4 In order to generally preclude a dilution of the shopping functions in Sawbridgeworth and to add to the overall vitality and viability of the town, proposals for development or changes of use from shop (A1) to non-shop (non-A1) uses in the main commercial frontages as defined on the Proposals Map will be considered against Policy STC4.

14.9 Environment

14.9.1 A continuing major obstacle to improving the environment of Sawbridgeworth is the traffic on the A1184, and associated residential roads. The Council will continue, in partnership with other authorities and interested parties, subject to available resources, with a programme of environmental improvements, including schemes of traffic management and traffic calming within Sawbridgeworth.

14.9.2 The Stort Valley is an area of known ecological value including many sites of wildlife and archaeological interest. The Council will continue to work in co-operation with the Countryside Management Service and other interested bodies to protect and enhance the valley as a whole.

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14.10 Transport

14.10.1 As mentioned in paragraph 14.9.1, the major transportation problem affecting Sawbridgeworth is the amount of traffic on the A1184 and associated roads. This situation will be further aggravated with continuing development, particularly at Bishop's Stortford, Stansted Airport, and Harlow.

14.10.2 A north-south bypass for Sawbridgeworth has been under consideration for more than a decade. Schemes have been proposed but later withdrawn, and at present there is no provision for a bypass in the Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan. In July 2000 the County Council resolved not to pursue a relief road but to develop other measures to address traffic problems in the town such as pedestrian, cycling, and traffic calming measures.

14.10.3 The issue of a Sawbridgeworth bypass is likely to be addressed through the emerging studies on wider transport issues associated with growth in the London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough corridor. The District Council continues to support the provision of an effective north-south bypass for Sawbridgeworth, together with other appropriate related transportation proposals. However until a resolution is reached, the District Council will continue to work with the County Council, as Highway Authority, and other local stakeholders to ameliorate the problems associated with traffic in the town.

14.11 Leisure and Community Facilities

14.11.1 Chapter 10 (Leisure, Recreation and Community Facilities) includes policies regarding the retention, provision and improvement of such facilities. The review of the Local Plan provides the opportunity to address any shortfalls in leisure or community facilities in Sawbridgeworth, which may already exist, or may arise as a result of any new development.

14.11.2 A shortfall of sports pitches has already been identified in the town, and the redevelopment of the football ground for housing will further impact on this lack of provision. The District

Council will support appropriate proposals to meet the identified shortfall in sports pitch provision in the town.

14.11.3 To this end, land to the north of Leventhorpe School is identified for new sports provision, as defined on the Proposals Map and Policy SA4. This is expected to be privately owned and managed, by a local club, association, or similar body.

SA4 Sports Pitch Provision

A site of 14 hectares has been allocated to the north of Leventhorpe School as shown on the Proposals Map for sports pitch provision.

14.11.4 Access to the site should be provided from either the existing Leventhorpe School entrance or from Parsonage Lane to the north. A 20 metre landscaping strip should be provided on the boundary of the site with Cambridge Road and a 10 metre strip on the boundary with Parsonage Lane and the western boundary of the site. Any changing facilities that will be required as part of the development should be located so as to minimise their visual impact. This site is located in the Green Belt. As PPG2 defines sports fields as an acceptable use in the Green Belt, it is not intended to exclude this area from the Green Belt. (See Paragraph 14.5.2 concerning a Development Brief for the sites referred to in Policies SA2 and SA4).

14.11.5 Within Sawbridgeworth all sites of public or private outdoor sports, recreation and open space facilities, or school playing fields to be protected are shown on the Proposals Map. Any proposals for development that would result in the loss of these areas will be refused unless the proposed development complies, inter alia, with Policy LRC1.