

## Settlement Appraisal

### Sawbridgeworth

#### 1. History

- 1.1 The Supporting Document records the various stages of assessment that were undertaken to inform the Preferred Options District Plan. It therefore provides an essential background to this Settlement Appraisal. In particular, Chapters 4 to 6 of the Supporting Document explained the process of shortlisting or ‘sieving’ options or ‘Areas of Search’.
- 1.2 On the basis of the assessments contained within the Supporting Document, and the rest of the evidence base that was available at that time, the Preferred Options District Plan proposed two sites for allocation: land to the south of West Road (300 dwellings) and land to the north of West Road (100 dwellings). In addition, an element of windfall development was attributed to Sawbridgeworth.

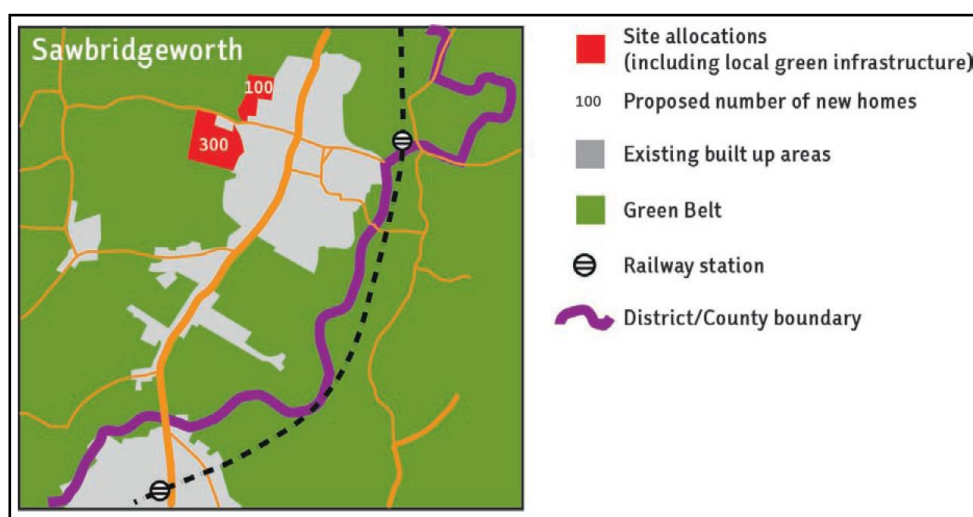


Figure 1: Preferred Options District Plan, Sawbridgeworth Key Diagram

- 1.3 This document continues the narrative of Chapters 4 to 6 by detailing information and evidence which has emerged since the Preferred Options consultation.

#### 2. Consultation Responses – town wide

- 2.1 The Preferred Options consultation elicited a significant response from members of the local community. While these representations covered a variety of topics, the main areas of concern were:

- Education capacity;
- Capacity of health facilities;
- Loss of Green Belt
- Increased congestion on the local road network, and in particular, West Road; and
- Harm to the character of the town.

2.2 In responding to the Preferred Options consultation, Hertfordshire County Council indicated that there are capacity issues with regards to primary education in Sawbridgeworth.

### **3 Technical Assessments**

#### **Green Belt Review**

- 3.1 The 2015 Green Belt Review assessed a number of parcels within and around Sawbridgeworth. The two parcels to the south and south east of the town (54 and 55) were identified as being of 'very low' suitability for future development. This was largely due to the importance of maintaining the current strategic gap between Sawbridgeworth and the neighbouring settlements of High Wych and Harlow.
- 3.2 The two large parcels to the west of the town were concluded to be of 'low suitability' for future development. Both parcels prevent encroachment of development on open countryside, while parcel 56 also assists in preventing coalescence between Sawbridgeworth and High Wych.
- 3.3 Parcel 59, to the north of the town, was regarded as being of 'high' suitability for future development as it does not perform an important function in terms of preventing encroachment into the countryside. Parcel 59a is a small section of Green Belt that extends into the existing urban area of the town, covering Reedings Junior School and the recreation ground to the west. Given the self-contained nature of this parcel of land, it was regarded as being of high suitability for development in Green Belt terms.

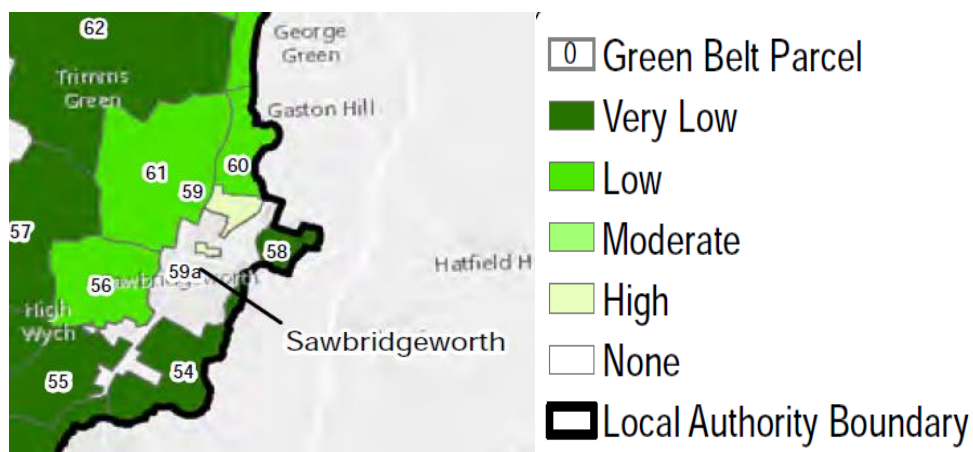


Figure 2: Conclusions of Green Belt Review 2015 for Sawbridgeworth

### Transport/Modelling

3.4 Prior to the publication of the Preferred Options District Plan, Hertfordshire County Council advised that the provision of more than approximately 500 homes in Sawbridgeworth would require the provision of a bypass of the town.

3.5 Following consultation on the Preferred Options District Plan in 2014, the Council has engaged closely with Essex County Council and our housing market area partners (Harlow, Epping Forest and Uttlesford Councils) in order to undertake strategic transport modelling. This modelling, known as VISUM, identifies that the proposed locations for growth across the wider area would lead to an increase in traffic on the A1184 through Sawbridgeworth. In order to help mitigate this impact, and also alleviate existing pressures and safety concerns, Hertfordshire County Council has suggested a need to upgrade two key junctions:

- Signalisation of the London Road / West Road / Station Road junction
- Potential signalisation of the A1184 / High Wych Road junction.

3.6 The need for these upgrades has also been identified through transport assessment work undertaken by the site promoters for the sites to the north and south of West Road.

3.7 While the A1184 will experience greater volumes of traffic throughout the plan period, the strategic VISUM transport model has identified that the provision of a new Junction 7a on the M11 will significantly reduce the impact of wider growth in this location. This is on the basis that car borne traffic would be more likely to use the M11 to travel between Bishop's Stortford and Harlow, rather than the A1184 as is often the case at present.

## **Delivery Study**

3.8 The Delivery Study is a technical document which assesses the financial viability and deliverability of the proposals contained in the Preferred Options District Plan. While the study did not specifically assess the two proposed sites in Sawbridgeworth, it did test the financial viability of different site typologies. The study concluded that development schemes in the Sawbridgeworth area that are predominantly or wholly residential in nature, should be considered financially viable when taking into account the policy requirements of the District Plan as a whole.

## **4 Duty to Co-operate**

4.1 For those areas such as Sawbridgeworth that are located on the eastern side of the District, the main forum for Duty to Co-operate discussions has been the Co-operation for Sustainable Development Member Board. This group comprises the four core authorities that form the West Essex/East Herts housing market area, along with Hertfordshire and Essex County Councils and other local authorities in the wider area.

4.2 In the context of Sawbridgeworth, there is a clear relationship between the town and Lower Sheering, which is located within Epping Forest District. In particular, pupils who live in Lower Sheering often go to school in Sawbridgeworth. However, at present, Epping Forest District Council are not proposing to direct any significant growth towards Lower Sheering or the surrounding area, and therefore the existing situation is unlikely to be exacerbated.

4.3 Co-operation among the constituent authorities will continue beyond plan adoption in order to address ongoing cross boundary issues.

## **5 Neighbourhood Planning**

5.1 Sawbridgeworth Town Council had an Area Designation approved in December 2015 in order to undertake a Neighbourhood Plan. It is understood that the Plan remains in the early stages of preparation, subject to the finalisation of the District Plan.

## **6. The Emerging Strategy**

6.1 In light of the evidence available, it is considered that three sites should be allocated in Sawbridgeworth:

- Land to the north of West Road – 125 dwellings
- Land to the south of West Road – 175 dwellings
- Land to the north of Sawbridgeworth – 200 dwellings

6.2 The justification for identifying these proposed allocations is presented below.

### **Policy SAWB2 Land North of West Road, Sawbridgeworth**

#### **Introduction**

6.3 As noted in paragraph 1.2, land to the north of West Road was identified as a proposed allocation for 100 homes in the Preferred Options District Plan. In light of the evidence available, it is considered that the site should continue to be identified as an allocation within the Pre-Submission version of the Plan. The site is discussed in further detail below.

#### **Identification of Site Constraints**

##### **Green Belt**

6.4 The site is currently located in the Green Belt. It forms the south eastern section of a much larger parcel of land, Parcel 61, as identified within the Green Belt Review 2015. Overall Parcel 61 was concluded as being of 'low' suitability for development. However, as part of the plan-making process, it is important to review whether smaller areas of Green Belt, within the wider Parcels, could be suitable for release. The findings are discussed in more detail below, based on the four purposes of Green Belt that formed the assessment criteria within the Green Belt Review document. As a result of this assessment, it is considered that the site is suitable for Green Belt release.

##### **Purpose 1: To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas**

6.5 The study concluded that Parcel 61 makes a 'Major' contribution to this purpose by restricting the north-west growth of Sawbridgeworth. However, it was also acknowledged that the south eastern section, which forms site SAWB2, makes a 'Moderate' contribution.

##### **Purpose 2: To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another**

6.6 The study concluded that the Parcel makes a 'Moderate' contribution to this purpose given that it extends as far as Spellbrook and therefore forms part of the wider strategic Green Belt gap that prevents the coalescence of Sawbridgeworth and Bishop's Stortford.

6.7 However, the SAWB2 site does not extend north beyond the existing urban area and so would only perform a very limited contribution to this purpose.

Purpose 3: To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

6.7 Again the study concluded that the Parcel makes a 'Major' contribution to this purpose as it is characterised by an undulating landscape with wide views in most directions. However the assessment does acknowledge that the south east corner of the Parcel is slightly more contained by the local landform.

Purpose 4: To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

6.8 The study concluded that Parcel 61 makes no contribution to this purpose.

Green Belt Conclusion

6.9 While the Green Belt Review concludes that the overall Parcel has low suitability for development, it is considered that the SAWB2 site is well related to the existing urban area, is relatively well contained, and that therefore any harm would be limited.

Other Constraints

6.10 There are very few other constraints in relation to the site. A ditch forms the western boundary of the site, however there is no fluvial flood risk associated with it. The risk of surface water flooding would need to be considered at the planning application stage with suitable mitigation provided where required in the form of sustainable drainage. There are no listed buildings or tree preservation orders within the immediate vicinity of the site.

6.11 The site is well related to the town centre, and so access to services and facilities is good. The site is also adjacent to Mandeville Primary School and in close proximity to Leventhorpe Secondary School.

**Developer Meetings and Information**

- 6.12 No specific meetings have taken place with the developers or site promoters following the Preferred Options consultation. However, In order to assist in its deliberations, the Council invited further information from landowners, developers and agents in the form of Delivery Statements which form the basis of draft Statements of Common Ground. These statements contain details about required infrastructure and utilities and will be used to support the submission of the Plan to the Planning Inspectorate.

### **Land Uses and Proposals**

- 6.13 Given the size of the site, and in applying a density of around 25 dwellings per hectare, it is considered that it would be suitable to provide approximately 125 dwellings in this location, rather than 100 as initially proposed within the Preferred Options District Plan.
- 6.14 In addition to residential use, there will be public green space including a play area. Importantly, given that there are capacity issues at primary school level in Sawbridgeworth, development in this location will provide approximately 1.2 hectares of land in order to help facilitate the permanent expansion of Mandeville Primary School to 2FE. The site will also include a parking area that will provide 29 spaces for the school. This will assist in reducing school related congestion on West Road at peak times.





Figure 3: Potential site layout provided by site promoters.

## Infrastructure Needs

6.15 The infrastructure requirements arising from a development of this size are not particularly significant in comparison to much larger sites proposed within the District Plan. However, the main requirements are identified below.

- Financial contributions towards an upgrade to healthcare facilities;
- Provision of affordable housing;
- Provision of land to allow for the permanent expansion of Mandeville Primary School to 2FE;
- Financial contributions towards the expansion of Mandeville Primary School;
- In conjunction with development to the south of West Road (SAWB3), signalisation of the London Road / West Road / Station Road junction will



be required along with possible signalisation of A1184 / High Wych Road junction;

- Utilities works including connection to the main foul sewer;
- Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs); and
- Other financial contributions as appropriate.

## **Implementation**

6.16 The site is in the ownership of a single landowner with whom the developer has an option agreement. It is expected that development could start on site in 2018 with a build out rate of approximately 50 homes per year. The site is therefore deliverable in the first five years of the plan period.

## **Policy SAWB3 Land South of West Road, Sawbridgeworth**

### **Introduction**

6.17 As noted in paragraph 1.2, land to the south of West Road was identified as a proposed allocation for 300 homes in the Preferred Options District Plan. In light of the evidence available, it is considered that the site should continue to be identified as an allocation within the Pre-Submission version of the Plan, but for a reduced amount of development. The site is discussed in further detail below.

### **Identification of Site Constraints**

#### **Green Belt**

6.18 The site is currently located in the Green Belt. It forms the north eastern section of a much larger parcel of land, Parcel 56, as identified within the Green Belt Review 2015. Overall Parcel 56 was concluded as being of 'low' suitability for development. However, as part of the plan-making process, it is important to review whether smaller areas of Green Belt, within the wider Parcels, could be suitable for release. The findings are discussed in more detail below, based on the four purposes of Green Belt that formed the assessment criteria within the Green Belt Review document. As a result of this assessment, it is considered that the site is suitable for Green Belt release.

#### **Purpose 1: To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas**

6.19 The study concluded that Parcel 56 makes a 'Major' contribution to this purpose as development is likely to appear as sprawl in what is considered to

be a broad open landscape. In addition the wider Parcel safeguards the narrow gap between High Wych and the edge of the town on High Wych Road.

- 6.20 The land to the south of West Road, SAWB3, is unlikely to cause harm to the strategic gap between the town and High Wych. However it is recognised that development of the whole site could lead to a perception of sprawl due to the openness of the landscape on the west and south western parts of the site.

Purpose 2: To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another

- 6.21 The study concluded that Parcel 61 makes no contribution to this purpose.

Purpose 3: To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

- 6.22 The study again concluded that the Parcel makes a 'Major' contribution to this purpose. It stated that development in almost any part of this Parcel would likely be an apparent encroachment into countryside, although some eastern and south eastern parts are more contained.

- 6.23 Again, as is the case with Purpose 1 above, it is recognised that development of the whole site could lead to a perception of encroachment due to the openness of the landscape on the west and south western parts of the site.

Purpose 4: To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

- 6.24 The study concluded that Parcel 56 makes no contribution to this purpose.

Green Belt Conclusion

- 6.25 While the Green Belt Review concludes that the overall Parcel has low suitability for development, it is considered that the SAWB3 site is well related to the existing urban area and that the majority of the site is relatively well contained. However, it is considered that development of west and south western parts of the site would lead to unacceptable harm.

Other Constraints

- 6.26 As is the case with land to the north of West Road, there are very few other constraints in relation to the site. A brook forms the eastern boundary of the site although this does not constrain the developable area. The risk of surface water flooding would need to be considered at the planning application stage with suitable mitigation provided where required in the form of sustainable

drainage. There are no tree preservation orders within the immediate vicinity of the site, and although there are two listed buildings close to the northern boundary, it is unlikely that development would harm their setting to any significant degree.

6.27 The site is well related to the town centre, and so access to services and facilities is good. The site is also close to Mandeville Primary School and in relatively close proximity to Leventhorpe Secondary School.

### **Developer Meetings and Information**

6.28 Following consideration of the Green Belt Review, a meeting was held with the developers and site promoters. As a result of these discussions, it was agreed that the amount of development proposed for the site should be reduced in order to avoid harm to the more sensitive areas of Green Belt.

6.29 The Council subsequently invited further information from landowners, developers and agents in the form of Delivery Statements which form the basis of draft Statements of Common Ground. These statements contain details about required infrastructure and utilities and will be used to support the submission of the Plan to the Planning Inspectorate.

### **Land Uses and Proposals**

6.30 As noted above, the level of development proposed for this site has been reduced due to Green Belt concerns. While the Preferred Options District Plan proposed 300 homes in this location, it is considered that this should be reduced to approximately 175 homes. This reduction is illustrated in Figure 4 overleaf. In addition to residential use, there will be public green space including play areas.



Figure 4: Potential site layout provided by site promoters.

## Infrastructure Needs

6.31 The infrastructure requirements arising from a development of this size are not particularly significant in comparison to much larger sites proposed within the District Plan. However, the main requirements are identified below.

- Financial contributions towards an upgrade to healthcare facilities;
- Provision of affordable housing;
- Financial contributions towards the expansion of Mandeville Primary School;
- In conjunction with development to the north of West Road (SAWB2), signalisation of the London Road / West Road / Station Road junction will be required along with possible signalisation of A1184 / High Wych Road junction;

- An extension to the existing footpath on the southern side of West Road in order to serve the development;
- Utilities works including connection to the main foul sewer;
- Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs); and
- Other financial contributions as appropriate.

## **Implementation**

6.32 A single developer has an option agreement on the site. It is expected that development could start on site in 2018 with a build out rate of approximately 75 homes per year. The site is therefore deliverable in the first five years of the plan period.

## **Policy SAWB4 (New Site) Land to the North of Sawbridgeworth**

### **Introduction**

6.33 Prior to the Preferred Options consultation, the broad area of land to the north of Sawbridgeworth was assessed as part of the 'sieving' process described in Paragraph 1.1. At that time development in this wider location was not considered favourable, largely due to concerns regarding flood risk and potential impact on sites of environmental importance. However, the significant level of housing need in East Herts has resulted in a need to re-examine previously discarded options. As a result of this work, and new evidence such as the Green Belt Review 2015, it is now considered that land in this location should be allocated for approximately 200 homes.

### **Identification of Site Constraints**

#### **Green Belt**

6.34 The site is currently located in the Green Belt. It forms a significant proportion of Parcel 59 as identified within the Green Belt Review 2015. Overall Parcel 59 was concluded as being of 'high' suitability for development, largely because the existing Green Belt boundary in that location is poorly defined and it was considered that there are more appropriate boundaries further north. The assessment does acknowledge that the eastern section of this Parcel is more sensitive, given that it forms the lower slopes of the Stort Valley. Given this assessment, the western part of Parcel 59 is considered suitable for Green Belt release.

## Other Constraints

6.35 There are very few other constraints related to this site. As acknowledged in Paragraph 6.33, land in this location was previously dismissed from consideration due to concerns regarding flood risk and potential impact on sites of environmental importance. However, these constraints are related to the eastern section of this wider area. Therefore, in avoiding the more sensitive area of Green Belt, as described in Paragraph 6.34, these other constraints can be avoided or mitigated. The proposed site area is identified in Figure 5 below.

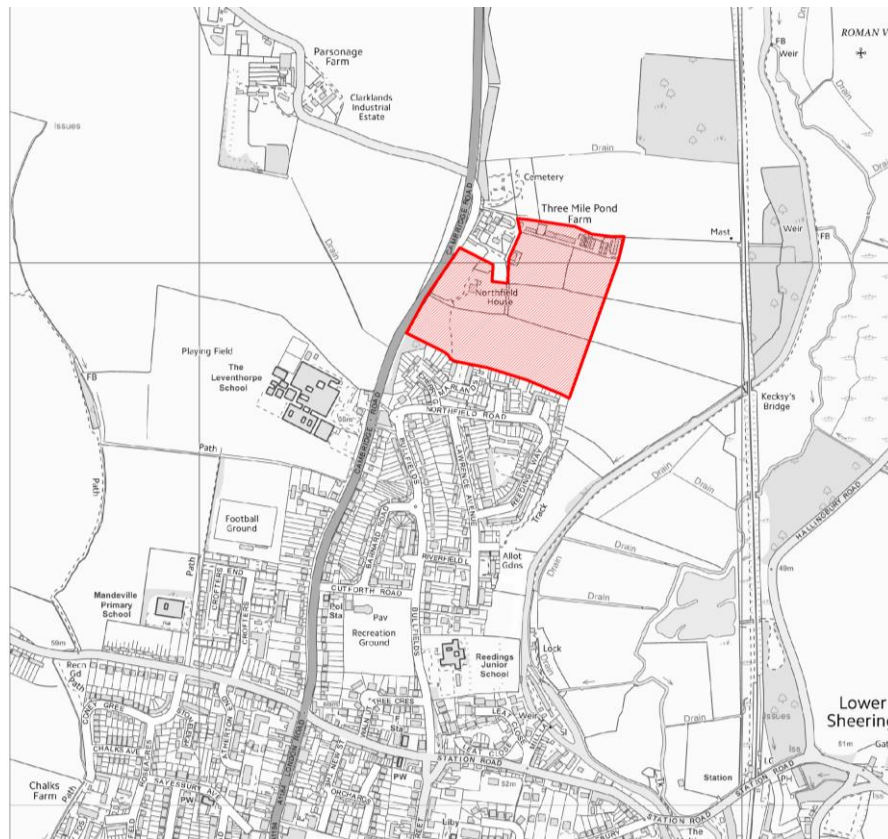


Figure 5: Proposed Allocation Boundary

## **Developer Meetings and Information**

6.36 Meetings have been held with all of the relevant landowners in order to ensure that the land is available for development. However, at present, the site isn't in the control of a developer.



## Land Uses and Proposals

6.37 The site will deliver approximately 200 new homes and should incorporate new public green space. The development would need to incorporate suitable planting on the eastern boundary in order to provide a strong Green Belt boundary in this location.

## Infrastructure Needs

6.31 The infrastructure requirements arising from a development of this size are not particularly significant in comparison to much larger sites proposed within the District Plan. However, the main requirements are identified below.

- Financial contributions towards an upgrade to healthcare and education facilities;
- Provision of affordable housing;
- Utilities works including connection to the main foul sewer;
- Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs); and
- Other financial contributions as appropriate.

## Implementation

6.32 Given that the site is not currently in the control of a developer, it is not expected that housing would be delivered in the first five years of the plan period.

## 7. Consideration of Alternative Sites

7.1 As part of the Plan-making process it is necessary to consider whether there are alternative options to the proposed development. As identified by Paragraph 1.1, the Supporting Document assessed a number of Areas of Search prior to the Preferred Options consultation. However, a large number of sites were also submitted to the Council through the 'Call for Sites' process. As identified in Paragraph 3.4, the County Council previously advised that development above an approximate figure of 500 dwellings would require the provision of a bypass. This position has been superseded by ongoing transport modelling work which demonstrates that growth in the wider area, including Bishop's Stortford South and the Gilston Area, will contribute to additional congestion on the A1184. While this can be mitigated to some extent by signalization of junctions, the advice from the County Council is that the quantum of growth identified for Sawbridgeworth should not exceed that already proposed (i.e. 500 dwellings). Therefore, in order for other sites to be

allocated, it would need to be demonstrated that they are preferable in sustainability terms than one or more of the three proposed allocations. The suitability of these alternative site options has been assessed through the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA), and are discussed in more detail below.

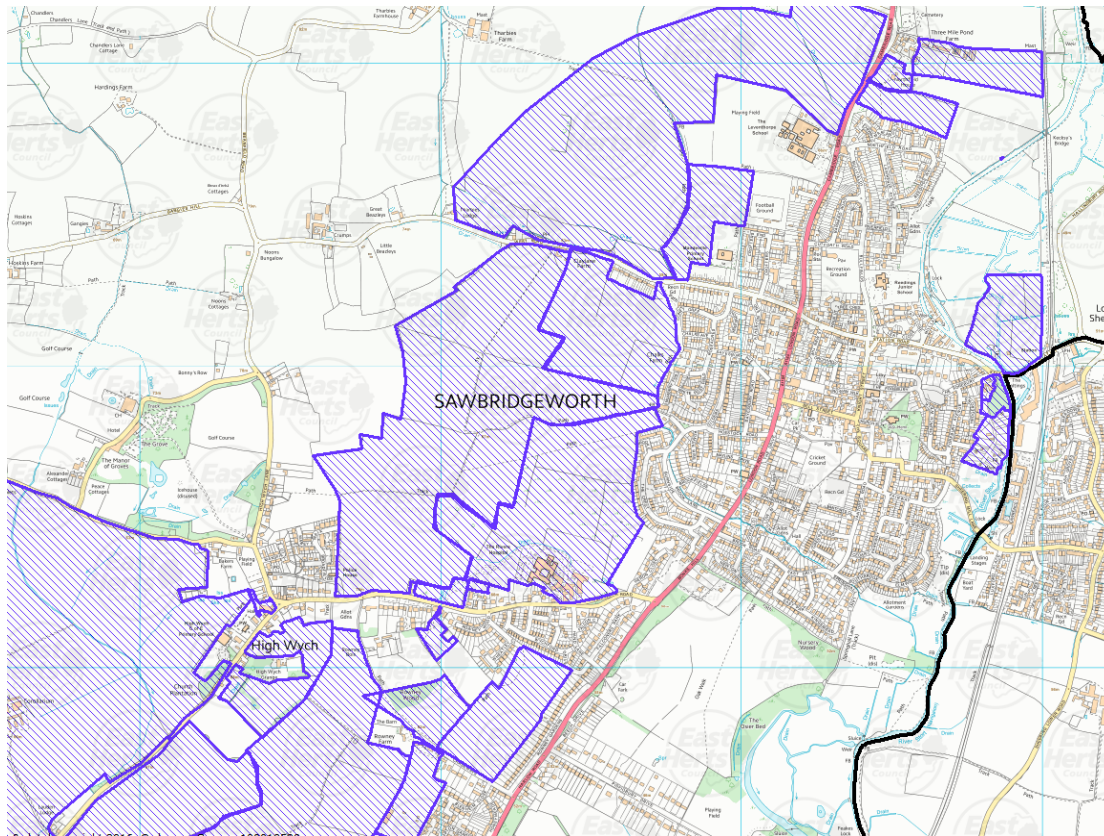


Figure 6: Strategic Land Availability Assessment sites around Sawbridgeworth

### Sites to South West of Sawbridgeworth

7.2 A number of sites were submitted to the Council within the broad parcel of land to the south of High Wych Road. While these sites vary in size, they all fall within a strategic parcel of Green Belt that prevents coalescence of Sawbridgeworth with Harlow and High Wych. Development of any of these sites would weaken the distinct and separate character of the three settlements. These sites are therefore considered to be less preferable in Green Belt terms than the three proposed allocations. In addition, SAWB2 and SAWB3 are better related to services and facilities and are therefore considered to be more sustainable.

### Sites to the West of Sawbridgeworth

- 7.3 In addition to SAWB2 and SAWB3, four sites were submitted to the west of the town, north of High Wych Road. Development of the smallest of these sites would reduce the already narrow strategic gap between Sawbridgeworth and High Wych and is therefore not preferable.
- 7.4 Two very large sites were also proposed for large scale strategic development. This scale of development to the west of the town was dismissed through the sieving process in the Supporting Document, largely due to the significant negative impact that it would have on the character of the town. At this stage it is also unclear whether the provision of a bypass would be deliverable in the plan period. In addition, development on this scale would lead to coalescence issues with the proposed Gilston Area development.
- 7.5 The final site on the western side of the town encompasses the Thomas Rivers Hospital site. The Supporting Document considered this area as part of the sieving process. It was dismissed due to its location within the strategic parcel of Green Belt that separates Sawbridgeworth from High Wych. However, the site promoters have since submitted a proposal that would only see the eastern portion of this site developed. While this development would still cause some harm to the Green Belt, it is relatively well contained and is well related to the existing urban area. It could therefore be argued that, in Green Belt terms, the difference between this proposal and the SAWB2 and SAWB3 sites is marginal. However, in terms of access to services and facilities, the two proposed allocations are clearly preferable. Meanwhile the SAWB4 site is also clearly preferable in Green Belt terms, as confirmed by the Green Belt Review.

### Sites to the East of Sawbridgeworth

- 7.6 Three sites were submitted to the east of the town, south of Station Road. One of these sites, known as Esbies, has previously been in use for some time as an unauthorised Gypsy and Traveller site. While all three sites are located within the Green Belt, this area was not assessed through the Green Belt Review. Nevertheless development of these areas would lead to clear coalescence issues in terms of the relationship of the town with Lower Sheering. Development would also likely have a negative impact on the environmental quality of the river-scape. These areas are therefore considered to be less preferable than the proposed allocations.

- 7.7 A fourth site was submitted to the north of Station Road. This site is largely located within Flood Zone 3 and is therefore not considered to be developable.

## **8. SA Objectives**

- 8.1 The Sustainability Appraisal is an integral part of Plan-making. This Settlement Appraisal forms part of the Sustainability Appraisal process as it considers the impacts arising from development, and a consideration of alternative options. To assist the broader District-Wide Sustainability Appraisal, each of the urban extension options and the proposed development strategy for each East Herts town has been assessed against the Sustainability Appraisal Framework as updated by the Strategic Housing Market Area Spatial Options Distribution work. The appraisal, below, of proposed development in Sawbridgeworth describes how the sites will meet the objectives as set out in the Sustainability Appraisal Framework.

### *Air Quality*

- 8.2 There is an existing Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in Sawbridgeworth. While the relatively modest level of development proposed for the town is unlikely to greatly exacerbate this issue, air quality must be monitored and managed in accordance with Policy EQ4 of the District Plan. Consideration of this issue must also take account of more significant developments elsewhere that are likely to lead to additional car movements on the A1184 through the town.

### *Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure*

- 8.3 None of the three proposed allocations would impact on designated sites of environmental importance. While development of greenfield sites does impact on biodiversity, this can be mitigated to some extent through the provision of green spaces and substantial planting to form buffers and new Green Belt boundaries.

### *Community and Wellbeing*

- 8.4 The proposed housing mix and tenure will support all age ranges, including the needs of an ageing population. Land to the north of West Road (SAWB2) will provide land to facilitate the expansion of Mandeville Primary School. All three sites will provide financial contributions towards healthcare and education, among other things.

### *Economy and Employment*

- 8.5 The proposed developments will not directly provide new employment opportunities beyond the construction phase. However, Sawbridgeworth is well located between two higher order settlements where substantial employment opportunities exist. In particular, the new Enterprise Zone in Harlow is easily accessed.

### *Historic Environment*

- 8.6 The proposed allocations would have a minimal impact on the historic environment.

### *Housing*

- 8.7 The proposals will provide for a wide range of house types and mix, including an appropriate quantum and mix of affordable housing and family sized homes.

### *Land*

- 8.8 All three proposed allocations are currently greenfield sites that are in agricultural use. Development will be at appropriate densities that make efficient use of land while respecting the character of existing development. An assessment will need to be made at the planning application stage in order to ascertain whether any material can be extracted to be used during construction.

### *Landscape*

- 8.9 The proposed allocations are all relatively well contained and any significant impact on landscape quality can be mitigated through careful design and the use of landscape buffers and planting.

### *Low Carbon Development*

- 8.10 Town centre services and facilities can easily be accessed by foot or bicycle from proposed development along West Road (SAWB2 and SAWB3). In addition, an existing footpath runs from the SAWB4 site to the town centre. Development that exceeds sustainability standards contained within Building Regulations will be encouraged.

### *Transport*

- 8.11 All three proposed allocations are close to bus routes that either provide access to the town centre or the wider area including Bishop's Stortford and Harlow. Sawbridgeworth also has a train station that provides direct services to London and Cambridge. Development in Sawbridgeworth and the wider area would increase the amount of car borne traffic using the A1184. However this would be mitigated through local junction improvements and, in particular, the provision of a new Junction 7a on the M11.

### *Water*

- 8.12 Methods to minimise water consumption through construction and occupation of the development will be utilised and appropriate connections to water supply and waste water networks are possible. The wider Rye Meads Sewage Treatment Works has capacity with local improvements to connection points required.

## **9. Conclusion**

- 9.1 The Settlement Appraisal for Sawbridgeworth has demonstrated that, having considered the reasonable alternatives, three sites should be proposed for allocation within the District Plan in order to deliver a total quantum of approximately 500 new homes.
- 9.2 All three sites are located within the Green Belt at present. However, a carefully planned review of Green Belt in East Herts is considered justified by the significant level of housing need that exists across the District. In the case of Sawbridgeworth, the three proposed sites are considered to be the most preferable, taking into consideration sustainability and Green Belt criteria.
- 9.3 All three sites will provide a range of housing mix and tenures, including affordable housing. Development will also contribute financially to enhanced education and health services in the town. Land to the north of West Road will provide land to facilitate the expansion of Mandeville Primary School. Meanwhile, improvements to local road junctions will help to mitigate the impact of increased traffic, while the provision of a new Junction 7a on the M11 will reduce the amount of vehicle movements on the A1184.
- 9.4 It is considered that this presents a positive and sustainable strategy for Sawbridgeworth.