



Part 2

# East Herts District Plan

## Examination Hearing Statements

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### Matters and Issues: Part 2

## Chapter 5: Bishop's Stortford

## Issues:

### **Question 1**

***What is the basis for planning to accommodate between 3,729 and 4,142 new homes at Bishop's Stortford?***

1. The Development Strategy Topic Paper (**TPA/001**) sets out the Council's approach to directing development towards sustainable locations. Bishop's Stortford is the district's largest town, the principle shopping centre and has the greatest number of employment areas and businesses. The town benefits from fast rail services into London and Cambridge, from proximity to the M11 and also to Stansted Airport, which is a major employer of the town's residents. The main strategy behind planning for Bishop's Stortford is to facilitate and encourage the redevelopment of existing brownfield sites within the town centre, followed by the creation of urban extensions of a scale that could support new community facilities including new schools.
2. As set out in paragraph 3.6 of Development Strategy Topic Paper, the 2007 Local Plan identified land to the north of Bishop's Stortford for the delivery of approximately 2,530 homes. Linked to this was the delivery of land south of Hadham Road for residential purposes provided a secondary school was delivered as part of the Bishop's Stortford North development proposal. At the time of submission, development had not commenced at Bishop's Stortford North and it was considered prudent to retain the two allocations at Policy BISH3 (2,529 homes) and Policy BISH4 (163 homes).
3. Since the District Plan was submitted, construction has now started on the Bishop's Stortford North development and permission has been granted on appeal for the delivery of 247 homes at the Hadham Road site. It is still considered necessary to retain both policies in order to guide later phases of the developments.
4. Land at the Goods Yard is the largest brownfield site in the town, offering a unique opportunity to develop new homes and businesses in a highly sustainable location adjacent to the station and town centre. Similar to Bishop's Stortford North, this site has been a long-standing allocation. An application was previously refused for 682 homes, but is now progressing through the masterplanning process for 600 homes, as described in the Council's Updated Housing Land Supply paper (**ED130**). It is therefore proposed to amend Policy BISH7 to this effect:

## Policy BISH7 The Goods Yard

- II. ~~In the context of this, t~~ The Goods Yard will provide for at least ~~400~~**600** homes between 2017 and 2027, as part of a mixed use development including a significant amount of B1a office floorspace and small-scale retail provision. Development of the site shall include:
5. The two previous allocations now form part of the commitments for delivery within the first five years of the Plan. Taking account of the amended figure for the Goods Yard and Hadham Road, the overall quantum of new development proposed as allocations for the town rises to 4,426, as illustrated in the table below.

Site Allocation	Proposed in the Pre-Submission Plan	Committed / Anticipated
Policy BISH3: Bishop's Stortford North	2,529	2,529
Policy BISH4: Reserve Secondary School Site, Hadham Road	163	247
Policy BISH5: Bishop's Stortford South	750	750
Policy BISH6: Bishop's Stortford High School Site	150	150
Policy BISH7: The Goods Yard	400	600
Policy BISH8: Old River Lane	100	100
Policy BISH9: East of Manor Links	50	50
	4,142	4,426

6. It is therefore proposed to amend Policy BISH1 to this effect:

### Policy BISH1

- I. ~~In accordance with Policy DPS3 (Housing Supply 2011-2033), Bishop's Stortford will accommodate a minimum of between 3,729 and 4,142~~**4,426** homes, ~~which will include~~ at the following sites:
- (a) **At least** 2,529 homes at Bishop's Stortford North, including 2,200 on ASRs 1 to 4 and 329 at ASR 5 as set out in Policy BISH3;
- (b) **At least** ~~0-163~~**247** homes at the Reserve Secondary School site at Hadham Road contingent on the provision of a secondary school site at Bishop's Stortford North, as set out in Policy BISH4;

(c) **At least** 750 homes at Bishop's Stortford South as set out in Policy BISH5;

(d) **At least** ~~0~~150 homes at the Bishop's Stortford High School site at London Road contingent on the relocation of the school to Bishop's Stortford South as set out in Policy BISH6;

(e) **At least** ~~400~~600 homes at the Goods Yard set out in Policy BISH7;

(f) **At least** ~~0~~100 homes at ~~The Causeway/~~ Old River Lane as set out in Policy BISH8;

(g) **At least** 50 homes at land East of Manor Links as set out in Policy BISH9; and

(h) A proportion of the overall windfall allowance for the District.

7. Land was originally proposed for a larger development of 150 homes to the east of the town. However, this land became unavailable and therefore only 50 homes are now proposed to the east of Manor Links (BISH9). This is an unencumbered site which can be delivered quickly.
8. Land to the south of the town has had a long planning history and provides an opportunity to complement the development to the north of the town through the creation of a new community, complete with a new primary and secondary school, new retail and community facilities. The development also offers the opportunity to create new cycle, pedestrian and passenger transport routes. The site is bordered to the north and east by residential development and to the west by residential development and the Southern Country Park, which was formed as part of the Thorley Park development in the 1980s. The southern distributor road, St James' Way to the south of the site forms a very strong physical Green Belt boundary.
9. As a well performing single sex school, demand for places at the Bishop's Stortford High School is considerable. However, the school needs major refurbishment, and the relocation of the school will enable the school to not only create new facilities but to expand to take an additional form of entry. The potential to deliver these wider benefits weighed in favour of this proposed allocation. Land at the Bishop's Stortford High School will become available subject to the relocation of the school through the development of land at Bishop's Stortford South.

## **Question 2**

***What is the overall amount of employment and retail floorspace to be allocated in Bishop's Stortford (this should be added to Policy BISH1)?***

1. The District Plan proposes between 4 and 5 hectares of land to be delivered through the proposed allocation at Bishop's Stortford South. It is agreed that a modification will be required to add this to Policy BISH1. The Employment Study identified that there is sufficient employment land identified to accommodate jobs growth across the FEMA in the short to medium term. As jobs growth is intrinsically linked to housing growth, not all employment land needs to be delivered immediately. There is a need to ensure that the delivery of new employment land is phased in line with growth, or there is a risk that employment land remains unoccupied, increasing the pressure to redevelop it for other uses.
2. The Council's Matter 3 Statement sets out how the District's identified employment needs will be met through the proposed employment land allocations. Whilst the Council acknowledges the need to ensure there is flexibility to provide for possible future employment needs this will be met through the creation of new businesses at the Bishop's Stortford North development and through the Goods Yard and Old River Lane developments. In addition, the Council is committed to working with its neighbouring authorities in the exploration of additional locations suitable for employment development across the Functional Economic Market Area.
3. The Council is currently working with Uttlesford District Council to explore the potential use of land to the north of the town (adjacent to Goodliffe Park Industrial Estate) for new employment land. While the industrial park lies within East Herts, land to the east and north lies within Uttlesford district on land which is currently Green Belt. It will therefore be the responsibility of Uttlesford District Council which is preparing its Regulation 19 District Plan, to allocate the site. East Herts Council also considers that land currently occupied by the Bishop's Stortford Football Club adjacent to Woodside Industrial Estate would also perform well as employment land. However, the availability of this land for employment uses depends upon the relocation of the current football club facility.
4. The Council's recent Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Assessment (**ED149**) identifies a considerable need for football pitches within Bishop's Stortford. Indeed, the Council is currently working with the Bishop's Stortford Community Football Club, one of the largest community football clubs in the country, to identify a suitable location to accommodate the club's matches and training needs. It is understood that the Bishop's Stortford Football Club is willing to explore co-locating with the Community Football Club, but is not currently part of

the partnership undertaking the site feasibility work. Given that the Plan proposes to remove this area of land from the Green Belt, a more intensive use of the site is considered possible such as the creation of 3G pitches which can accommodate a greater number of matches than a single traditional adult grass pitch. Until this option is fully explored through the feasibility work it is considered appropriate to reflect the current use of the site and to designate it as a Community Facility for Sport and Recreation. Policy CFLR8 requires the loss of community facilities to be replaced by enhanced facilities in a suitable location. Therefore, should a replacement facility be delivered, there is no policy objection to the use of this land for employment purposes. However, it is not considered appropriate to prejudice the ongoing use of the site by allocating this land as an Employment Area.

5. In terms of retail, the Council is not proposing to allocate specific areas of land to accommodate retail floorspace. The Bishop's Stortford North development will provide around 1,200 sq.m of retail floorspace, and the strategic policy for land to the south of the town requires the provision of retail floorspace in the form of neighbourhood centres to provide a range of local shops and services. The final floorspace will be determined through the masterplanning work, but is expected to provide up to 1,000 sq.m of retail floorspace. In the interests of the sequential approach of directing retail development to the town centre of Bishop's Stortford, the new retail floorspace in these strategic developments will be of a scale and size that accommodates day-to-day retail needs. It is therefore proposed that an amendment is made to Policy BISH1 which indicates that new retail opportunities will be directed towards the town centre through the development of the Old River Lane site (Policy BISH8), and the Goods Yard (Policy BISH7) and small scale convenience retail opportunities will be delivered through the Bishop's Stortford South development (BISH5) for day-to-day needs.

6. It is therefore proposed to amend Policy BISH1 as follows:

II. New employment and retail floorspace will be delivered primarily within the town centre and the two strategic allocations of Bishop's Stortford North and South:

- Through mixed-use development at the Old River Lane (Policy BISH7) and Goods Yard (Policy BISH8) sites;
- Through two mixed-use local centres at Bishop's Stortford North (Policy BISH3) providing 4.1ha of land comprising 21,000sq.m of commercial floorspace (B1 a, b and c), up to 3,000sq.m for D1 uses and up to 1,200sq.m retail floorspace. Further provision of up to 4,000sq.m of commercial floorspace may also be delivered;

- By provision for up to 1,000 sq.m retail floorspace and between 4 and 5 hectares of new employment land at Bishop's Stortford South (Policy BISH 5).

III. In the longer term, land at the Mill Site may come forward for mixed-use development as set out in Policy BISH10.

### **Question 3**

***How and why was the planned level chosen ahead of other options? Is the site selection methodology robust and transparent?***

1. The key strategy underpinning the chosen level of development is the desire to ensure that new infrastructure of benefit to the town and wider hinterland is delivered through development. A number of small sites were considered through the Strategic Land Availability Assessment and the Settlement Appraisal, but this style of piecemeal development would not have delivered the critical mass of development or funding to support the delivery of infrastructure such as education facilities, retail uses or new bus services. These discounted sites are also in locations which contribute to the integral character of the town such as on green wedges or open spaces. In addition to Bishop's Stortford North, which has been a long-standing allocation, only two other locations existed which could deliver large scale development; to the east and the south of the town. Insufficient land was available to the east of the town, leaving only land to the south, which was both available and considered deliverable.
2. Bishop's Stortford is the largest town in the District, with the largest number of shops and businesses. It also has very good accessibility to the strategic road network, rail services to London and Cambridge, and is in close proximity to Stansted Airport. The town benefits from a number of key town centre locations which provide a rare opportunity to redevelop and regenerate the town with new shops, services, business and homes. Unfortunately, the quantum of retail and employment floorspace achieved through the Bishop's Stortford North application was limited, leaving limited areas of opportunity for new employment land to be delivered. Land to the south of Bishop's Stortford is the only remaining area of land that is immediately available and is capable of delivering a quantum of employment floorspace able to accommodate B1, B2 and small scale B8 uses.
3. The site selection process undertaken throughout the Plan-making process has been very comprehensive. The Supporting Document (**SSS/001**) describes how the Council appraised a number of high level distribution options and 69 Areas of Search against 21 criteria-based topic assessments. Each stage of the

shortlisting and sieving process was presented to the District Planning Executive Panel, which is a public meeting. The Settlement Appraisal for Bishop's Stortford (**SSS/002**) continues the narrative of the Supporting Document; describing how technical studies undertaken following the Preferred Options Consultation were considered and contributed to the site election process. The Settlement Appraisals also considered each proposed site allocation in detail and described why alternative sites were discounted from the submitted strategy.

4. Beyond this Plan period it is envisaged that, apart from the intensification of the urban area, limited development will occur in the town. Clear boundaries exist around the town in the form of the southern distributor road and the A120 bypass, beyond which development would represent clear encroachment into the countryside and Green Belt around the town.

#### **Question 4**

***What is the current position with the Bishop's Stortford Town Centre Planning Framework upon which town centre allocations rely? Can the Council confirm that as a supplementary Planning Document the Town Centre Framework will not set policies, as these must appear in the Local Plan?***

1. The Bishop's Stortford Town Centre Planning Framework is currently agreed for use as a Guidance Document, however, it remains the Council's intention to adopt the guidance as a Supplementary Planning Document. The Framework does not contain policies; instead it contains recommendations, advisory points and proposals for urban design interventions. New development in the town centre does not rely on the framework in order to come forward. As the Council owns the site it is currently considering a range of options for the Old River Lane site.
2. It is proposed that a Main Modification is made to Policy BISH2 to remove the words "conform with" to reflect that the Framework is a guidance document rather than a policy document. In addition, it is proposed to amend Policy BISH10: The Mill Site to ensure that ongoing operations are not prejudiced should development come forward on non-operational parts of the site.

#### **Policy BISH2: Bishop's Stortford Town Centre Framework**

- I. Development proposals in Bishop's Stortford Town Centre will be expected to ~~conform with,~~ and **take account of and** positively contribute to, proposals contained within the Bishop's Stortford Town Centre Planning Framework, as appropriate.

## Policy BISH10: The Mill Site

- I. Reflecting the site's town centre location and proximity to the station, should the site come forward within or beyond the Plan period, the Bishop's Stortford Town Centre Planning Framework will form the basis of a ~~Supplementary Planning Document~~, which will be used to inform the masterplanning of this site, **ensuring that partial redevelopment of the site does not prejudice the ongoing operation of the site for commercial purposes. Masterplanning of the site** This should be undertaken in a collaborative manner involving the District Council, Bishop's Stortford Town Council and other key stakeholders.

### Question 5

***Are the allocations BISH4 and BISH6 available for development? Can they be relied upon to deliver housing in the expected timescales - for example BISH6 II indicates that 150 homes will be delivered between 2017 – 2022?***

1. The Council anticipates that the Hadham Road site will commence from April 2019 and will be complete by 2022/23.
2. The Council is in the process of preparing a Statement of Common Ground with Hertfordshire County Council regarding the redevelopment of the High School Site (BISH6). However, many of the provisions of this site have already been agreed through the Memorandum of Understanding with Hertfordshire County Council (**ED134**), which for brevity are not repeated here. The delivery of new homes on the Bishop's Stortford High School site is intrinsically linked to the availability and completion of a new secondary school as part of the Bishop's Stortford South site (BISH5). It is therefore anticipated that development for housing will not commence until 2021/22 and will be complete by 2023/24. An amendment is therefore suggested for Policy BISH6 to reflect this change.

## Policy BISH6 Bishop's Stortford High School

- II. In the event that the site comes forward for non-educational development, approximately 150 new homes will be provided between 2017 and ~~2022~~**2027**.

**Question 6**

***BISH5 – is this the best option for Bishop’s Stortford having regard to loss of Green Belt?***

1. Yes. This site provides the ability to create key infrastructure to support the needs of the existing community as well as new residents. There is a need to expand Thorley Hill Primary School, which will become possible through the relocation of the Bishop’s Stortford High School to the Bishop’s Stortford South site. The development of Bishop’s Stortford South will also facilitate the creation of a new primary school of up to three forms of entry in size; 1.5 forms of entry to serve the new development and the remaining to allow for longer term education needs to serve the rest of the town. The site also provides for a new secondary school of up to eight forms of entry; 1.5 forms of which will serve the new development. New retail, community facilities and employment opportunities will also be created as well as 750 new homes of a variety of types, including affordable and specialist housing.
2. It is acknowledged that this site does require the loss of Green Belt. However, it is considered that this harm is outweighed by the benefits this site will bring. The site is well contained by existing residential areas and the strong urban feature of the southern distributor road St James’s Way, which provides a clear and defensible boundary to the south of the town. The Bishop’s Stortford Settlement Appraisal (**SSS/002**) sets out how alternative development locations and options were considered.

**Question 7**

***Are the allocated sites appropriate and deliverable, having regard to the provision of the necessary infrastructure and facilities, and taking account of environmental constraints?***

1. Yes. Bishop’s Stortford North has outline permission for the entire site, with hybrid permission for the first two phases including the secondary school, and detailed permission for the fifth area. Development has already commenced on these parts of the site. Outline permission has been granted on appeal for the Hadham Road site. The Council owns and is managing the proposed development of the Old River Lane site. There is an extant planning application currently progressing through the masterplanning process at the Goods Yard site.
2. Pre-application discussions are already progressing on the east of Manor Links site, which is a relatively small and unconstrained site. There are minimal

infrastructure interventions required and biodiversity assets have been identified and are proposed to be retained and mitigated through the design of the layout. The Statement of Common Ground (**ED140**) sets out how these issues are to be dealt with through the planning application process in more detail.

3. The Bishop's Stortford High School site will be an available urban brownfield site once the school relocates to the Bishop's Stortford South site. As such the site is relatively unconstrained in terms of infrastructure requirements.
4. Bishop's Stortford South is currently in agricultural use, and there are no designated biodiversity assets within the site. There are several hedgerows and trees which will be retained along with a small watercourse which will become part of a green infrastructure corridor running west to east across the site. New planting, swales and landscaping will create considerable gains in terms of the overall biodiversity of the site as well as providing an opportunity to enhance east-west routes connecting the Southern Country Park (to the west of the site) and the river Stort valley (to the east). There are three Public Rights of Way through the site, which will remain. One of these, the Hertfordshire Way, runs across the north of the site, which along with the current landscape has dominated the emerging masterplan in terms of retaining open views from the footpath.
5. Technical assessments of utilities and drainage requirements have already been undertaken. Traffic modelling has also been undertaken and there is ongoing engagement with Hertfordshire County Council on highways, drainage and education matters. Where infrastructure requirements exist, they have been identified within the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (**IDM/001**). In particular there is a need to create new accesses on St James' Way, Obrey Way and Whittington Way.
6. The Statement of Common Ground (**ED132**) sets out the agreed approach to the masterplanning process, from which it is intended to develop a full detailed planning application, thus ensuring an earlier approval and delivery of the site.