



East Herts District Plan

Local Green Space Note

Following Part 2 Hearing Session -
Detailed Policies

East Herts District Plan Examination

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The East Herts District Plan proposes to designate parts of Bishop’s Stortford and Hertford as Local Green Spaces (LGS). Through the District Plan Examination, the Inspector has asked the Council to explore further its proposed approach to this particular policy designation.
- 1.2 Paragraphs 76 to 78 of the National Planning Policy Framework sets the basis for the identification of green areas for special protection. These spaces should be of particular local importance and as such a policy of restraint is applied to such spaces. This approach rules out areas from development other than in very special circumstances and as such the allocation of such spaces should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services.
- 1.3 The NPPF states that the designation should only be used:
- Where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
 - Where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
 - Where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.
- 1.4 The NPPF however, does not define what “very special circumstances” or “extensive” means and is therefore subject to interpretation taking account of specific local circumstances. This paper therefore explores each of the above “tests” in relation to the proposed Local Green Spaces in Bishop’s Stortford and Hertford.

2. Bishop’s Stortford

- 2.1 The ‘Green Wedges’ of Bishop’s Stortford are considered an intrinsic part of the character of the town, appearing as ‘spokes on a wheel’ with the town centre being the core of the wheel. They have been a long-standing policy intention since the 1991 Review of the East Herts District Plan, the first Plan to adopt the extension of the Metropolitan Green Belt around Bishop’s Stortford. The Bishop’s Stortford Town Study prepared for the 1991 Local Plan Review identified each of the ‘Green Wedges’, while specific policies in the Plan sought to protect the wedges from inappropriate development by the application of Green Belt policies and their enhancement by planting and use for leisure purposes encouraged.
- 2.2 The principle of the ‘Green Wedges’ was carried through into the 1999 Adopted Local Plan, where the same approach of restraint was applied. The principle of the Green

Wedges along with the exploration of the contribution of individual sites within them was also given consideration in the examination of the current 2007 Local Plan.

2.3 The emerging District Plan now proposes to allocate four of these Green Wedges as Local Green Spaces:

1. The Castle/ Grange Paddocks
2. Whitehall/ Hoggate's Wood
3. Stortford Park
4. Thorley Park

2.4 Each of the proposed Local Green Spaces is surrounded by residential development with the exception of the Whitehall/ Hoggate's Wood LGS which will be surrounded to the east and west when development at Bishop's Stortford North is complete. Each of the spaces has a series of footpaths, desire lines and Public Rights of Way which act as routes to nearby services and facilities or neighbouring residential areas. Importantly, the spaces also provide green routes from the town's outer suburbs to the town centre, with two of the spaces extending into the Town Centre Conservation Area and therefore providing an open setting to many listed buildings such as the Bishop's Stortford College campus and in the case of The Castle/ Grange Paddocks, the setting of the Waytemore Castle scheduled monument (remnants of a Norman Motte and Bailey Castle SM20628).

2.5 The proposed Local Green Spaces contain a variety of land uses including local areas for play, equipped play spaces and informal recreation areas. Some spaces contain allotments, Local Wildlife Sites, pocket woodlands, river environments and naturalised areas providing space for rest and reflection. The spaces provide opportunities for spotting wildlife such as otters and wetland birds. The spaces also provide areas for sport, from informal kick-about areas to managed football, cricket and rugby pitches, tennis courts, Artificial Turf Pitches and Multi-Use Games Areas. The spaces also contain education facilities such as primary and secondary schools and their grounds. The Grange Paddocks Local Green Space provides a green setting to the entrance to the town when travelling by rail.

2.6 Each of the proposed Local Green Spaces contains a series of smaller distinct parcels which perform different functions for the surrounding communities. Therefore, despite their size they still have a very local character and use.

3. Hertford

3.1 The 'Green Fingers' of Hertford, like the wedges of Bishop's Stortford, are long-established features of the town and have contributed to the pattern of growth and the character of the landscape. Hertford Civic Society published its first Green Fingers report in 1976 (*A Study of the 'Green Fingers' of the Town*) followed by an update in 2004, which sought to define the role and function of these spaces for their environmental qualities and public enjoyment and set out a number of recommendations for their long term protection from development. The *Hertford Town Study* (1986) was the first planning document to be adopted by the Council that recognised the importance of the fingers as a valuable Local Asset describing them as areas of undeveloped land which penetrate towards the centre of the town or city and is bounded on either side by the radiating urban development of that settlement, each representing a priceless environmental asset for the benefit of local people and visitors alike. This definition was carried forward into the East Herts Local Plan

Adopted First Review, 1993. Subsequent versions of the Plan have retained the policy designation.

- 3.2 The emerging District Plan now proposes to allocate four of these Green Wedges as Local Green Spaces:
1. The Beane Valley (North of Hertford)
 2. Hartham and The Meads (East of Hertford)
 3. The Southern Green Finger (South East of Hertford)
 4. West Street to Hertingfordbury (South of Hertford)
- 3.3 Each of the proposed Local Green Spaces lies adjacent to residential areas, each space connecting the outer suburbs of the town to the town centre, with all four spaces extending in to the Conservation Area. The Southern Green Finger provides part of the open setting of the Balls Park Historic Park and Garden, the Beane Valley Finger provides part of the open setting of Goldings Manor Historic Park and Garden. The spaces also provide a green setting to the entrance to the town when travelling by rail.
- 3.4 Each of the spaces has a series of footpaths, desire lines and Public Rights of Way which act as routes to nearby services and facilities or neighbouring residential areas. Each of the spaces contain Local Wildlife Sites, pocket woodlands, river environments and naturalised areas providing space for rest and reflection. The spaces provide opportunities for spotting wildlife such as otters and wetland birds. The spaces also provide areas for sport such as in the Hartham and The Meads space which provides informal kick-about areas to managed football, tennis courts, and outdoor bowls. The spaces also contain education facilities such as secondary schools and their grounds, such as the Southern Green Finger which contains Simon Balle School and its outdoor sports area which includes cricket, rugby, athletics, artificial turf pitches and multi-use games areas. This space also provides camping and caravan grounds.
- 3.5 Each of the proposed Local Green Spaces contains a series of smaller distinct parcels which perform different functions for the surrounding communities. Therefore, despite their size they still have a very local character and use.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The eight proposed Local Green Spaces are demonstrably special to the local communities they serve, providing a range of day to day functions. Each of the spaces penetrates into the urban area, being surrounded by residential development. As each space provides different functions each space is local in some way to the communities they serve. They provide accessible green space within a few minutes' walk of the nearby residential properties and they provide opportunities for informal and formal recreation facilities which serve the local community. They are green spaces within urban locations serving a multitude of green infrastructure and ecosystem services as well as contributing to the setting and character of the two towns.
- 4.2 While the Local Green Space policy as described in the NPPF is generally one of constraint, it is important to note that the Council proposes a modification to policy CFLR2 Local Green Space, which clarifies that development which is commensurate to the role and function of the spaces would be acceptable in principle.