

1.INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Local Plan

1.1.1 The East Herts Local Plan Second Review has been prepared in accordance with the transitional arrangements set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The purpose of the Local Plan is to guide development and the use of land in East Hertfordshire to 2011.

1.2 Scope and Status of the Local Plan

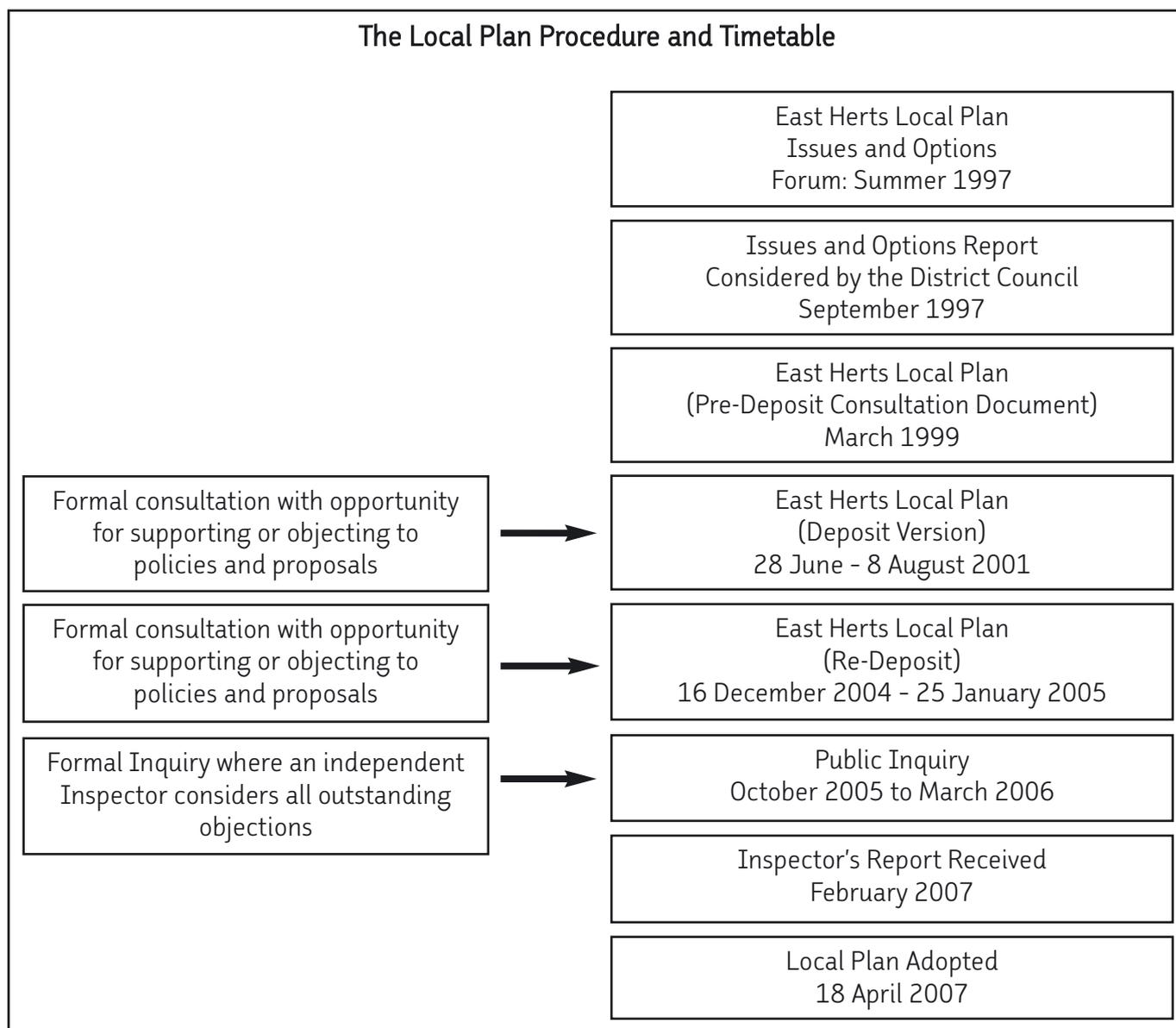
1.2.1 East Herts Council, like all district and borough councils, has a statutory duty to produce a Local Plan for the whole of its area.

1.2.2 The first plan for the District was adopted on 1 November 1981, followed by a Local Plan First Review adopted on 3 March 1993. Limited Alterations to this First Review were adopted on 3

December 1999, taking the previous Local Plan to the year 2001. The Second Review will guide development to 2011, in line with the 1998 Adopted Hertfordshire Structure Plan.

1.2.3 The Second Review forms part of the Development Plan for East Herts, together with the 1998 Adopted Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991-2011, the 1998 Hertfordshire County Minerals Local Plan, and the 1999 Hertfordshire County Waste Local Plan.

1.2.4 As a statutory Local Plan, its policies and proposals may only relate to the development and use of land. However, a wide range of social, economic and environmental issues have been taken into account in the preparation of the Local Plan.



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1.2.5 Having identified the overall aim of achieving sustainable development in the District, the Local Plan is concerned with its delivery through the policies and proposals it contains. These have been drafted in the context of national, regional and Structure Plan guidance and provide the land use framework for the Council and external strategies.

1.2.6 To summarise, for the purposes of development control the Local Plan is intended to fulfil three functions:

1. as a guide and tool for use by the District Council and Planning Inspectorate when determining planning applications;
2. as essential information for the benefit of all prospective developers, that leaves the minimum possible area of doubt concerning a proposed scheme; and
3. to the public at large making known the criteria by which planning applications will be judged.

1.3 Consultation and Public Participation

1.3.1 The District Council regards the involvement of the community as an integral part of the plan-making process.

1.3.2 In preparing this Local Plan, the District Council has taken into account the views of the community including local residents, local businesses, landowners, voluntary organisations, conservation and amenity groups, statutory agencies and other local authorities.

1.3.3 The District Council is committed, through consultation, to the continued involvement of the community in the planning process.

1.4 Structure of the Local Plan

1.4.1 The Local Plan is produced in two parts:

1. A Written Statement, which sets out the Council's policies and proposals for the development and use of land; and

2. A Proposals Map, which indicates the areas to which policies apply and sites that are subject to specific policies.

1.4.2 The Written Statement is divided into two sections:

1. Part I - District Wide Planning - which sets the Local Plan general context and deals with topic chapters covering the district wide planning policies.
2. Part II - Settlement Planning - which deals with policies and area or site specific proposals in the District's towns and villages.

1.4.3 The policies and proposals of the Local Plan have been prepared within the framework of national, regional and structure plan policies and guidance, which have the delivery of the principles of sustainable development as their key aim.

1.4.4 As part of the District Council's commitment to ensure the Plan has the most appropriate policies and proposals, a Sustainability Appraisal of the Plan has been undertaken. The Sustainability Appraisal is not a one-off assessment of the policies in the plan. The aim of the appraisal is to influence the content of the plan and/or amend the plan where the policies originally put forward are unsustainable. Full details of the Sustainability Appraisal are available in a separate document, available from the Development Plans Team.

1.4.5 The adoption of the Strategic Environmental Appraisal Directive 2001/42/EC by the European Commission has introduced a legal requirement for public sector plans policies and programmes to be subject to a Strategic Environmental Appraisal (SEA). In line with Government guidance the Sustainability Appraisal of this Plan has incorporated the requirements of the SEA Directive.

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1.5 National Planning Guidance

1.5.1 The Government produces a range of advice to planning authorities, which is set out in Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG's), Planning Policy Statements (PPS) and Circulars. Local authorities must have regard to national policies set out in PPG's and PPS. Circulars provide more detailed advice and guidance on specific planning issues.

1.5.2 The PPG's, PPS and relevant Circulars, and how they have been used to influence policy formulation, are referred to as appropriate throughout the Plan.

1.6 Regional Planning Guidance

1.6.1 Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) is issued by the Government and sets out its policies to guide development and provide a framework for

the review of County Structure Plans. The relevant RPG for the current 1998 Adopted Structure Plan and this Local Plan Review is RPG9 for the South-East (March 1994).

1.6.2 Revised RPG9 to 2016 was published in March 2001, and was to be reflected in Structure Plan Alterations to 2016. The County Council, however, has suspended further statutory stages on these Alterations, as explained below.

1.6.3 Hertfordshire is now, however, within the East of England and future regional planning guidance will be provided in the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England (RSS14), a consultation draft of which was published in December 2004, with the final version being expected by the Government in mid-2007. This new RSS will cover the period to 2021 (see also Section 1.12).

General structure and coverage of the Local Plan

| | |
|---|---|
| Introduction Why the Local Plan is being produced Changes to the Planning System Background information and main planning issues facing East Hertfordshire Overall Local Plan Strategy | |
| Sustainable Development | |
| Environment Green Belt & Countryside Environment and Design Built Heritage | Social Matters Housing, Leisure, Recreation & Community Facilities |
| Infrastructure Transport | Economy Economic Development and Employment, Shopping and Town Centres |
| Settlement Planning - Main Settlements Bishop's Stortford, Hertford, Ware, Sawbridgeworth, Stanstead Abbots and St Margarets, Buntingford | Settlement Planning Other Settlements The Villages |
| Implementation and Monitoring Planning Obligations | |

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1.7 Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991-2011 (Adopted April 1998) and Alterations to 2016

1.7.1 The Structure Plan covers the period up to 2011, and it is that Plan with which this Local Plan Review has to conform.

1.7.2 The Structure Plan has at its core the principle of sustainable development, which is reflected in its objectives. These objectives include concentrating development in towns; increasing accessibility and reducing the need to travel; reducing private car use; protecting critical built and natural habitats; increasing energy efficiency; encouraging a sense of place and community; and encouraging community participation.

1.7.3 The Structure Plan is in the process of being rolled forward to 2016. Consultation on the deposit version of the Structure Plan Alterations to 2016, took place between 5 March and 16 April 2003.

1.7.4 The consultation response of GO-East raised a number of issues where it was considered that the Alterations had not taken account of new guidance or emerging policy. Consequently GO-East questioned whether it was appropriate to take the Alterations forward to an Examination in Public (EIP), the commencement date for which was anticipated to be late September 2003.

1.7.5 Hertfordshire County Council in May 2003 resolved to postpone the EIP but to keep progress on the draft RSS14 under review. The County Council also resolved that work on the Structure Plan should progress, including consideration of the responses made during deposit, examining the need for pre-inquiry changes and updating technical papers.

1.8 Minerals and Waste Local Plans

1.8.1 The Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan 1991-2006 and the Hertfordshire Waste Local Plan 1995-2005 are part of the development plan for Hertfordshire. They set out the detailed land use policy framework for the extraction of minerals and disposal of waste. The current Minerals Local Plan was adopted in July 1998, and is now being

reviewed. A public Inquiry was held in November/December 2004 and it was Hertfordshire County Council's intention to adopt the Minerals Local Plan at the meeting of its Full Council on the 28 March 2006. However, due to a European Court of Justice ruling with regard to the Habitats Directive this adoption was deferred. It is now anticipated that this Plan will be adopted in Spring 2007.

1.8.2 All applications for minerals and waste development occurring within East Herts will be decided by the County Council as County Matter applications and assessed against the policies of the Development Plan as a whole including the Minerals and Waste Local Plans and their replacements. Development likely to unnecessarily sterilise or prejudice the extraction of known mineral supplies in the District will not be supported, in accordance with Policy GBC15.

1.9 Other East Herts Council Strategies

1.9.1 The Local Plan is also influenced by, and seeks to implement the policies of, other plans and strategies, as detailed below:

Community Planning

1.9.2 The Local Government Act 2000 gave councils a new statutory duty and a new power to promote the environmental, economic and social well being of their communities.

1.9.3 This means that councils have an obligation to consult local people about improvements they want in their area. The Government expects all the statutory organisations (town, parish, county and district councils, health trusts, police and educational organisations) and the voluntary and private organisations to be working together on an agreed set of priorities, which come from local people. These priorities should be set out in the Community Strategy.

1.9.4 It is important that where proposals in the Community Strategy are related to the use of land, they can be implemented by the Local Plan, and that the Local Plan reflects the community priorities established in the Community Strategy.

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1.9.5 Table 1.1 summarises the key themes in the Community Strategy (2003 edition) related to the use of land, and identifies the main policies of the Local Plan that can assist in their implementation.

Other Strategies

1.9.6 In addition to delivering the land use aspirations of the Community Strategy, the Local Plan also assists in the implementation of land use elements of other District Council and partners' strategies. The relationship that the Local Plan has

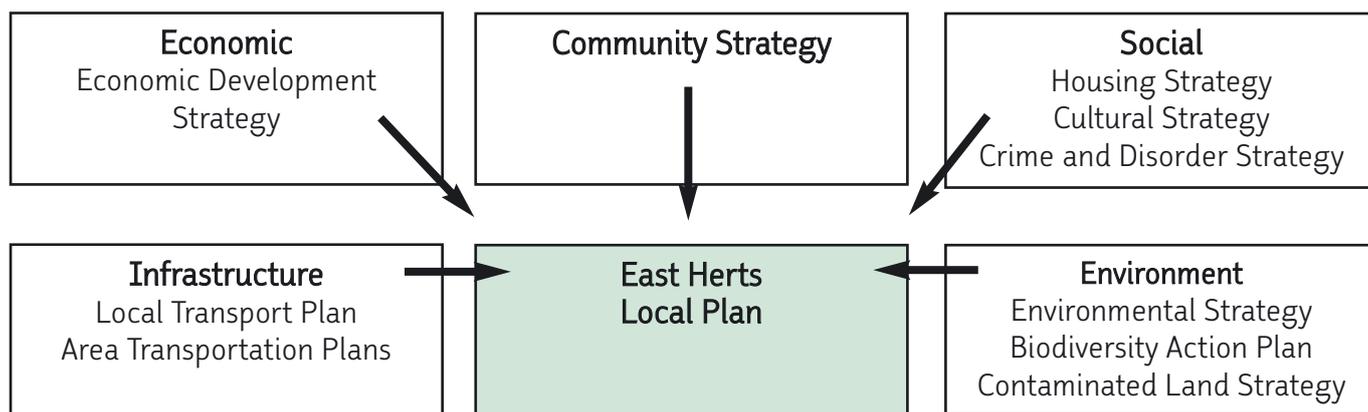
with these other strategies can be seen over the page. The District Council is involved, often with partners, in the preparation of many strategies e.g. concerning culture, housing, social inclusion, and economic development.

1.9.7 The Local Plan can help deliver the land use elements of these strategies, and is effectively the District Council's land use strategy. At the heart of realising this is the aim of achieving sustainable development in the District.

Table 1.1 Community Strategy Themes

| Community Strategy key themes | Local Plan policies | |
|---|---------------------|--|
| Protecting our high quality environment | SD1 | Making Developments More Sustainable |
| | SD2 | Settlement Hierarchy |
| | SD3 | Renewable Energy |
| | SD4 | Sustainable Development and Nature Conservation |
| | GBC2 | The Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt |
| | Section 4.13 | Parish Plans |
| | GBC14 | Landscape Character |
| | ENV1 | Design and Environmental Quality |
| | ENV2 | Landscaping |
| Improving traffic and transport | TR1 | Traffic Reduction in New Developments |
| | TR2 | Access to New Developments |
| | TR3 | Transport Assessments |
| | TR4 | Travel Plans |
| | TR8 | Car Parking - Accessibility Contributions |
| | TR9 | Cycling - Cycling Routes |
| | TR12 | Cycle Routes - New Developments |
| | TR13 | Cycling - Facilities Provision (Non-Residential) |
| | TR14 | Cycling - Facilities Provision (Residential) |
| | TR19 | Towns and Villages |
| Providing Affordable Housing | HSG3 | Affordable Housing |
| | HSG4 | Affordable Housing Criteria |
| | HSG5 | Rural Exceptions Affordable Housing |
| Safeguarding our neighbourhoods | ENV3 | Planning Out Crime - New Development |

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1.10 Changes to the Planning System

1.10.1 On 28 September 2004 Part 1 (Regional Functions) and Part 2 (Local Development) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 commenced. The main changes introduced by the Act are as follows:

- Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) will be replaced by Planning Policy Statements (PPS).
- Regional Planning Guidance will be replaced by statutory Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS), which will form part of the Development Plan.
- Structure Plans will be abolished and local plans and unitary development plans replaced by Local Development Frameworks (LDF's). LDF's must be in general conformity with the RSS.
- LDF's will comprise a series of Local Development Documents (LDD's), including a Local Development Scheme, a Core Strategy, Site Specific Policies and Proposals, Action Area Plans and a Statement of Community Involvement.
- There will be modifications to the processes by which plans are prepared and examined, and the Inspector's report will be binding on the local planning authority.

1.10.2 Under the procedures set out in the Act, arrangements have been put in place to ensure that the work undertaken on draft plans is not wasted. Procedures vary according to the stage the plan is at. This Local Plan will continue under the transitional arrangements. There will be no modifications stage and the Inspector's report will be binding on the District Council. After the plan is adopted, it will to be 'saved', and eventually replaced by a Local Development Framework within a three-year period.

1.10.3 The Government wishes to see local authorities moving as quickly as possible from the current system to one of an LDF containing Local Development Documents, whilst maintaining continuity in the development plan system as a framework for development control. The Government is particularly keen for local authorities proceeding under the transitional arrangements to incorporate LDF principles into their work on new development plans. This Local Plan has attempted to do this by:

- Writing more succinct and focussed text and policies.
- Ensuring it is closely linked to the Community Strategy.
- Cross referring to national and regional policies rather than repetition.

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1.11 The District of East Hertfordshire

Location

1.11.1 The District of East Hertfordshire covers an area of 477 square kilometres (184 square miles) and comprises approximately a third of the area of Hertfordshire. It is predominantly a rural District, with attractive towns and villages set amongst a rolling landscape.

1.11.2 Bishop's Stortford, Hertford, Ware and Sawbridgeworth are the four main towns in the District. The Metropolitan Green Belt, which contains these towns, covers the southern third of the District. The northern two thirds of the District are classified as Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt. There are in addition numerous other villages and hamlets.

1.11.3 The District is also characterised by the quality, nature and extent of historic buildings and conservation areas within its boundary. Areas of nature conservation are equally abundant.

Population

1.11.4 The District is home to a population of just under 129,000 (2001 census).

Infrastructure

1.11.5 Main line rail links into London and the proximity of the A1(M), M11 and M25 motorways add to the attraction of the District as a place to live, and as such continue to create pressure for development, in particular for new housing.

1.11.6 Stansted Airport, whilst outside the District, lies immediately to the east of Bishop's Stortford and has strategic implications for the area.

Economy

1.11.7 The District has a sound economic base, built on small and medium sized engineering firms, high-tech computer companies, brewing, printing, food processing and distribution, and Stansted Airport related service industries. In addition,

there is the major pharmaceutical employer of GlaxoSmithKline (in Ware), and also local government (mainly in Hertford).

1.11.8 The larger town centres are in Bishop's Stortford, Hertford and Ware, though the smaller settlements support a healthy number of shops and related services.

1.12 Key Planning Issues facing East Hertfordshire

1.12.1 The Governments Sustainable Communities Plan (February 2003) identified the London-Stansted-Cambridge sub-region as one of four growth areas, which together with Thames Gateway, Milton Keynes/South Midlands and Ashford, will provide the majority of the 200,000 additional homes envisaged, over and above existing allocations in the period to 2016. East Hertfordshire's inclusion in the London-Stansted-Cambridge sub-region could have significant impacts on the future of the District. Sub-regional studies of the area in 2002/2003 have assessed the potential for further growth and its implications for the area.

1.12.2 In February 2004 the Government announced an extension to the London-Stansted-Cambridge growth area to encompass Peterborough and all of Cambridgeshire. The corridor has also been widened to include the Hertfordshire local authority areas of Broxbourne, Stevenage and North Hertfordshire. In addition, the Essex District of Braintree also forms part of the extended growth area.

1.12.3 Further studies have been undertaken during 2004 for the original and extended growth area. All of these studies have informed the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England (RSS14), which will guide future development in the region up to 2021.

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1.12.4 The White Paper, The Future of Air Transport, published on 16 December 2003, sets out a strategic framework for the development of airport capacity in the United Kingdom over the next 30 years. The White Paper supports the development of a second runway at Stansted Airport. This could have a dramatic impact on the rural character of East Hertfordshire.

1.12.5 The above emerging national, regional and sub-regional issues, and their impact on the District, will be addressed in the first East Herts Local Development Framework, which will be prepared as a review of the Local Plan Second Review in due course.

1.13 A Vision for East Hertfordshire

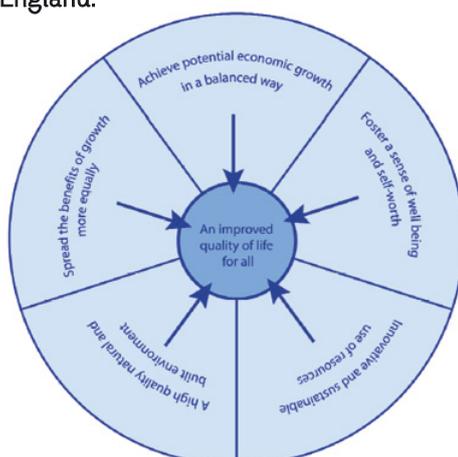
1.13.1 National, Regional and Structure Planning Strategies have as their core the principle of sustainable development.

1.13.2 The international definition of sustainable development by the World Commission on Environment and Development is -

'Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'

1.13.3 The Government's aim of achieving sustainable development is set out in 'Securing the Future - delivering the UK sustainable development strategy' (March 2005). This provides the national framework within which national, regional and local bodies need to work. The strategy identifies five guiding principles that will form the basis for policy in the UK:

A Vision for a Sustainable East of England:



- *Living within environmental limits*
- *Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society*
- *Achieving a sustainable economy*
- *Promoting good governance*
- *Using sound science responsibly*

1.13.4 'A Sustainable Development Framework for the East of England' (October 2001), produced by the East of England Regional Assembly and the East of England Sustainable Development Round Table, identifies a specific vision and objectives for a sustainable East of England. The vision is to plan for an improving quality of life for the people of the East of England, which is sustainable for the long-term future.

1.13.5 The District Council, through its role as local planning authority, endorses this vision and wants to hear people say in 2011 that the District is cleaner and safer, has more local facilities, has a healthy sense of community, meets more of the principles of sustainability and is an even more attractive place, as a whole, to live and work in than it was in the 1990's.

1.13.6 The key aims of the Local Plan, as detailed on the next page, have been produced with this vision in mind.

1.14 The Aims

1.14.1 To help translate the vision into a useable framework for the Plan, a set of Key Aims, drawn principally from the Structure Plan, has been developed. The aims, which follow, are the main basis on which the policies of the Plan have been formulated.

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| A. | reduce overall demand for, and make the most efficient use of, all forms of resources; | O. | maintain a healthy economy and foster economic growth, provided these are within levels which the environment can sustain; |
| B. | increase the use of renewable resources whenever possible, provided this is not detrimental to other aims; | P. | increase community awareness and participation in political decision making and in initiating environmental improvements; |
| C. | increase the re-use of resources; | Q. | encourage residents to change to a more sustainable way of life; |
| D. | only when (C) is not possible, increase the recycling of resources; | R. | apply the precautionary principle where the potential damage to the environment is uncertain and significant; |
| E. | maintain and enhance biological and geological diversity; | S. | maintain the settlement pattern of small towns and villages through the concentration of development in towns, and to other locations where necessary in the interest of equitable distribution, as well as through the maintenance of a Green Belt, and Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt; |
| F. | maintain irreplaceable critical international, national and local assets; | T. | ensure that development and use of the built environment respects and are in harmony with the natural environment, and that the relationship between the two is designed to be one of balance and mutual enhancement; |
| G. | maintain stocks of less critical assets and environmental quality; | U. | maintain the viability and vitality of existing town centres; |
| H. | reduce pollution; | V. | increase accessibility for everyone to facilities needed to maintain or improve their quality of life; |
| I. | maintain the capacity of land to renew itself; | W. | increase the conservation of water through the protection of the watercourses and groundwater and the efficient use of water; |
| J. | mitigate the possible causes and effects of climatic change; | X. | increase the efficient use of energy, both in the built environment and in the transportation of people and goods; and |
| K. | increase the rate of carbon fixing through protecting existing and increasing plant cover (particularly trees); | Y. | ensure new developments are durable and adaptable. |
| L. | improve the overall quality of life by providing a safe, healthy, diverse and pleasant environment in which to live and work (including an increase in leisure, sport and recreational opportunities); | | |
| M. | whenever the scope of planning permits, ensure that people's fundamental needs are met, including the provision of sufficient homes (including homes which are affordable); | | |
| N. | whenever the scope of planning permits, reduce inequality of social and economic conditions between areas, and improve equality of opportunity in economic and social terms; | | |

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1.15 The Need for Sustainable Development

1.15.1 Expanding human requirements and economic activities are placing ever-increasing pressure on land resources, creating competition and conflicts and resulting in sub-optimal use of both land and land resources. Planning can help resolve these conflicts in order to move towards more effective and efficient use of land and its natural resources. Planning policies must support the best possible land use and sustainable management of resources. This Local Plan has this principle at the heart of its strategy.

1.15.2 Sustainability has become the new focus for planning. The Local Plan is recognised as a key tool in contributing to the objectives of ensuring that development and growth are sustainable. This Local Plan aims to fully exploit this potential. Chapter 2 (Sustainable Development) explores sustainability and its relation to the planning process in East Hertfordshire more fully.

1.16 The Local Plan Strategy

1.16.1 The overall purpose of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review is to achieve sustainable development in the District, consistent with local circumstances and requirements.

1.16.2 The Local Plan Strategy for East Hertfordshire, contained in the 1998 Adopted Hertfordshire Structure Plan and detailed in this Local Plan Second Review, is basically one of restraint, with emphasis on generally concentrating development in the main settlements of Bishop's Stortford, Hertford, Ware and Sawbridgeworth, as listed in Structure Plan Policy 6, together with Stanstead Abbots and St Margarets, and Buntingford, as two additional settlements where limited development may be appropriate to maintain the vitality of the area.

1.16.3 In accordance with Structure Plan Policy 6 and the Local Plan Village Development Strategy, development in smaller settlements will also be accommodated to support the facilities and services needed and meet the employment and housing needs for that settlement and its

surrounding area only. Elsewhere, in the Green Belt and Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt, there is a strong restraint on development, other than required for agriculture, forestry, appropriate rural and countryside activities and local needs.

1.17 Quality of Life and Reducing Social Exclusion

Quality of Life

1.17.1 Quality of life is more than can be measured by purely economic indicators or delivered by simple growth of income. It includes: physical and mental health; access to good quality affordable housing; community; social and cultural life; physical security; opportunities for education; personal development; access to a fulfilling occupation; and the quality of the built and natural environment. The key for planning is to ensure that development assists in meeting these needs.

1.17.2 It does not mean that economic growth need be compromised. Development can positively improve the quality of life for all, but what must be ensured is that the potential of future generations to also have at least the same quality of life is not put at risk.

1.17.3 The District Council, in applying the policies of the Plan, will consider the implications for quality of life as an important issue. Examples of specific policies include: the protection of special areas of character, whether they are urban or rural in form; planning out crime; ensuring high quality development; and access to housing, jobs, shops and leisure facilities.

1.17.4 The District Council's commitment to improving the quality of life of local communities can also be seen by the amount of public consultation and participation encouraged in the planning process. This enables people to share in the decisions that affect their lives.

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Reducing Social Exclusion

1.17.5 East Herts Council is committed to a policy of equality of opportunity in both employment and service provision. Nevertheless inequality is an extremely difficult issue to tackle, covering as it does a wide range of socio-economic factors. Planning can play a small, but none the less important, part in reducing inequalities, for example:

- accessibility for all sectors of the community (including, but not exclusively, policies supporting access for disabled people) to places of work, education, health care and other essential services;
- support of passenger transport choices so that everyone is able to travel;
- retention and provision of local facilities in areas which are easily accessible to people without a car;
- provision of an appropriate range of new housing, including a proportion which are affordable, in new residential schemes; and
- energy efficiency, which reduces fuel poverty and helps ensure warmth.

1.17.6 In order to achieve reductions in social exclusion, the District Council may seek planning obligations (or as subsequently revised) or conditions imposed on development approvals, where these are reasonable and relevant to planning.