

Chapter 6

Buntingford

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6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1** Buntingford is a small town located at the centre of a large rural area in the northern half of the District. The town has developed in a valley setting astride the River Rib and the Roman Road Ermine Street and is surrounded by open countryside.
- 6.1.2** Being surrounded by an extensive rural hinterland enables Buntingford to function as an important rural service centre for the outlying villages in the north of the District. Despite its small size, the town has an extensive range of services and facilities that serve the day-to-day needs of residents, and a vibrant local community demonstrated by the numerous clubs and societies that are active in the town.
- 6.1.3** The historic core of the town, centred on the High Street, is an attractive location which supports local independent traders and a weekly market. The town is served by two small supermarkets but residents have to travel to larger nearby towns for comparison shopping trips. Buntingford is therefore regarded as a Minor Town Centre.
- 6.1.4** The medieval town centre lies within a Conservation Area, with the evolution of the town's urban form being influenced by its historical role as an important coaching stop on the route from London to York. The town has numerous buildings which are listed for their historical significance providing a visual record of the history of the town.
- 6.1.5** Buntingford is the only town in East Herts that is not served by a railway, and bus service connections to other settlements are limited, resulting in a reliance on the private car as a means of transport to access larger nearby settlements for employment and leisure purposes. However, this relative remoteness has enabled the town to retain its Market Town character.
- 6.1.6** As there has been some loss of employment in the town in recent years, it is important that the town should seek to maintain and improve on its current employment provision, in order to provide local jobs for both existing and new residents of the town. Enhancements to the town's broadband infrastructure will support existing businesses in the town and help attract new businesses to locate in Buntingford.
- 6.1.7** As Buntingford is the only town in the District not constrained by Green Belt, it has been subject to a number of speculative planning applications in advance of the adoption of the District Plan. The development of approximately 1,100 dwellings has been approved across a number of sites in the town since 2011 and therefore, the development strategy for Buntingford is focused on seeking to ensure that the impacts of development can be mitigated and managed within the overall infrastructure of the town.
- 6.1.8** The main components of the development strategy for Buntingford are as follows:

- 6.1.9 Housing:** additional homes will be provided which will consist of a mix of dwelling types and sizes, including bungalows and specialist retirement accommodation, to ensure that Buntingford's population is able to access a balanced housing market catering for all life stages. The provision of affordable housing as part of new residential and mixed use development schemes will allow emerging households to be able to remain living in Buntingford in accommodation suited to their needs.
- 6.1.10 Education:** the town and surrounding villages are served by a three tier education system. Education provision at the upper level will be enhanced via the expansion of Freman College and the provision of new playing fields, which have been secured as part of the new development being constructed to the north of the town. At the middle tier, Edwinstree Middle School will be expanded to provide additional school places to meet the educational needs of the town and the surrounding villages at this level.
- 6.1.11** The educational needs of the town at the lowest tier, First Schools, will be met through the expansion of Millfield First and Nursery School to 2 forms of entry and through the provision of a new 2 form of entry First School in the town. Land to the east of London Road has been allocated for this purpose. In addition, expansion of Layston C of E School may also be required.
- 6.1.12 Transport:** as part of development proposals for the town, bus services will be enhanced to support travel around the town and to provide links to neighbouring towns. Financial contributions towards the implementation of a Community Transport project have been secured from some of the approved development schemes in the town which will, once established, provide a valuable service to the residents of the town and neighbouring villages. New developments will encourage the use of sustainable travel modes through the enhancement of walking and cycling links around the town. The impact of development on the local road network will be mitigated through upgrades to existing junctions, including widening of the exit links at the A10/London Road roundabout.
- 6.1.13 Other Infrastructure:** improvements to wastewater networks may be required to support existing and new developments whilst the broadband infrastructure of the town is due to be upgraded in 2017/18.
- 6.1.14 Employment and Retail:** the large rural hinterland surrounding the town makes Buntingford an ideal base for small businesses that have links to the town itself rather than those that rely on a proximity to major road networks. Existing employment sites in Buntingford will be retained and, where appropriate, extended and modernised. 2 hectares of employment land has been retained through the redevelopment of the former Sainsbury's Depot site, and an additional 3 hectares of employment land has been allocated as an extension to the Buntingford Business Park.
- 6.1.15** The town centre of Buntingford will retain its role as a minor town centre with a secondary shopping frontage which will continue to function as an important service centre for its large rural hinterland, whilst retaining its market town characteristics.

Economic and housing development will increase available expenditure to help support a good range of services including jobs, shopping, leisure and education, to meet the needs of residents of the town and surrounding villages.

- 6.1.16 Leisure and Community Facilities:** Buntingford's leisure facilities will be supplemented by the provision of new playing pitches and a large area of public open space as part of development to the north of the town. Public access to the countryside that surrounds the town will be maintained and enhanced. New burial space will be provided in the town.
- 6.1.17 Character:** Buntingford will preserve its market town character and the quality of the town's historic core will be respected in new development proposals. Development to the north and south of the town will enhance primary routes into the town, providing a visual transition between rural and urban, and development to the east will be appropriately landscaped, respecting the valley landscape of the town. To the south-west, the open character of the countryside between Aspenden and Buntingford will be preserved, thereby avoiding coalescence between the two communities.

6.2 Neighbourhood Plan

- 6.2.1** The Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan was 'made' in May 2017. The Plan covers the market town of Buntingford and the surrounding villages of Aspenden, Buckland and Chipping, Cottered, Hormead and Wyddial. The Plan sets out policies on business and employment, environment and sustainability, housing development, infrastructure, leisure and recreation, and transport.
- 6.2.2** The Plan forms part of the development plan and as such any proposals within the Neighbourhood Plan area must also accord with the policies set out in the Neighbourhood Plan.

6.3 Development in Buntingford

- 6.3.1** The main features of the policy approach to development in Buntingford are shown on Figure 6.1 below:

Figure 6.1: Key Diagram for Buntingford



- 6.3.2** Whilst no further site allocations for residential development are proposed as part of the District Plan Strategy, in order to reflect the fact that a substantial level of development has been granted planning permission in the town since 2011, these recently permitted sites have been included in Policy BUNT1.
- 6.3.3** It is also expected that a proportion of the overall windfall allowance for the District will be accommodated in Buntingford. These sites will be determined on an individual basis, taking into account the policies of the Plan.

Policy BUNT1 Development in Buntingford

Buntingford will accommodate a minimum of 1,074 homes, which will include:

- (a) around 26 homes on land off Longmead;
- (b) around 160 homes on land north of Hare Street Road;
- (c) around 280 homes on land south of Hare Street Road;
- (d) around 56 homes on land off Aspenden Road;

- (e) around 316 homes on land to the east of London Road;
- (f) around 236 homes on land north of Park Farm Industrial Estate; and
- (g) a proportion of the overall windfall allowance for the District.

First School Site Allocation

- 6.3.4** Hertfordshire County Council, as Local Education Authority, is responsible for the planning of school places in the District, and has identified that a new 2 form of entry (2FE) First School is required in Buntingford.
- 6.3.5** In order to meet this need, land to the east of London Road has been allocated for the provision of a 2FE First School (see Figure 6.2). The site is strategically placed to meet future identified need and will ensure sufficient first school capacity in the town for the future to meet the anticipated demand in the Buntingford area.

Figure 6.2 Site Location: Land east of London Road

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Policy BUNT2 First School Site Allocation

I. Land to the east of London Road, as shown on the Policies Map, is allocated for the development of a 2 form of entry First School.

II. Development of the site is expected to be in accordance with Policy CFLR10 Education and address the following provisions and issues:

- (a) suitable access arrangements and appropriate local highways mitigation measures;
- (b) sustainable transport measures including the encouragement of walking and cycling;
- (c) the extension of the existing footpath running along the western side of London Road;
- (d) the retention of a playing pitch on the site for dual community use;
- (e) quality local green infrastructure through the site including opportunities for preserving and enhancing on-site assets; and

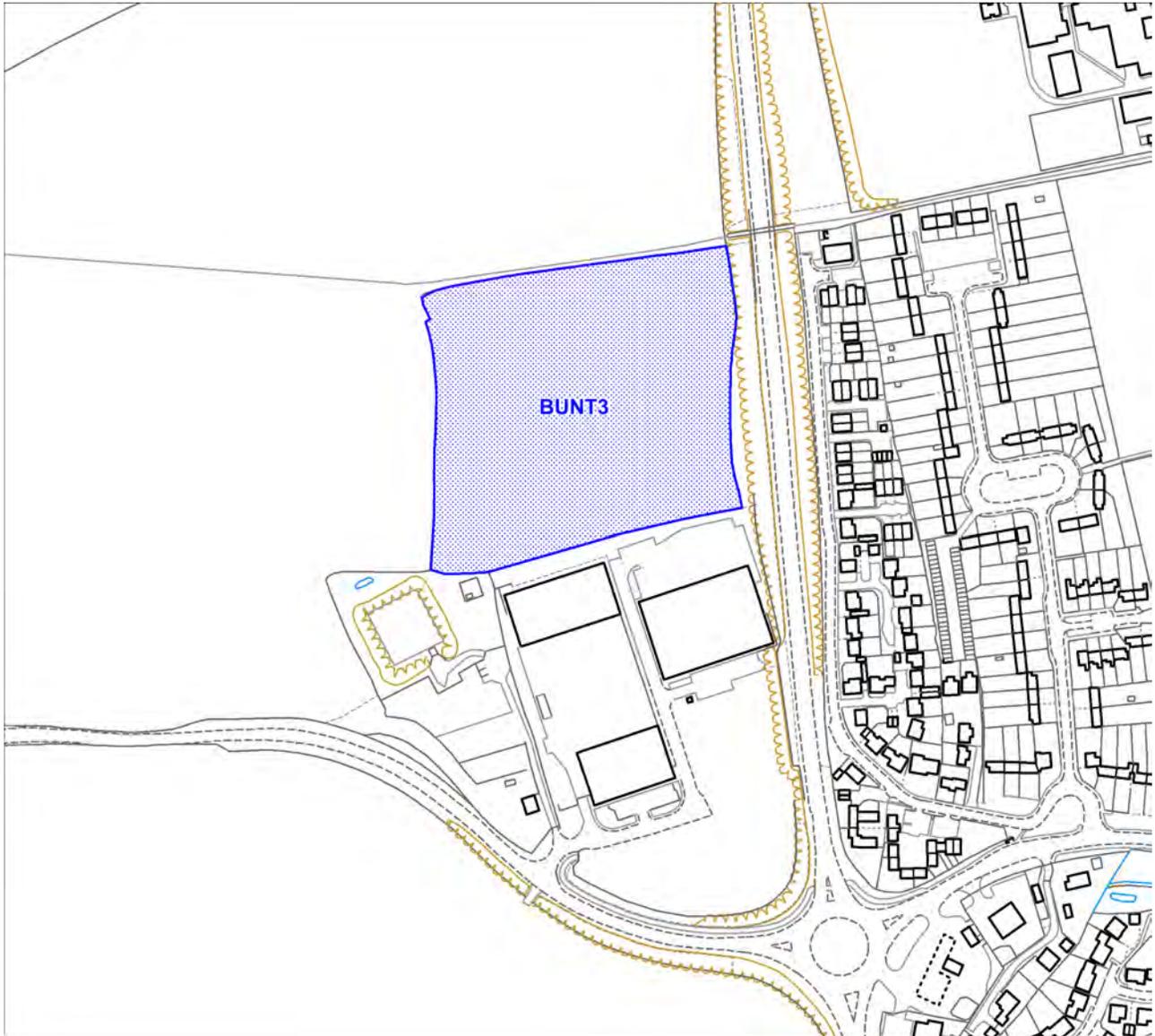
(f) other policy provisions of the District Plan and relevant matters, as appropriate.

6.4 Employment in Buntingford

- 6.4.1** The relative isolation of Buntingford makes it an attractive place for new small scale employment allocations in order to provide opportunities for local businesses to serve the town and nearby settlements in the rural area. The town centre will be strengthened by an increase in expenditure generated by the growing population of the town.
- 6.4.2** The employment strategy for the town is to protect and enhance the existing employment areas in the town through the development of increased employment floorspace within the existing designated areas. 3 hectares of additional employment land has also been allocated to the north of Buntingford Business Park (see Figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3 Site Location: Land North of Buntingford Business Park

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- 6.4.3** In respect of the Watermill Industrial Estate, the access to the site along Aspenden Road is narrow in width and it is considered that the approval of planning permissions for significant traffic generating developments would exacerbate any current shortcomings in road access to this part of the town. Therefore, development proposals in this location will be limited to B1, B2 and small-scale B8 uses, where they are assessed as not having an adverse impact on the operation of the highway network.

Policy BUNT3 Employment in Buntingford

I. In accordance with Policy ED1 (Employment), the following locations are designated as Employment Areas:

- (a) Park Farm;
- (b) Buntingford Business Park;
- (c) Watermill Industrial Estate (reserved for B1, B2 and small-scale B8 uses);

II. In addition, 3 hectares of land located to the north of Buntingford Business Park has been allocated as an extension to the existing Employment Area.

6.5 Retail in Buntingford

6.5.1 Buntingford has a small town centre, consisting of small units in a linear High Street, with two small supermarkets. Despite its size, the town centre provides a vital role for the residents of the town and for the rural hinterland. Recognising its size and its relatively limited retail offer, the High Street is designated as a minor town centre with only a secondary frontage. Within this frontage, it is necessary to retain a suitable mix of retail units and appropriate town centre uses in order to ensure the longer term viability and vitality of Buntingford's town centre. As such, retail development in Buntingford will be considered in accordance with Policy RTC1 (Retail Development) and RTC4 (Secondary Shopping Frontages).

6.6 Leisure and Community Facilities in Buntingford

6.6.1 Whilst Buntingford is located within a rural setting, public access to the countryside resource that surrounds the settlement could be improved. It is also important that improvements are made to existing open spaces for sport and recreation and play spaces for children and that new open spaces are provided to support existing and new communities in the town. The Bury Football Club will be retained on its existing site and improvements will be sought to the existing facilities, as appropriate. The Town Council are progressing plans to seek permission to develop a site on the edge of the town for a new cemetery and the provision of new burial spaces in the town will be supported. All development proposals will be considered in accordance with Policy CFLR1 (Open Space, Sport and Recreation).

6.6.2 New development in Buntingford will increase demand for local services and community facilities including healthcare and education. It is important that developments in Buntingford enhance existing and provide new community facilities in order to ensure existing and new communities can access vital services within Buntingford without the need to travel to neighbouring settlements. In this respect, development proposals will be considered in accordance with Policies CFLR7 (Community Facilities), CFLR8 (Loss of Community Facilities), CFLR9 (Health and Wellbeing) and CFLR10 (Education).