

Chapter 10

Villages

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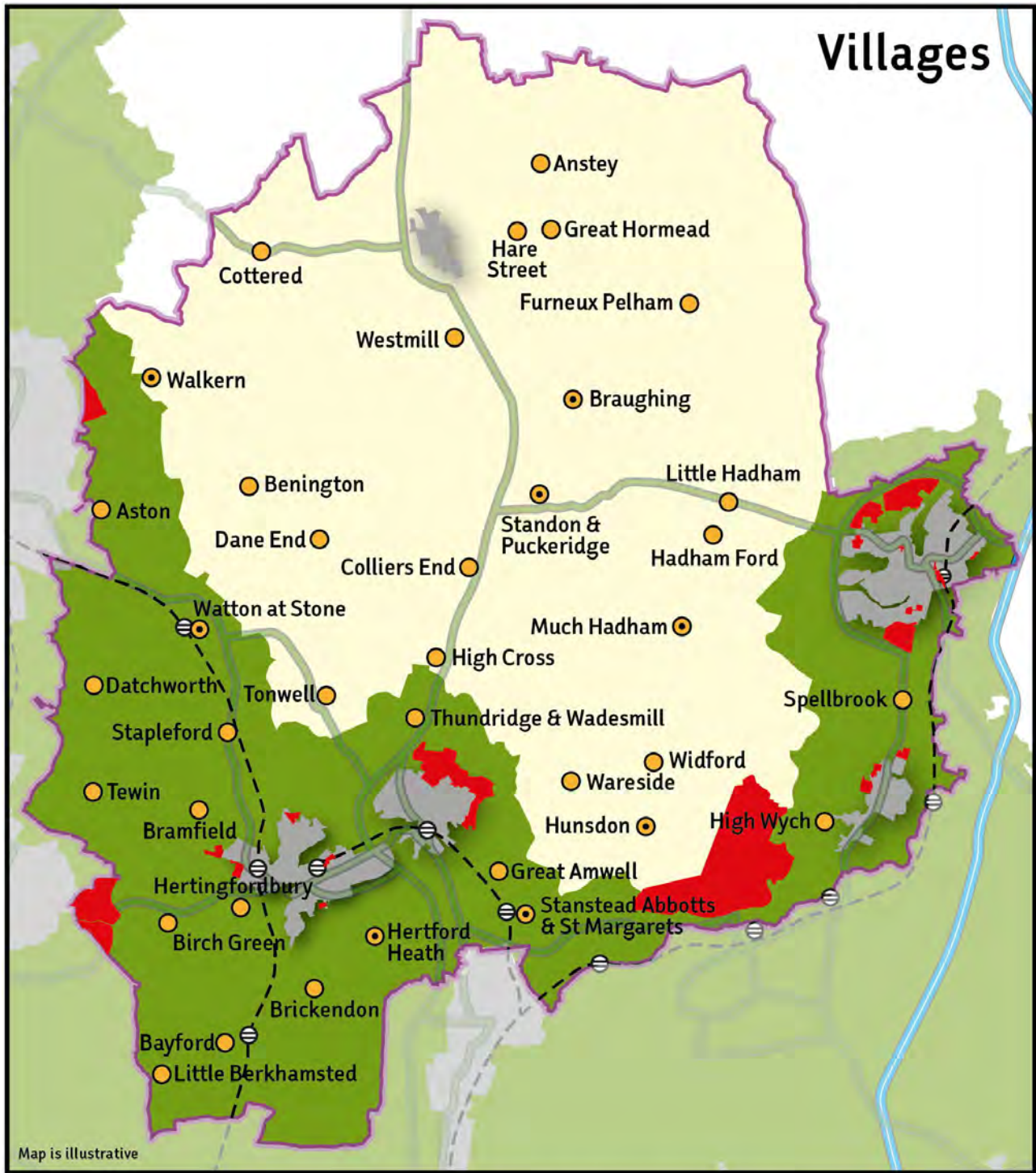
10.1 Introduction

- 10.1.1** East Herts is a rural district, characterised by a dispersed settlement pattern of market towns, and over a hundred villages and hamlets reflecting thousands of years of human activity in the area. This has resulted in a valuable heritage in terms of the built environment, with 37 villages benefitting from designated Conservation Areas which benefit their unique historic character.
- 10.1.2** Whilst villages originally grew as farming settlements, changes in agricultural practice have meant that there are fewer jobs on the land and many villages have become dormitory or commuter villages that house residents who work and socialise elsewhere.
- 10.1.3** Historically, the planning system has viewed villages in the context of the wider countryside and as such, has applied a general policy of restraint that seeks to protect the countryside (and therefore villages) from development.
- 10.1.4** This policy of restraint, whilst preserving the setting of the villages in open countryside by limiting their growth has resulted in housing affordability in the villages becoming particularly acute, with many younger residents unable to afford a home in the village that they grew up in. In addition, many villages have seen a decline in local services and facilities in recent years and the retention of the remaining services and facilities is crucial to maintaining a thriving rural community. Rural housing is considered to be essential to ensure viable use of local facilities.
- 10.1.5** Therefore, the development strategy for the villages seeks to balance the need to ensure vital and viable rural communities, with the desire to conserve the countryside. The Plan classifies villages into three groups, through a village hierarchy, reflecting their relative sustainability. This is an important element of the strategy, helping to direct housing development of an appropriate scale to the most sustainable locations.
- 10.1.6** Villages have been classified following an assessment of:
- the range of services and facilities that are present in each village;
 - the village's accessibility to higher order settlements; and
 - the level of public transport provision available.

Further information regarding the village classification process can be found in The Final Village Hierarchy Study, August 2016. This can be viewed at: www.eastherts.gov.uk/evidencebase

- 10.1.7** Figure 10.1 below illustrates the key diagram for villages:

Figure 10.1: Key Diagram for the Villages



- Green Belt
- Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt
- Site allocations
- Group 1 village
- Group 2 village
- Railway station
- District/County boundary

10.2 Neighbourhood Plans

- 10.2.1** Neighbourhood planning is a key part of the Government's localism agenda. It aims to give local communities greater power to shape their neighbourhood by taking a more active role in the development of planning policies at a local level.
- 10.2.2** A Neighbourhood Plan allows communities to create both a vision and planning policies for the use and development of land in their village. For example, communities can identify where new homes should be built, what they should look like and identify local infrastructure needs.
- 10.2.3** The District Council wants to give Parish Councils the opportunity to empower local people to take a proactive role in shaping the future of the areas in which they live, and give local people greater ownership of the plans and policies that affect their local area. In accordance with Policy VILL1 (Group 1 Villages), Parish Councils will therefore be encouraged to prepare Neighbourhood Plans, in accordance with the provisions of the District Plan, to allocate land for development or to introduce additional policy requirements aimed at ensuring that development contributes toward local distinctiveness or other community objectives. Other Parish Councils may also wish to consider producing a Neighbourhood Plan to shape development in their villages.

10.3 Development in the Villages

- 10.3.1** In accordance with Policy DPS3 (Housing Supply 2011-2033) Group 1 Villages will together accommodate at least 500 new homes, between 2017-2033.
- 10.3.2** Group 1 Villages are the most sustainable villages in the District. In these villages development for housing, employment, leisure, recreation and community facilities will be permitted. Growth in these areas will help to sustain existing shops, services and facilities, deliver affordable housing, provide local job opportunities and deliver community benefits.
- 10.3.3** Having regard to the need to promote sustainable patterns of development, and to ensure delivery of the overall housing requirement for the villages, Group 1 Villages will need to accommodate at least a 10% increase in housing stock (based on the 2011 Census) over the 16-year period between 1st April 2017 and 31st March 2033. This is a level of housing growth that is considered fair, achievable and sustainable for each of the settlements concerned and that will make a meaningful contribution towards alleviating future housing demands, addressing local housing needs and supporting the village economy. Table 10.1 shows the minimum number of homes that each village will need to accommodate. However, development in excess of the minimum number indicated, may be considered appropriate, depending on site availability, site suitability and upon the capacity of infrastructure to meet the additional demand that arises.

Table 10.1 10% growth in new homes at Group 1 Villages based on 2011 Census figures

Village Name	Number of Households	10% growth 2017-2033
Braughing	347	35
Hertford Heath	836	84
Hunsdon	367	37
Much Hadham	535	54
Standon & Puckeridge	1,456	146
Stanstead Abbots & St Margarets	938	94
Walkern	551	55
Watton-at-Stone	917	92

Note: the figures shown are based on 2011 Census figures interpreted by Hertfordshire County Council.

- 10.3.4** Parish Councils will be encouraged to produce a Neighbourhood Plan to develop a shared vision for their village and to deliver the sustainable development they need (including housing, employment and leisure, recreation and community facilities). Neighbourhood Plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies in this Plan.
- 10.3.5** In order to accommodate at least a 10% increase in housing stock, village development boundaries in Group 1 Villages located in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt may need to be amended through Neighbourhood Plans.
- 10.3.6** The villages of Hertford Heath, Stanstead Abbots & St Margarets, and Watton-at-Stone are inset from the Green Belt. These villages will be encouraged to consider accommodating development in their Neighbourhood Plans, especially where it contributes to wider sustainability objectives and the delivery of community benefits. Where such proposals would involve changes to Green Belt boundaries, the District Council will consider making these amendments either through the next review of the District Plan or through a separate Site Allocations Development Plan Document.

10.3.7 The District Council will monitor the progress of Neighbourhood Plans in its Authority Monitoring Report. Where Parish Councils in Group 1 Villages have not submitted a Draft Neighbourhood Plan (Regulation 16) by 31st March 2021, the District Council will consider whether it is necessary to identify sites for development through a Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD).

Policy VILL1 Group 1 Villages

I. The following villages are identified as Group 1 Villages:

Group 1 Villages			
Braughing	Hunsdon	Standon & Puckeridge	Walkern
Hertford Heath	Much Hadham	Stanstead Abbots & St Margarets	Watton-at-Stone

II. Within the Group 1 Villages of Braughing, Hunsdon, Much Hadham, Standon & Puckeridge, and Walkern, as defined on the Policies Map, development for housing, employment, leisure, recreation and community facilities will be permitted subject to (VII) below and all other relevant policies in this Plan. These villages will need to accommodate at least a 10% increase in housing stock (based on the 2011 Census) over the 16-year period between 1st April 2017 and 31st March 2033.

III. Within the Group 1 Villages of Hertford Heath, Stanstead Abbots & St. Margarets, and Watton-at-Stone, as defined on the Policies Map, development for housing, employment, leisure, recreation and community facilities will be permitted subject to (VII) below and all other relevant policies in this Plan. These villages will be encouraged to consider whether it is appropriate, through the formulation of a Neighbourhood Plan, to accommodate additional development especially where it contributes to wider sustainability objectives and the delivery of community benefits. Where such proposals would involve changes to Green Belt boundaries, the District Council will consider making these amendments either through the next Review of the District Plan or through a separate Site Allocations Development Plan Document if necessary.

IV. Parish Councils are encouraged to prepare Neighbourhood Plans to allocate land for development or to introduce additional policy requirements aimed at ensuring that development contributes toward local distinctiveness or other community objectives.

V. The District Council will monitor the progress of Neighbourhood Plans in its Authority Monitoring Report. Where Parish Councils have not submitted a Draft Neighbourhood Plan (Regulation 16) by 31st March 2021, the District Council will consider whether it is necessary to identify sites for development through a Site Allocations Development Plan Document if necessary.

VI. Prior to a Parish Council preparing a Neighbourhood Plan, development in the villages listed above will be limited to the built up area as defined on the Policies Map.

VII. All development should:

- (a) Relate well to the village in terms of location, layout and connectivity;
- (b) Be of a scale appropriate to the size of the village having regard to the potential cumulative impact of development in the locality;
- (c) Be well designed and in keeping with the character of the village;
- (d) Not represent the loss of a significant open space or gap important to the form and/or setting of the village;
- (e) Not represent an extension of ribbon development or an addition to an isolated group of buildings;
- (f) Not unacceptably block important views or vistas and/or detract from the openness of the countryside;
- (g) Not be significantly detrimental to the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

10.3.8 Group 2 Villages are generally smaller villages where limited infill development, together with small-scale employment, leisure, recreation and community facilities will be permitted. This development should take place within the village development boundary as defined on the Policies Map.

10.3.9 As with Group 1 Villages, Parish Councils may consider that the most appropriate way to plan for their community's needs is by preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. Therefore, in addition to limited infill development, small-scale development identified in an adopted Neighbourhood Plan will be permitted. In villages located in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt, this may include development on the periphery of the main built up area of the village.

10.3.10 No specific housing target has been identified for Group 2 villages. Where housing development does take place, this will contribute towards the Council's windfall allowance.

Policy VILL2 Group 2 Villages

I. The following villages are identified as Group 2 Villages:

Group 2 Villages				
Anstey	Brickendon	Great Amwell	High Wych	Thundridge & Wadesmill
Aston	Colliers End	Great Hormead	Little Berkhamsted	Tonwell
Bayford	Cottered	Hadham Ford	Little Hadham	Wareside
Benington	Dane End	Hare Street	Spellbrook	Westmill
Birch Green	Datchworth	Hertingfordbury	Stapleford	Widford
Bramfield	Furneux Pelham	High Cross	Tewin	

II. Within Group 2 Villages, as defined on the Policies Map, limited infill development, together with small-scale employment, leisure, recreation and community facilities will be permitted subject to (V) below and all other relevant policies in this Plan.

III. In addition, small-scale development identified in an adopted Neighbourhood Plan will be permitted.

IV. Prior to a Parish Council preparing a Neighbourhood Plan, development in the villages listed above will be limited to the built up area as defined on the Policies Map.

V. All development should:

- (a) Relate well to the village in terms of location, layout and connectivity;
- (b) Be of a scale appropriate to the size of the village having regard to the potential cumulative impact of development in the locality;
- (c) Be well designed and in keeping with the character of the village;
- (d) Not represent the loss of a significant open space or gap important to the form and/or setting of the village;
- (e) Not represent an extension of ribbon development or an addition to an isolated group of buildings;
- (f) Not unacceptably block important views or vistas and/or detract from the openness of the countryside;
- (g) Not be significantly detrimental to the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

- 10.3.11** Group 3 Villages are generally amongst the smallest in East Herts. These villages have a poor range of services and facilities and it is often necessary for local residents to travel outside the village for most of their daily needs. These villages generally lack a primary school or local convenience shop and may not have a permanent post office or a village hall or meeting place. However, whilst Group 3 Villages are viewed as the least sustainable locations for development in the District, limited infill development identified in an adopted Neighbourhood Plan will be permitted.

Policy VILL3 Group 3 Villages

- I. Those villages/settlements not identified as either Group 1 or Group 2 Villages are identified as Group 3 Villages.
- II. Within Group 3 Villages, limited infill development identified in an adopted Neighbourhood Plan will be permitted.
- III. All development should:
 - (a) Relate well to the village in terms of location, layout and connectivity;
 - (b) Be of a scale appropriate to the size of the village having regard to the potential cumulative impact of development in the locality;
 - (c) Be well designed and in keeping with the character of the village;
 - (d) Not represent the loss of a significant open space or gap important to the form and/or setting of the village;
 - (e) Not represent an extension of ribbon development or an addition to an isolated group of buildings;
 - (f) Not unacceptably block important views or vistas and/or detract from the openness of the countryside;
 - (g) Not be significantly detrimental to the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

10.4 Village Development Boundaries

- 10.4.1** Village development boundaries have been defined for all Group 1 and Group 2 Villages, both within and beyond the Green Belt, and are shown on the Policies Map. These have generally been drawn quite tightly around the main built up area of villages. Development within the village development boundaries of Group 1 and 2 Villages is acceptable in principle.

- 10.4.2** It is anticipated however, that through Neighbourhood Plans, village development boundaries in Group 1 Villages may need to be amended to accommodate at least a 10% increase in housing stock in accordance with Policy VILL1. In addition, village development boundaries in Group 2 Villages located in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt may also be amended through the formulation of a Neighbourhood Plan to identify sites to accommodate small-scale development proposals. Group 2 Villages located within (washed over by) the Green Belt will not be permitted to amend their village development boundary through the Neighbourhood Planning process.
- 10.4.3** Where Group 1 Villages are inset from the Green Belt, Parish Councils will be encouraged to consider whether it is appropriate to amend their Green Belt boundary (which defines the village development boundary) through the formulation of a Neighbourhood Plan to accommodate additional development. Where such proposals would involve changes to Green Belt boundaries, the District Council will consider making these amendments either through the next review of the District Plan or through a separate Site Allocations Development Plan Document if necessary.

10.5 Employment in the Villages

- 10.5.1** The District Council provides support for rural businesses and the rural economy through its planning policies and through implementation of its Economic Development Vision and Action Plan. Employment areas within the rural area have a key role to play in providing accessible and affordable employment and business opportunities. The Local Plan Second Review 2007 designated several Employment Areas in the villages, all of which have been retained.
- 10.5.2** In addition, the following two sites have been designated as Employment Areas reflecting the market demand for these premises:
1. Leaside Works, Stanstead Abbots
 2. Riverside Works, Amwell End, Stanstead St. Margarets

Policy VILL4 Village Employment Areas

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

- (a) Silkmead Industrial Estate, Hare Street;
- (b) Oakley Horseboxes, High Cross;
- (c) Langley House, Station Road, Standon;
- (d) Standon Business Park, Standon;

- (e) Leaside Works, Stanstead Abbotts;
- (f) Riverside Works, Amwell End, Stanstead St. Margarets;
- (g) The Maltings, Stanstead Abbotts;
- (h) Warrenwood Industrial Estate, Stapleford;
- (i) Thundridge Business Park, Thundridge.

- 10.5.3** Sensitive small scale employment development can help sustain the rural economy and achieve a wider range of local employment opportunities. It can enhance the vitality of villages and reduce the need to travel. Proposals must however be in scale with the location. This means that larger proposals are more likely to be considered favourable in Group 1 Villages, whilst only very small scale proposals are likely to be acceptable in Group 2 Villages.
- 10.5.4** The District Council also recognises that in order to ensure the continued viability of existing rural businesses there may be a need for premises to expand. Applications for small-scale extensions or alterations to premises, which provide an important source of local employment and cannot be relocated without damage to the local economy or community, will therefore be viewed sympathetically.
- 10.5.5** New employment development in the villages will be considered in accordance with Policies GBR1, GBR2, ED2, VILL1 and VILL2.

10.6 Retail, Leisure and Community Facilities in the Villages

- 10.6.1** Village shops, post offices and pubs play a vital role in rural areas helping to maintain villages as viable communities. They are often a focus of community life, providing a wide range of services. The District Council wishes to support the continued provision of these facilities recognising in particular that they are of value to less mobile members of society and those without access to a car.
- 10.6.2** Planning applications that result in the loss of village shops, post offices and pubs will not be permitted unless the Council is satisfied that every effort has been made to retain them in accordance with Policy CFLR8 (Loss of Community Facilities).
- 10.6.3** Small-scale extensions/alterations to existing village shops, post offices and pubs may be permitted in Group 1, 2 and 3 Villages in accordance with Policy CFLR7 (Community Facilities), where the use is considered essential to the vitality and viability of the village and is of a scale and use appropriate to the size and location of the village.

