



# Buntingford Employment Study

## Final Report

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**East Hertfordshire District Council**  
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## Executive Summary

1. This report sets out an overall vision and objectives for employment growth in Buntingford. In doing so it identifies the likely growth in the resident population and workforce of the town over the next 17 years, and considers the need to provide local employment and how this might be achieved.
2. The specific triggers that have led EHDC to commission this report are the application for redevelopment of the former Sainsbury's Distribution Depot for around 327 new homes and 1,700 sq m of employment floorspace; and approval for development of over 700 new homes elsewhere in Buntingford.
3. Around 5,400 people live in Buntingford in 2,130 households. The resident workforce of Buntingford totals some 2,870 people, 93% of whom are in work either as employees (80%) or on a self-employed basis (20%). However, only 1,320 people work for employers in Buntingford – and not all of these will live in the town.
4. The majority of residents who live in Buntingford and who are in work travel out of Buntingford to their place of employment (an estimated 1,920 people); it is estimated that only around 750 people both live and work in Buntingford – a self-containment ratio of only 26%.
5. The employment base of Buntingford has fallen significantly in the last decade, from in excess of 2,000 people in the period 1998-2004, to its current level of around 1,300 jobs. This is likely to be largely attributable to the closure of the Sainsbury's Distribution Depot in 2004.
6. While the population of Buntingford grew very little between 2001 and 2011, the population of the town will grow substantially in the next decade. New housing schemes already approved can be expected to increase the population of the town by around 1,700 people, while other schemes coming forward could, if approved, increase the population of the town by a further 2,350 people, an overall increase of 4,150 people.
7. Depending on the scale of new housing development, it can be expected that the total number of residents in employment will grow by between 690 and 1,625 people. Unless additional jobs are created in Buntingford, then all of these people will be commuting out of the town to work elsewhere – and the vast majority can be expected to drive to work, as they do at present.
8. In planning the future of the town, there is a need to address the issue of whether it would be desirable to grow the employment base of the town; and if so, how this should be achieved. Wessex Economics believe that it would be desirable to grow the employment base of the town to increase the opportunities for people to live in Buntingford and to work locally.
9. There is no guarantee that additional jobs created in Buntingford will be filled by local residents but the availability of local employment opportunities is particularly important to those who wish to work part time, those with lower skills and in lower paid work. Growth in the number of people who work in Buntingford, particularly if they are not residents, will help support retail and service activities in the town centre.
10. The largest employment site currently designated for employment use in Buntingford is the former Sainsbury's Distribution Depot site. This 11 hectare site has been vacant since 2004. Fairview Homes have applied for planning permission to develop 327 homes and 1,700 sq m of employment floorspace (on c1.2 ha of the site).

11. There are three other significant employment sites in Buntingford. The Park Farm Industrial Estate, Buntingford Business Park, and the Watermill Industrial Estate. There is capacity to accommodate some additional development on each of these sites, though there is doubt about the viability of developing B class floorspace on the Watermill Industrial Estate.
12. The former Sainsbury's Depot site has been marketed for distribution purposes without success. Wessex Economics conclude that a single business user is unlikely to be found for the site; and that there is no realistic prospect of the entirety of the site being required for employment purposes, given the essentially local character of demand for employment floorspace in Buntingford.
13. Therefore, it is appropriate that the site comes forward for mixed use development, with part of the site retained for employment development. The appropriate time frame within which to assess the requirement for employment land in Buntingford, and hence the quantum of employment land to be retained at the Sainsbury's Depot site, is that covered by the emerging Local Plan which covers the period to 2031.
14. Wessex Economics recommend that 2 to 3 ha of the former Sainsbury's Depot site should be retained for employment uses. This recommendation takes into account patterns of take up of employment floorspace in East Herts District, evidence presented by Fairview Homes on the viability of development, and the desirability of achieving a better balance between resident population and local employment opportunities.
15. The recommendation takes into account Wessex Economics' assessment that the former Sainsbury's Depot site is the best location for further development of employment floorspace in Buntingford in terms of location, existing access arrangements and the availability of essential infrastructure. It has the potential to attract a different type of user to that which might be attracted to the Buntingford Business Park.
16. A 2 ha retention of employment land on the Sainsbury's Depot site, incorporating Fairview Homes' proposal for 1,700 sq m of development on 1.2 ha, could deliver 5,560 sq m of mixed B1 business space in a development of one and two storey buildings; and could lead to the creation of around 300 jobs (full and part time). This would replace some of the jobs lost in Buntingford when the depot closed.
17. A 3 ha retention of employment land on the Sainsbury's Depot site, incorporating Fairview Homes' proposal for 1,700 sq m of development on 1.2 ha, could deliver 10,380 sq m of mixed B1 business space in a development of one and two storey buildings; and could lead to the creation of around 515 jobs (full and part time).
18. Wessex Economics envisage that the site could also attract a number of businesses that would create jobs but would not be deemed to be B class uses; for example, vets and doctors' surgeries; gyms and alternative therapy centres; and nurseries. Many well managed modern business parks attract such users, since land for modern buildings with good access and parking is often hard to find.
19. When allowance is made for the potential for additional development at the Buntingford Business Park (including the additional 3 ha allocation proposed in the draft Local Plan) and at the Park Farm Industrial Estate, it is estimated that there is capacity to create between 1,100 and 1,300 additional jobs in Buntingford over the period to 2031.

20. This would go a long way to creating local employment opportunities for the expected increase in working population of up to 1,625 people, and replacement of the jobs lost when the Sainsbury's Depot closed. It would contribute to moderating the very substantial net out-commuting from the town; and contribute to retention of a full range of services in the town centre.
21. EHDC and its partners should consider pursuing a range of actions in addition to the development of policy on employment sites as part of an overall employment strategy for Buntingford. These are set out below.
22. EHDC should undertake a full assessment of broadband capacity and achievable speeds on the key employment sites in the town (the Sainsbury's Depot Site, Buntingford Business Park and Park Farm Industrial Estate) and address any deficiencies. Marketing of sites will be significantly hampered if Buntingford cannot provide the same quality of connectivity as major towns in East Herts.
23. EHDC needs to work with the developers of the former Sainsbury's Depot Site to develop an attractive environment for businesses that is well integrated within the overall mixed use development, recognising the different standards that different occupiers may seek. The design and functional operation of this larger site will be important to its success.
24. EHDC as planning authority will need to be flexible in terms of its development planning decisions for the retained employment site on the Sainsbury's site, recognising that this is key to successful promotion of the site, so uses other than purely B1 use (eg sui generis and health and education uses) should in principle be allowed on the site, as long as they do not compromise other objectives
25. It is not clear yet what the overall quantum of housing development in Buntingford will be in the Local Plan period to 2031. EHDC should review with Hertfordshire County Council whether a case can be made for the dualling of the single carriageway section of the A10 to the south of Buntingford. This would help the marketing of the employment proposals at Buntingford
26. If a key part of Fairview Homes' proposition is that it is willing to commit to the construction of new employment space as part of the overall development scheme (as distinct from simply promoting or marketing retained allocations), then EHDC needs to ensure that there are enforceable conditions that determine the timing and quality of the development to be delivered.
27. If Fairview Homes are not committing to the construction of new employment floorspace, conditions should be placed on any developer of the Sainsbury's site that they ensure that the employment site is effectively promoted and marketed; the ideal position would be to ensure that the land is sold to a developer who has a proven track record of delivery of commercial floorspace and experience of working on smaller sites, delivering a good quality of development in smaller formats.
28. Loans are available through the Local Enterprise Partnerships to open up and develop new employment sites (notably the Growing Places Fund). If there is a need to improve telecoms or other infrastructure, this may provide a means of forward funding such improvements. EHDC should be willing to work with developers to bring sites forward and ensure the availability of essential infrastructure.

## 1. About this Report

### Study Objectives

This report has been prepared by Wessex Economics on behalf of East Hertfordshire District Council (EHDC). The purpose of the study is to inform the Council with relation to the following three topics:

- First, the extent of employment growth required in Buntingford in association with the growth in population generated by the recent grant of planning permissions and the future development required through the District Plan
- Second, how and where employment growth can be delivered in the town
- Third, in relation to the former Sainsbury's Depot site (which is an allocated employment site in the current adopted Local Plan) to inform the Council with regard to:
  - the likelihood of the site being used by a single employer;
  - the adequacy of employment generating development proposed as part of the application in terms of location, quantity and quality; and,
  - the likelihood that the proposed scale of development will be taken up.

Overall the Council is looking for the study to set out a vision and objectives for employment growth and development that strike an appropriate balance between aspiration and achievability, using robust evidence to demonstrate deliverability of employment floorspace. The study brief asks that appropriate measures are identified to support delivery of employment floorspace and jobs.

### The Study Area

The recommendations made in this study relate specifically to the town of Buntingford in East Hertfordshire District. Buntingford is a small market town with a population of only 4,950 (ONS Urban Area Census definition), though this could rapidly expand to almost 8,500 if all the housing developments that have been proposed were to be built out.

The study has entailed detailed analysis of the demographic, labour force and employment characteristics for Buntingford ward. Figure 1 shows that Buntingford ward includes all of the built up area of the town, but also includes a number of villages, notably Widdial, Chipping and Buckland. Throughout this study, detailed demographic and employment analysis is for the ward. The population of the ward is 5,400 – so by implication there are around 450 people who live in the ward, but outside of the town.

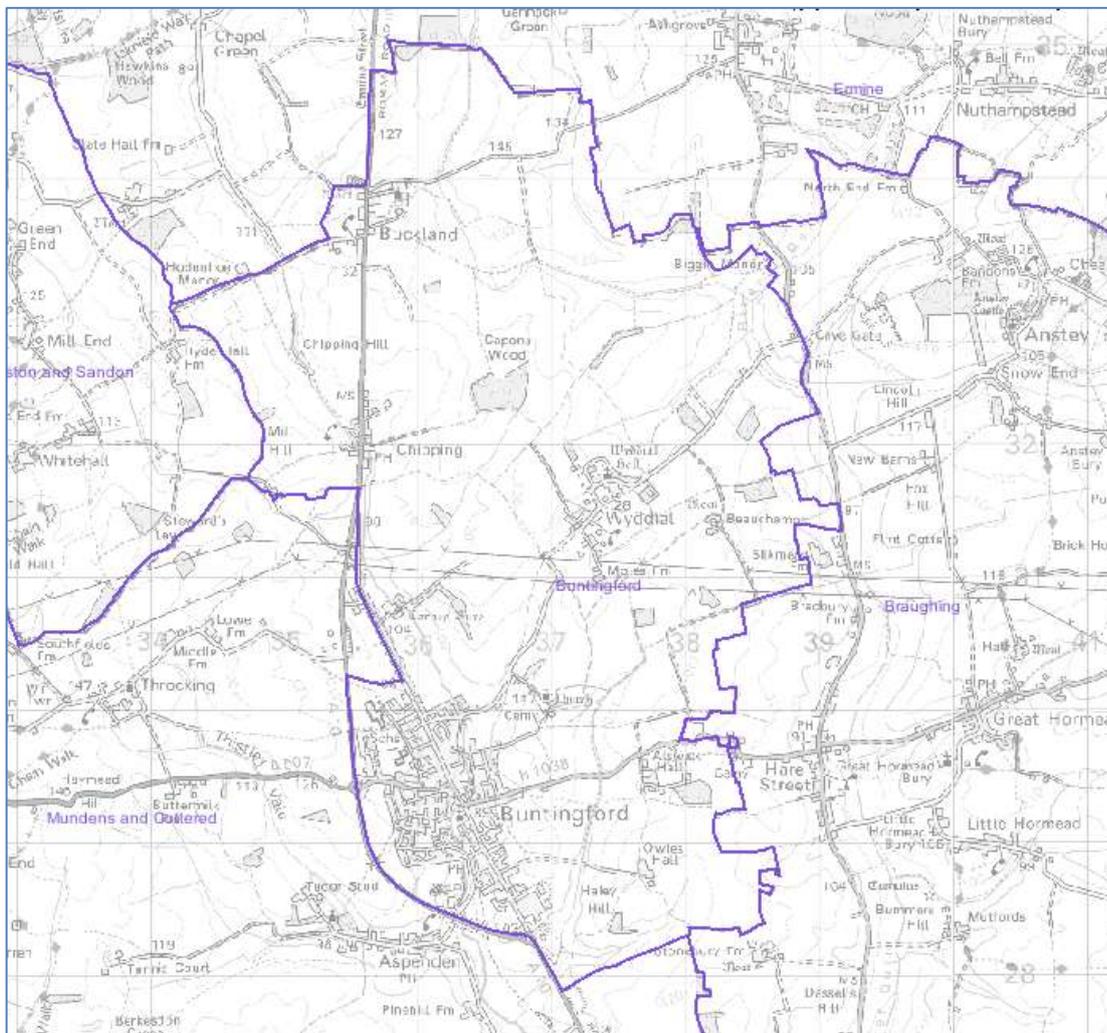
The population and, to a lesser extent the employment, figures quoted in this report therefore somewhat overstate the population and jobs in Buntingford town itself, but this is not material to the analysis presented

in the report. Throughout this study the baseline population of Buntingford is taken as being as 5,400; the total population in this ward, and all other statistics are presented on this basis.

Throughout this report where reference is made to data for 'Buntingford' the reader should understand that the figures quoted are for Buntingford ward, rather than strictly for the town of Buntingford itself. Wherever this is not the case, then this is made clear in the text.

It should also be noted that the Buntingford Business Park, located on the west side of the A10 at its intersection with the Baldock Road, lies outside Buntingford ward though it is functionally part of the town. This is an employment site, with the principal employer being Veolia Environmental Services. The recorded number of jobs in Buntingford in this report will be understated by the number of jobs accommodated on this site, though an estimate is made of how many people work on this site.

**Figure 1: The Study Area**



In thinking about future strategy for employment in Buntingford it is important to be aware of the wider context within which Buntingford is located. This strategic context is discussed in Section 2, but it is important to note that in analysis of what level of employment development is realistic in Buntingford, consideration needs to be given to the economic dynamics of the sub-region which includes all of East Hertfordshire, Stansted, Harlow and the string of towns along the A1 (M) and Royston to the north.

## Report Structure

This report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 sets the wider strategic context within which planning for employment provision in Buntingford needs to be set
- Section 3 identifies the existing business and employment base of Buntingford; how this has changed over time
- Section 4 presents the existing demographic profile of Buntingford and then focuses on the characteristics of the economically active population. It also examines the scale of likely population growth associated with the development of new homes in Buntingford
- Section 5 analyses the existing centres of employment in Buntingford, past trends in development of employment floorspace, the current supply of employment land and its development potential
- Section 6 examines the case for release of all or part of the Sainsbury's Depot site for development other than employment uses, and assessed the contribution that the Fairview Homes proposals would make to job creation.
- Section 7 considers how much of the Sainsbury's Depot site should be retained for employment and related uses; the scale and type of uses that could be accommodated on an indicative retention of 2 to 3 hectares of employment land, and how this would fit with the wider availability of sites in Buntingford.
- Section 8 brings together the conclusions of the study and sets out an overall strategy for employment and development of commercial floorspace in Buntingford.

## 2. Strategic Context

Any strategy for economic development of a particular town or locality needs to be rooted in an assessment of the locational attributes of that town or locality, set in the wider strategic and competitive context. This section places Buntingford in its wider strategic context, and references previous work undertaken on behalf of East Herts District Council in coming to preliminary conclusions on the scale and potential for employment-related development in Buntingford.

### Location

Market towns across much of the East of England developed to serve a rural hinterland extending a half day's walk - some 6 miles - in every direction. Thus, market towns tend to be located around 12 miles from each other. Buntingford illustrates precisely this pattern.

Buntingford is located in a ring of generally larger towns some 8 to 12 miles away as follows (with indicative out of peak period drive times):

- Royston (8 miles, 15 minutes)
- Baldock (9 miles, 20 minutes)
- Letchworth Garden City (11 miles, 25 minutes)
- Stevenage (10 miles, 25 minutes)
- Ware (11 miles, 20 minutes)
- Bishop's Stortford (12 miles, 25 minutes)
- Hertford (14 miles, 25 minutes)

Buntingford is therefore located in the centre of a ring of towns, all of which have a larger population and employment base than Buntingford, and all of which can be regarded as easily accessible from Buntingford for anyone who has access to a car.

### Connections

Buntingford is located on the A10 London to Cambridge Road. The A10 is no longer the strategic route it once was, since traffic to Cambridge and East Anglia uses the M11. However, the A10 provides a fast connection to the south to Ware and Hertford and beyond to the M25, with the road being fully dualled from 3 miles south of Buntingford. This explains the short journey times noted above to Ware and Hertford to the south and to Royston to the north. Journey times in peak hours can be longer than shown with delays experienced at junctions and roundabouts. The east-west road links to nearby towns are less direct, on conventional A roads and hence slower.

While Buntingford is well connected by road for a freestanding town, the focus for employment development in this part of Hertfordshire and the adjacent area of Essex is on the A1M or the M11 corridors. A number of previous studies confirm that this is so, including the Hertfordshire Strategic Employment Sites Study<sup>1</sup>, and the East Hertfordshire Employment Forecasts and Strategic Economic Development Advice report<sup>2</sup>. Within East Hertfordshire itself the focus of commercial development activity is in the District's larger settlements, Bishop's Stortford, and Hertford-Ware. All these settlements have better road connectivity than Buntingford.

Similarly Bishop's Stortford and Hertford-Ware have better rail connections than Buntingford. Bishop's Stortford has fast rail services (38 minutes to London) to London Liverpool Street; while Hertford and Ware have services to London Liverpool Street; and Hertford also has services to London Moorgate. The closest rail station to Buntingford is at Royston, which has regular services to London King's Cross (fastest services 46 minutes). Buntingford residents can also pick up the same services at Stevenage.

## Size

Buntingford is a small town compared to all of the surrounding settlements. It has a current population of around 5,400 people, which is a fraction of the size of other towns in East Hertfordshire. Bishop's Stortford has a total population of 40,000 people, with the Stansted area having a population of 13,000 people, a combined total of 53,000<sup>3</sup>. The Hertford-Ware urban area has a population of 45,500; the Welwyn urban area has 60,000 people; Stevenage, 90,000; and Harlow, 60,000. Even Royston has three times the population of Buntingford, totalling 15,800. All these towns are quite small compared to a city such as Cambridge with an urban area population of 158,000.

The relevance of size is that larger urban areas have a larger pool of labour and hence are more attractive locations for employers than smaller urban areas. This is particularly so for larger employers. Larger urban areas are more attractive because the employer can recruit from a large pool of potential employees; these larger settlements have better transport connections; they also have a larger commercial property market and hence a wider choice of sites and properties. There is also greater depth to the commercial property market and these areas therefore attract more investment than small settlements, since there is a wider pool of potential tenants and hence less risk that property will sit empty, or be difficult to sell.

## Assessment

Figure 2 reproduces the conclusions reached about the prospects for employment development in Buntingford taken from the 2012 district-wide economic development study undertaken for East Herts District Council<sup>4</sup>. The study did not undertake any detailed analysis of the demographic and employment

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<sup>1</sup> Regeneris Consulting for Hertfordshire County Council and EEDA, April 2011

<sup>2</sup> DTZ, November 2012

<sup>3</sup> All population statistics quoted are 2011 Census population for the relevant ONS urban area definition

<sup>4</sup> East Hertfordshire Employment Forecasts and Strategic Economic Development Advice, DTZ, November 2012

characteristics of Buntingford, and therefore the conclusions reached have to be treated with care – and are tested in this report.

However, the essential conclusion reached regarding the competitive positioning of Buntingford in terms of its ability to attract commercial development is valid. This states that *'Buntingford is not a strategic employment location and will not attract large scale employers, since employers would not be able easily to recruit locally. But it could attract smaller, essentially local employers either with strong local connections or those who regard it as a good central location to service customers in the ring of towns all located around 10-15 miles of Buntingford'* (para 7.24)

## Figure 2: The Role of Buntingford in the Spatial Strategy for East Hertfordshire

Buntingford is a small market town on the A10 in the north of East Hertfordshire District. It is some distance from major employment centres. Bishop's Stortford is some 12 miles from the town to the east, Baldock/Letchworth 12 miles to the west. Ware is 10 miles to the south, mostly on the dual carriageway A10. The town does not have a rail service.

It is very likely therefore that the majority of those who live in Buntingford who are in work commute out of the town, with the main flows likely to be to the south to Ware and Hertford. Relative inaccessibility, however, probably means that the town has a higher proportion of older and retired people and lower levels of economic activity than the larger towns in East Hertfordshire.

It is possible that a relatively large proportion of those in work do so from home or at home, since this is an increasingly common characteristic of those living in rural areas – provided they have access to a good standard broadband service. It is quite possible that if new housing were provided in Buntingford, it would attract those who are able to work in this way, or those who want to live in a small market town and accept commuting.

Buntingford is not a strategic employment location and will not attract large scale employers, since employers would not be able easily to recruit locally. But it could attract smaller, essentially local employers, either with strong local connections or those who regard it as a good central location to service customers in the ring of towns all located around 10-15 miles of Buntingford.

Were additional housing to be developed in Buntingford, the current patterns of employment would probably prevail, with a relatively high proportion of new residents being retired or at a stage in their career where they can work part time, or work from home; others who are mobile workers who are not attached to one place of work; and others who accept commuting by car as the consequence of living in a market town in a rural setting.

Given relatively high prices of housing in a rural market town, residential development is likely to attract higher skill, mid-career families, who can afford the cost of travelling to work. There could be issues, however, if a significant amount of affordable housing were secured as part of development, in terms of residents finding it difficult to access work, and limited opportunities being available in the town itself.

**East Hertfordshire Employment Forecasts and Strategic Economic Development Advice Report, DTZ, November 2012**

In terms of the potential of Buntingford to attract commercial development, there is a need to investigate whether, given its modest size, Buntingford has any particular strengths in terms of its existing employers, and the skills and qualifications of its residents; and whether it attracts residents who may be minded to establish and grow businesses. These issues are explored in detail later in this report.

All these factors can be affected by whether the town is deemed to offer a good quality of life to enterprising and well qualified people in terms of local facilities, schools, housing, quality of countryside, cultural amenities, etc. This quality of life is itself an economic asset. Quality of environment appeals to certain types of businesses, often those independently owned, where directors have discretion over their business location.

### 3. Employment in Buntingford

This section examines the business and employment base of Buntingford, in terms of the type of businesses located in the town, and the employment associated with these employers. The existing business base provides clues as to the sort of business activities that want to be located in the town, and this in turn can inform an assessment of the type and size of employers that might be attracted to Buntingford, were appropriate sites and premises to be provided.

#### Businesses in Buntingford

In 2008 there were around 284 separate enterprises in Buntingford<sup>5</sup>. Of these the vast majority (79%) employed fewer than 5 staff, and another 13% employed between 5 and 10 people. In total there were only 25 enterprises that employed more than 10 people, and around half of these employed 11-20 staff. The business base of Buntingford is therefore comprised of small businesses. It is worth noting, however, that the ward boundary does exclude the Buntingford Business Park/Meridian and the substantial Veolia Environmental Services operation located just outside the town on Baldock Road.

More up-to-date information is available on the number of enterprises for a rather larger area including Buntingford<sup>6</sup>, but covering the north east corner of East Hertfordshire District, including a number of villages. Buntingford is by some way the largest settlement in this area, and the majority of employers in this area will be located in Buntingford, but there will be shops, garages and other businesses in and around the villages in this larger area. The area covered for which these data are available is shown in Figure 3.

Data for this area in the north east of East Hertfordshire District indicates that the area no longer has any employers that employ more than 50 people, whereas in 2008 there were a handful (c 7) of such employers in Buntingford. The likelihood is that this reflects the downturn over the last few years and that a number of employers have either reduced their employment, moved away, or gone out of business.

Some sense of the types of employers located in Buntingford can be gained from both the 2008 and 2012 data. Figure 4 shows that in 2008 the largest number of businesses in the area are construction businesses – probably small builders for the most part. Not surprisingly, there are a significant number of shops, food and drink businesses and accommodation providers; and a number of public service providers. All these activities are probably supported by the local population base – though the building businesses may favour Buntingford since it is a good central location to serve all the surrounding towns.

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<sup>5</sup> Base – Buntingford Ward

<sup>6</sup> Base – East Herts Medium Super Output Area 01

Figure 3: East Hertfordshire Middle Super Output Area 1



Figure 4: Number of Enterprises by Sector in Buntingford, 2008 and 2012

	2008		2012	
	No.	%	No.	%
Construction (F)	51	18%	50	14%
Retail ( Part G), Food and Accommodation (I)	47	17%	50	14%
Public admin & other service (O,R,U)	29	10%	20	6%
Professional, scientific & technical (M)	26	9%	55	15%
Business administration & support services (N)	24	8%	25	7%
Education and Health (P&Q)	22	8%	15	4%
IT, Communications, Finance, Property J, K, L)	30	11%	40	11%
Motor Trades, Wholesale, Transport (Part G, H)	34	12%	50	14%
Manufacturing, Utilites, Agriculture (A-E)	21	7%	50	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>355</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: 2008 Annual Business Inquiry,

In 2008 Buntingford had relatively few business services companies (Sectors J, K, L, N), though the 2012 data indicate that the representation of these businesses has increased. This could be a genuine increase over the period 2008-12, which is intuitively quite possible given the change in the economy; or it could be because these businesses are better represented outside of Buntingford itself in the wider rural area. Buntingford has a modest number of manufacturing businesses. The largest number of business in this grouping in the 2012 data is accounted for by agricultural businesses which make up half the total.

The data indicate that the current employment base of Buntingford is dominated by the service sector; and is overwhelmingly made up of small employers, with no employers with more than 50 employees. This is not untypical of a town of Buntingford’s size, but it is important to consider whether it would be possible to

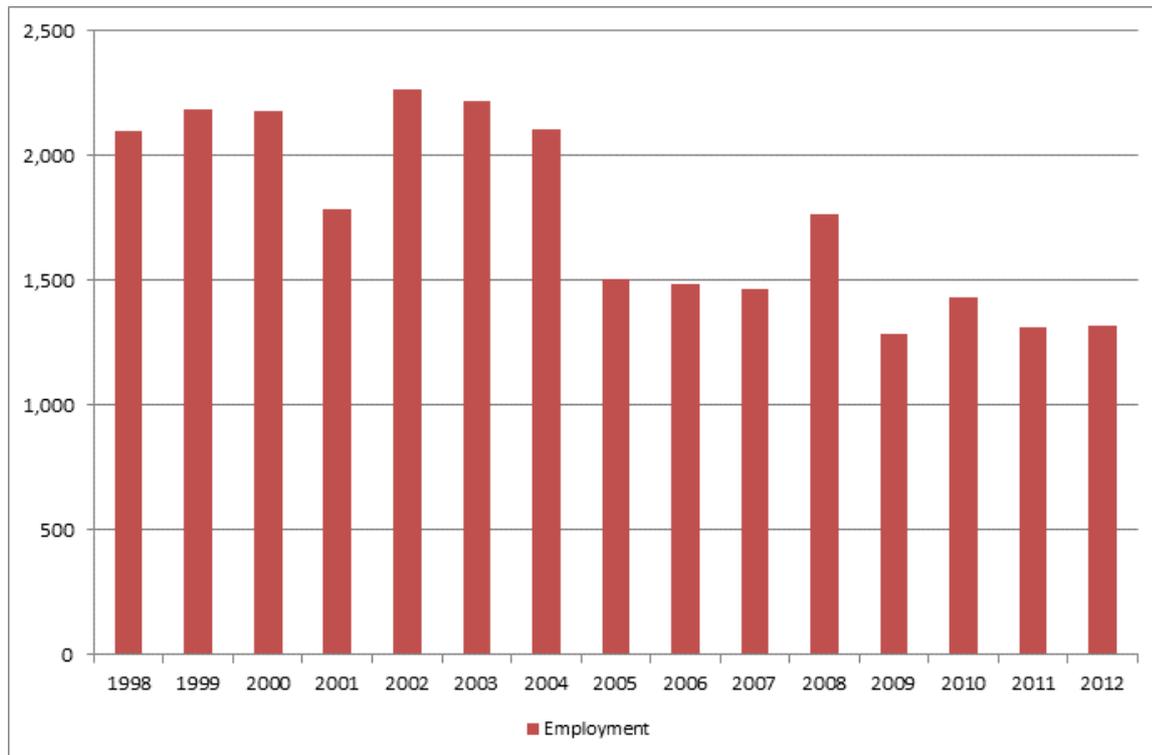
broaden the employment base of the town as it grows, and to attract some larger employers. These issues are addressed in Section 6.

### Employment in Buntingford

In 2011 some 1,320 people were employed in Buntingford<sup>7</sup>. Adding in the 525 self-employed people living in the area<sup>8</sup>, and an estimated 100 employees on the Buntingford Business Park, this means that there are some 1,945 people working in Buntingford. Employment in the town has fallen significantly since 2004. With the one exception of 2001, throughout the period 1998 to 2004 more than 2,000 people worked in Buntingford (see Figure 5). This fell to 1,500 people in 2005.

This dramatic drop in employment is almost certainly associated with the closure of the Sainsbury’s Depot on the south of the town in 2004. At the time the BBC reported that about 800 people worked at the depot, but unless other businesses were creating jobs at the same time in Buntingford, it would appear from the data that around 600-750 jobs associated with the depot were lost. Around another 200 jobs have been lost between the period 2005-07 and 2009-2012, suggesting that the economic downturn has had an impact on a number of employers in the town.

**Figure 5: Number of Employees in Buntingford, 1998-2012**



Source: Annual Business Inquiry 1998-2008, BRES, 2009-12

<sup>7</sup> Source: Business Register and Employment Survey 2012, Buntingford Ward

<sup>8</sup> Source: 2011 Census of Population

The decline in employment in Buntingford over the period 1998-2012 is, not surprisingly, much greater (-37%) than in East Hertfordshire as a whole (-3%), both of which have performed badly compared to the regional (+11%) and England overall (+10%) averages.

Figure 6 shows the profile of employment in Buntingford, and benchmarks this against employment in East Herts as a whole. The largest five sectors in Buntingford – education, retail, health, manufacturing and business administration – account for 62% of all employment in the town. These sectors account for 50% of employment in East Herts. The most obvious difference in the employment structure of Buntingford and East Herts is the low representation of business service jobs (N, M, J, L) in Buntingford compared to in East Herts as a whole.

**Figure 6: Number of Employees in Buntingford by Sector, 2012**

	Buntingford		East Herts
	Employees	%	%
Education (P)	230	17%	10%
Retail (Part G)	180	14%	10%
Health (Q)	140	11%	9%
Manufacturing (C)	140	11%	10%
Business administration & support services (N)	130	10%	12%
Professional, scientific & technical (M)	90	7%	13%
Accommodation & food services (I)	70	5%	8%
Arts, entertainment, recreation & other services (R,S,T and U)	60	5%	4%
Construction (F)	60	5%	5%
Wholesale (Part G)	60	5%	5%
Transport & storage (inc postal) (H)	50	4%	2%
Public administration & defence (O)	40	3%	3%
Motor trades (Part G)	30	2%	2%
Information & communication (J)	20	2%	4%
Financial & insurance (K)	20	2%	1%
Property (L)	10	1%	2%
Agriculture, forestry & fishing (A)	0	0%	0%
Mining, quarrying & utilities (B,D and E)	0	0%	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,320</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: BRES 2012

Figure 7 shows the split of employment in Buntingford between those who work full time and those who work part time, and benchmarks this against employment in East Herts as a whole, the county, region and England as a whole. There is a significantly higher level of part time employment in Buntingford than in the benchmark areas; 45% of all jobs in Buntingford are part time, compared to 35% in the district, county and region. This may be associated with the relatively high share of education, and health jobs in Buntingford, sectors which have quite high levels of part time employment.

**Figure 7: Number of Employees in Buntingford by Sector, 2012**

	Full Time	Part Time
Buntingford	55%	45%
East Hertfordshire	65%	35%
Hertfordshire	65%	35%
East of England	65%	35%
England	67%	33%

Source: BRES 2012

## 4. The Resident Workforce

This section examines the characteristics of the population of Buntingford with a particular focus on those who are in work or who would wish to work. This helps to inform the answer to the questions ‘*how many people in Buntingford are in work or seeking work, what type of jobs do they do, and where do they work?*’ This is important background information that should inform discussions about how many jobs and what type of jobs it would be desirable to provide in Buntingford to ensure that the town grows in a sustainable way.

### Population, Households and Homes

Around 5,400 people live in Buntingford. The population has scarcely grown at all in the decade to March 2011. In 2001 the population of the town numbered 5,240, so the population has only grown by 140 people in the last 10 years. Population growth in the town has been very modest compared to population growth in East Herts District as a whole and compared to the other benchmark areas.

**Figure 8: Population Growth in Buntingford, 2001 and 2011**

	2001	2011	Change	% change	% change p.a.
Buntingford	5,240	5,380	140	3%	0.3%
East Hertfordshire	128,920	137,690	8,770	7%	0.7%
Hertfordshire	1,033,980	1,116,060	82,080	8%	0.8%
East of England	5,388,140	5,846,970	458,830	9%	0.8%
England	49,138,830	53,012,460	3,873,630	8%	0.8%

Source: Census 2001 and 2011

There has been quite a significant shift in the age profile of Buntingford residents over the decade 2001 to 2011. The number of residents over retirement age has increased significantly from 710 to 1,110, an increase of 300. This will in part reflect the national trend of an aging population, but might also reflect the appeal of the town to people who are moving house following their retirement.

**Figure 9: Population by Age Group in Buntingford, 2001 and 2011**

	2001	2011	Change	% change	% change p.a.
0-15	1,137	1,059	-78	-6.9%	-0.7%
16-24	435	553	118	27.1%	2.4%
25-44	1,563	1,168	-395	-25.3%	-2.9%
45-64	1,393	1,585	192	13.8%	1.3%
65-74	415	555	140	33.7%	2.9%
75+	296	458	162	54.7%	4.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,239</b>	<b>5,378</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>2.7%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>

Source: Census 2001 and 2011

The other notable trend is the decline in the numbers of residents aged 25-44 and the number of children and young people aged 15 and under; this has been in part matched by growth in the numbers of young adults aged 16-24 and of those aged 45-64. Such a pattern might arise simply from the aging of a cohort of family households resident in the town; that is, the parents were in the 25-44 age bracket in 2001 and many of the same people are now in the 45-64 age bracket; their children were 15 and under in 2001 are now aged 16-24. Such a pattern would imply stability in the local resident population. Alternatively, it might be that the town is increasingly attractive to older families with older children and young adults. Such a change might be the result of rising house prices which might have made Buntingford less affordable to young families.

When compared to benchmark areas such as the District as a whole, Buntingford has a notably lower proportion of residents aged 25-44 than all the benchmark areas, but the difference with East Herts and Hertfordshire as a whole is particularly notable. The town has a higher proportion of people aged 45-64 and a higher proportion of people over retirement age. As noted above, this may be due to the town particularly appealing to the 45-64 and 65+ age groups; or may be the result of younger adults/families being excluded for affordability reasons. The limited building of new homes in Buntingford in the past decade may have made it less easy for younger family households to move into the town.

**Figure 10: Age Profile of Population of Buntingford and Benchmark Areas, 2011**

	Buntingford	East Herts	Herts	East England	England
0-15	19.7%	20.0%	20.0%	19.0%	18.9%
16-24	10.3%	9.6%	10.8%	10.9%	11.9%
25-44	21.7%	27.4%	27.9%	26.5%	27.5%
45-64	29.5%	27.6%	25.7%	26.2%	25.4%
65-74	10.3%	8.1%	7.8%	9.1%	8.6%
75+	8.5%	7.3%	7.7%	8.4%	7.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Census 2011

There were 2,130 households in Buntingford at March 2011, of which a quarter were single person households (see Figure 11). The town has rather fewer single person households than the benchmark areas, but this is attributable to a much lower proportion of single person households where the householder is below retirement age. The town has a higher proportion of households where at least one adult is 16 or over, and fewer couple households with no children. Households with children comprise about 28% of households, a little above the regional and national average

**Figure 11: Age Profile of Population of Buntingford and Benchmark Areas, 2011**

	Buntingford		East Herts	Herts	East England	England
	No,	%	%	%	%	%
<b>One Person Total</b>	525	25%	28%		28%	30%
<i>One Person Aged 65 +</i>	269	13%	11%		13%	12%
<i>One Person Aged Under 65</i>	256	12%	17%		16%	18%
<b>Other Households; Total</b>	1604	75%	72%		72%	70%
<i>No Adults or One Adult and One or More Children</i>	66	3%	4%		4%	5%
<i>Two Adults 65+ or Two Adults one aged 65+, No Children</i>	355	17%	13%		14%	13%
<i>Two Adults and One or Two Children</i>	328	15%	16%		14%	13%
<i>Two Adults Aged 16 to 64 and No Children</i>	345	16%	20%		19%	19%
<i>Two Adults and Three or More Children</i>	70	3%	3%		3%	3%
<i>Three or More Adults and One or More Children</i>	132	6%	5%		5%	5%
<i>Three or More Adults and No Children</i>	308	14%	12%		12%	12%
	<b>2129</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Census 2011

There were 2,200 homes in March 2011 an increase of 130 homes over the figure recorded in the 2001 Census (2,070 dwellings). On average there are 2.44 persons per household in 2011, a slight reduction on the figure of 2.53 persons per dwelling in 2001. Around 3% of homes were vacant on Census day 2011, which is quite a typical vacancy rate.

### Economic Activity, Workforce and Qualifications

A high proportion of those between the age of 16 and 75 living in Buntingford are economically active. Figure 12 shows that economic activity rates are higher in Buntingford than in Hertfordshire as a whole, and higher than at the regional and national level, but slightly below those for East Hertfordshire. Economic activity rates have increased in all areas since 2001. In total some 2,870 residents Buntingford aged between 16 and 75 are economically active.

**Figure 12: Economic Activity Rates in Buntingford, 2001 and 2011**

	2001	2011	% point change
Buntingford	72.9%	74.3%	1.4%
East Hertfordshire	73.5%	75.4%	1.8%
Hertfordshire	71.9%	74.2%	2.3%
East of England	69.3%	71.6%	2.3%
England	66.9%	69.9%	3.1%

Source: Census 2001 and 2011

Figure 13 shows that around 2,870 people who live in Buntingford are economically active. In total some 2,675 of these are in work (93% of all those economically active), either as employees (80%) or on a self-employed basis (20%). Only 3.2% of the economically active are unemployed, though the number of unemployed people has increased significantly since 2001. There has also been a shift from full time to part time work in the period 2001-2011. In passing, it is interesting to note that some 135 residents aged over 65 are in work either as employees or self-employed, representing 7% of all residents aged 65 or over.

**Figure 13: Economic Activity of those aged 16-64, Buntingford 2011**

	2001	2011	Change	% Change
<b>Economically Active, Total</b>	<b>2,770</b>	<b>2,868</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>4%</b>
Work FT	1,691	1,532	-159	-9%
Work PT	508	619	111	22%
Self Employed	450	525	75	17%
Unemployed	42	93	51	121%
Trainee/Full time student	79	99	20	25%
<b>Economically Inactive, Total</b>	<b>1,031</b>	<b>993</b>	<b>-38</b>	<b>-4%</b>
Retired	544	603	59	11%
Student	109	155	46	42%
Looking after family	243	147	-96	-40%
Long terms sick or disabled	81	55	-26	-32%
Other	54	33	-21	-39%

Source: Census 2001 and 2011

Figure 13 also shows that the number of economically inactive people in Buntingford has fallen since 2001. Consistent with the analysis of the population of the town, the number of retired people has increased; so too has the number of students. However, the number of people looking after family has fallen, which would be consistent with the decline in the number of children under 15 in the town. The number of people who are long term sick or disabled has also fallen.

The overall conclusion to be drawn from the analysis of economic activity is that it would appear that a high proportion of those who live in Buntingford, and would want work, are able to find paid employment. This does not necessarily mean that the work they have is precisely what they want in terms of hours, location, pay or other attributes; but it does not suggest a fundamental problem in terms of access to jobs in Buntingford. The greatest issues in terms of the quality of jobs is likely to be that there may be those who would wish to work full time rather than part time, or those who would rather work locally than further afield.

Generally, those with higher level qualifications will be able to command higher salaries than those with no qualifications, and therefore have more choice about where they live in relation to where they work since they are better able to bear the costs associated with travelling to work than those in low paid employment.

Figure 14 shows that only 25% of those residents of Buntingford who are economically active have a degree or higher qualifications (Level 4/5 qualifications), significantly lower than the average in East Herts or Hertfordshire as a whole. The counterpart of this is that 21% of the economically active residents of Buntingford have no qualifications, a higher level than found in East Herts (17%) or Hertfordshire (18%).

**Figure 14: Residents by Highest Level of Qualification, Buntingford 2011**

	Buntingford	East Hertfordshire	Hertfordshire	East of England	England
No qualifications	21%	17%	18%	23%	22%
Level 1 qualifications	15%	14%	14%	15%	13%
Level 2 qualifications	18%	17%	16%	16%	15%
Apprenticeship	4%	3%	3%	4%	4%
Level 3 qualifications	12%	12%	12%	12%	12%
Level 4 qualifications and above	25%	33%	32%	26%	27%
Other qualifications	4%	4%	5%	5%	6%

Source: Census 2011

Although the number of economically active residents with a degree level qualification is lower in Buntingford than the district and county average, Figure 15 shows that there has been a significant increase in the number of people with such qualifications over the decade 2001-11, and also in the numbers of people with A levels (Level 3). However, the number of people with no qualifications has not fallen dramatically. The picture presented by the data suggests the existence of a fairly stable core of people with no qualifications who may have lived in the town for a long time, with more recent arrivals likely to have higher level qualifications.

**Figure 15: Residents by Highest Level of Qualification, Buntingford 2011**

	2001	2011	Change	% Change
No Qualifications	1,025	922	-103	-10%
Level 1	691	653	-38	-5%
Level 2	858	799	-59	-7%
Level 3	285	521	236	83%
Level 4/5	699	1,084	385	55%
Other Qualifications/level unknown	249	340	91	37%

Source: Census 2011

## Occupations and Industry of Employment

The occupation of Buntingford residents has changed quite significantly over the last decade. The largest number now work in professional occupations (430 people), followed by managerial positions (390); followed by skilled trades (370); associate professional and technical occupations (365) and administrative and secretarial occupations (360) (see Figure 16). Figure 16 also shows the changing pattern of employment by occupation over the past decade.

It is interesting to note that the overall number of people working in generally higher paid occupations (managerial, professional, and associate professional occupations) has fallen, while the total numbers employed in skilled trades, caring, leisure and service occupations and sales and customer service have increased. This is not the pattern often associated with many market towns, where over time higher income groups tend to predominate.

**Figure 16: Residents by Occupation, Buntingford 2001 and 2011**

	2001	2011	Change	% change
Managers, directors and senior officials	540	393	-147	-27%
Professional occupations	302	427	125	41%
Associate professional and technical occupations	373	365	-8	-2%
Administrative and secretarial occupations	384	360	-24	-6%
Skilled trades occupations	325	369	44	14%
Caring, leisure and other service occupations	180	245	65	36%
Sales and customer service occupations	161	192	31	19%
Process plant and machine operatives	180	182	2	1%
Elementary occupations	283	232	-51	-18%

Source: Census 2001 and 2011

It is also possible to identify the sectors in which Buntingford residents work. Figure 17 shows that the sectors in which those who live in Buntingford are most likely to work are: the retail and wholesale trades; the construction sector; education; manufacturing; professional, scientific and technical activities; and health and social work. Together these 6 sectors employ two-thirds of all Buntingford residents who are in work.

**Figure 17: Residents by Sector of Employment, Buntingford 2011**

	Buntingford	East Hertfordshire	Hertfordshire	East of England	England
A Agriculture, forestry and fishing	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%
B Mining and quarrying	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
C Manufacturing	9%	9%	7%	9%	9%
D Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
E Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
F Construction	11%	9%	8%	9%	8%
G Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motor cycles	18%	16%	17%	16%	16%
H Transport and storage	4%	5%	5%	5%	5%
I Accommodation and food service activities	4%	4%	4%	5%	6%
J Information and communication	4%	5%	6%	4%	4%
K Financial and insurance activities	2%	6%	5%	5%	4%
L Real estate activities	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%
M Professional, scientific and technical activities	9%	10%	9%	7%	7%
N Administrative and support service activities	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%
O Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	6%	6%	5%	6%	6%
P Education	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%
Q Human health and social work activities	9%	9%	10%	11%	12%
R, S, T, U Other	5%	4%	5%	5%	5%

Source: Census 2011

## The Balance of Work Force and Jobs in Buntingford

Figure 13 shows that there are around 2,676 people in work (employed FT or PT plus self-employed) who live in Buntingford. The analysis in Section 2 shows that there are some 1,320 jobs located in Buntingford. In addition, there are some 220 people in employment or self-employment who work mainly at or from home. If one assumes some 100 jobs are based at Buntingford Business Park, this would therefore indicate overall a net out-commuting from Buntingford to other centres of employment of around 1,035 people.<sup>9</sup>

In practice many Buntingford residents are likely to work outside of the town, and a reasonable number of the jobs in the town will be filled by people who do not live in Buntingford. Overall commuting flows will be much bigger than implied by the net commuting balance. There is no guarantee that increasing the number of jobs in Buntingford will necessarily increase the number of people who live and work in Buntingford, though it would increase the *opportunity* for people to live and work in Buntingford

At present there is no information on the extent to which jobs in Buntingford are filled by people who live outside the town, or the extent that people who live in Buntingford work outside of the town. This data will become available in due course when 2011 Census Flow data are published, but these have not yet been released. However, some insights in travel to work patterns are provided by data on the means by which people in Buntingford travel to work.

Figure 18 shows that the vast majority (69%) of those who live in Buntingford and are in work travel by car to their place of work. It is reasonable to assume that the 330 people who walk or cycle to work are employed in Buntingford, but so will some of the 2,030 who travel to work by car (as a driver or passenger). If one were to assume that around 200 people who live in Buntingford and travel to work by car also work in Buntingford (around 10% of those using a car to get to work), this would imply that around 750 people<sup>10</sup>, 26% of economically active people who live in Buntingford, also work in Buntingford.

<sup>9</sup>  $2,676 - 220 = 2,456 - (1,320 + 100) = 1,036$

<sup>10</sup> 333 pedestrians and cyclists, 200 drivers, and 216 people working from home = 749

Figure 18: Means of Travel to Work, Buntingford 2011

	Buntingford		E Herts
	2011	%	%
Work mainly at or from home	216	8%	12%
Train, underground, metro, etc	122	4%	14%
Bus, minibus or coach	25	1%	2%
Driving a car or van	1,920	69%	58%
Passenger in a car or van	111	4%	3%
Bicycle	21	1%	1%
On foot	312	11%	8%
All other methods of travel to work	38	1%	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,765</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Census 2011

On the basis of the assumption that around 770 people live and work in Buntingford, one can generate an estimate of net commuting flows. This is based on there being an estimated 1,420 jobs in Buntingford, and 2,675 people who live in Buntingford who are in work. The assumption is made that the 216 people who work from home are not picked up as employees in the job count within Buntingford.

- Around 750 people live and work in Buntingford (a self-containment ratio of 26%)
- Around 1,920 people travel out of Buntingford to work elsewhere (2,675 – 750 = 1,925)
- Some 540 Buntingford residents are employed by local employers (750 – 216 = 534)
- Therefore some 885 people from outside Buntingford travel into the town to work (1,420 – 534) = 886
- Therefore there is a net commuting outflow of 1,040 from the town (885 – 1,925 = -1,040)

It is important to appreciate that the current position is, even if all the jobs in Buntingford (1,420) were filled by those who live in Buntingford, almost as many residents of Buntingford would be working outside of the town as employed in the town. Equally it is important to realise that Buntingford will have a higher level of self-containment than smaller settlements in East Herts. The degree of self-containment generally increases with settlement size.

In interpreting travel to work patterns it is relevant to note that East Herts District itself has a relatively low level of self-containment. While 60% of jobs in East Herts are filled by East Herts residents, only 45% of East Herts residents who are in work actually work in East Herts<sup>11</sup>. By implication, 55% of those East Herts residents who are in work have jobs outside the District. This provides an indication of the extent to which East Herts is, in many senses, the rural hinterland of the major employment centres in the A1M and A11 corridor, and in north and central London. Self-containment in East Herts District appears to have fallen in the period 2008-11.

<sup>11</sup> Source: Annual Population Survey, 2011

Figure 19 shows how travel to work patterns have changed over the period 2001 to 2011. Interestingly, the number of people working from home has fallen, even though the number of self-employed people has increased over this period. Reliance on driving has increased, albeit by a modest percentage. Use of trains has increased. The closest stations to Buntingford are Royston (for King’s Cross and Cambridge), Bishop’s Stortford (for Liverpool Street) and Letchworth or Stevenage (for King’s Cross). The likelihood is that the 112 users of trains work in London, with perhaps a small number working in Cambridge.

**Figure 19: Means of Travel to Work, Buntingford 2011**

	2001	2011	Change	% Change
Work mainly at or from home	266	216	-50	-19%
Underground, metro, light rail, tram	0	10	10	na
Train	76	112	36	47%
Bus, minibus, coach	25	25	0	0%
Motor cycle, scooter or moped	27	21	-6	-22%
Driving a car or van	1,866	1920	54	3%
Passenger in a car or van	95	111	16	17%
Taxi or minicab	3	3	0	0%
Bicycle	47	21	-26	-55%
On foot	289	312	23	8%
Other	9	14	5	56%

Source: Census 2001 and 2011

### Anticipated Growth in Population and Workforce

East Herts DC have recently given planning permission for the development of significant numbers of new homes, and a number of other schemes have been approved on appeal. There are a number of other sites in Buntingford that are also being promoted for housing development. The population of Buntingford will therefore grow in the coming years, a significant change to the position over the decade 2001-11 when the population of the town grew by only 140 persons, and the stock of dwellings by only 130 homes.

It is important for this study to assess the scale of population growth that can be expected as a result of these housing developments, and the associated growth in the economically active population of the town, since this has a bearing on the issue of how many jobs it would be desirable to have in the town. There is no formula that says that for a given economically active population there should be a certain number of jobs, but there is a general acceptance that it is good to encourage opportunities for people to work where they live; and this is particularly important for lower income, lower skill groups and those who wish to work part time.

Figure 20 shows the current approvals for development of new homes in Buntingford, current applications and emerging proposals. In total there are now approved planning permissions for development of 711 new homes in Buntingford, which represents a 35% increase on the number of homes in Buntingford in 2011. The

percentage figure will be higher for the town of Buntingford, since the data used for calculation of population and dwellings is for Buntingford ward as a whole.

There are also proposals for a further 963 new homes which, if all were approved, would take the total number of new homes planned up to around 1,675 new homes. This would represent a 68% increase on the number of homes in Buntingford ward over the 2011 level. Development on this scale would doubtless be phased over quite a long period of time as developers seek to ensure that the market is not over-supplied.

**Figure 20: Approved and Proposed Housing Developments in Buntingford, April 2014**

	Approvals/Recent Completions	No. of Homes	Status
A	North of Town (Ref BUN2 in DDP)	180	EHDC Approval
B	North of Hare Street	160	Approved on Appeal
C	South of Hare Street	100	Approved on Appeal
D	Baldock Road/A10 roundabout	271	Existing Commitment
	<b>Total Approved/Recently Completed</b>	<b>711</b>	
	<b>Submitted Applications</b>		
E	Former Sainsburys Depot	327	Application Submitted
F	South of Hare Street	180	Application Submitted
G	Land to east of Aspenden Road	56	Application Refused but expected to appeal
	<b>Proposed</b>		
H	Land to east of A10 bypass south of Baldock Road	400	Application in Preparation
	<b>Total Applications, and Proposed</b>	<b>963</b>	
	<b>Total All Housing Approvals and Potential</b>	<b>1,674</b>	

Source: Wessex Economics, EHDC

Figure 21 calculates the increase in the working population of Buntingford for four different scenarios:

- Scenario A assumes that only those schemes currently approved are built (schemes A-D, 711 homes)
- Scenario B assumes all the approved sites are built, plus the number of homes proposed by Fairview Homes for the former Sainsbury's Depot site (schemes A-E, 1,038 homes)
- Scenario C assumes that all the approved sites are built plus all the sites for which an application has been submitted (schemes A-G)
- Scenario D is based on the building of all the approved homes and all the identified potential schemes including those for which applications have been submitted or are likely to be submitted (schemes A-F, 1,674 homes).

It is important to appreciate how the numbers in Figure 21 have been derived. It is assumed that the population of Buntingford increases by 2.44 for every home built, this being the average size of households in Buntingford. To calculate the growth in the number of people in work or seeking work with the larger population, it is assumed that the percentage of those living in Buntingford who are economically active remains the same as it was in 2011, and so does the percentage of the economically active who work as employees and are self-employed.

Figure 21 shows the anticipated increase in the number of people in Buntingford that can be expected to be in work or seeking work under the different scenarios. It makes no assumptions about where people work. However, if no extra jobs are created in Buntingford, by definition all of the increase in the employee working population will have to commute out. A separate calculation is given of the growth in the number of people who are self-employed. Self-employed people are more likely to work at home (though the numbers of people working from home is around 215, while the numbers of self-employed residents is 525, so there is clearly not a 1:1 relationship).

This analysis is undertaken to inform the debate, not just of how many homes should be built in Buntingford, but the parallel consideration, which is the focus of this report, of how many jobs it would be desirable to secure in Buntingford. This latter issue will inform the requirement for employment land, though the issue of how much employment land is required has also to be rooted in the reality of how many and what type of employers can be attracted to Buntingford, and how many of these need B class business space.

**Figure 21: Estimates of the Increase in Employed Residents**

	Scenario A Approved (A-D)	Scenario B Approved + Sainsbury's Depot (A-E)	Scenario C Approved + Sainsbury's All Applications (A-G)	Scenario D Approved and Potential (A-H)
Number of Homes	711	1,038	1,274	1,674
Average person per dwelling	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44
Increase in population	1,735	2,533	3,109	4,085
Economically Active as % of population	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.53
Increase in economically active population	919	1,342	1,648	2,165
% of economically active employed (ex self employed)	75%	75%	75%	75%
<b>Anticipated increase in employed population</b>	<b>690</b>	<b>1,007</b>	<b>1,236</b>	<b>1,624</b>
Self employment as % of economically active	18%	18%	18%	18%
<b>Anticipated increase in self-employed population</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>396</b>

Source: Wessex Economics, EHDC

## 5. Employment Land and Premises in Buntingford

This section examines the stock of business space in Buntingford, past trends in development of employment floorspace, existing centres of employment in the town, and the current supply of employment land. An assessment is made of the capacity of existing employment land in terms of floorspace and the likely number of jobs that would be associated with such floorspace if it were to be developed.

Throughout this section and subsequent sections reference is made to the different use classes of employment land and other uses which are also sometimes developed on employment sites. These categories are identified below:

- B1 Business, subdivided as follows
  - B1 a) use as an office other than a use within Class A2 (financial and professional services)
  - B1 b) use for research and development of products or processes
  - B1 c) use for any industrial process being a use which can be carried out in any residential area without detriment to the amenity of that area by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit: Note in this report B1c uses are referred to as clean tech space
- B2 General Industry – industrial processes other than falling within Class B1
- B8 Storage or Distribution
- D1 Non-residential institutions, eg clinics, health centres, day nurseries, training centres, etc
- D2 Assembly and Leisure, including gyms, fitness centres, entertainment venues
- Sui Generis – a range of other uses that fall outside the standard uses

### The Stock of Employment Floorspace in Buntingford

There were around 210 commercial premises in Buntingford and the surrounding area<sup>12</sup> in 2008, with a total floorspace of 83,000 sq m. Figure 22 shows the breakdown by type of property and the average size of property in both square metres and square feet. These data exclude the new buildings constructed at Buntingford Business Park, since those are in a different statistical area.

**Figure 22: Stock of Business Premises in Buntingford and Area, 2008**

	No. of Properties	Total smq m	Total sq ft	Average sq m / property	Average sq ft / property
Retail	59	6,000	64,583	102	1,095
Office	31	4,000	43,056	129	1,389
Factory	79	18,000	193,750	228	2,453
Warehouse	28	54,000	581,251	1,929	20,759
Other	14	2,000	21,528	143	1,538
<b>Total</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>83,000</b>	<b>893,404</b>		

Source: Industrial and Commercial Floorspace Statistics VOA

Base: East Herts MSOA1

<sup>12</sup> These data are for East Herts MSOA 1 as shown in Figure 3

The data indicate that there were some 138 employment premises (office, factory and warehouse premises). It is worth noting that there are many fewer office (B1a or A2) premises (31 properties) than factory and warehouse premises (107 properties).

The data indicate that the stock of offices and factories (broadly B1 and B2 premises) must be dominated by very small units, a conclusion confirmed by visits to the main industrial estates in the area. The much larger average size of warehouse properties will be heavily biased by the scale of the former Sainsbury's Depot. The total floorspace at the former Sainsbury's Depot is 53,070 sq m, so this implies that there is only around 930 sq m of other warehouse space in Buntingford. In practice, most warehouse units other than those on the former Sainsbury's Depot site are likely to be small. There are likely to be a number of separately rated hereditaments on the former Sainsbury's site.

Analysis of the same data for 2003 indicates over the period 2003-08, the overall stock of office premises fell by 5 properties, and the number of factory premises fell by 2, but the number of warehouse properties increased by 4. The fall in the number of office properties is probably associated with small properties used as offices being converted to residential use, and this may also explain the fall in the number of factory premises as well. The increase in the number of warehouse units might be due to change of use of agricultural buildings. Wessex Economics has no specific evidence that this has occurred in the Buntingford area, but it is quite a common and widespread trend.

Data from Hertfordshire County Council's monitoring of employment floorspace completions suggest that there has been no substantive development of employment floorspace in Buntingford over the period from 2004<sup>13</sup>. Over the 9-year period 2004/05 to 2012/13 around 100 sq m of new B1 space and 948 sq m of B2 space has been built (see Figure 23). However, a much larger volume of employment floorspace has been lost to other uses, principally residential development. Thus, over this period as a whole there has been a net loss of employment floorspace of almost 1,000 sq m. Figure 24 shows the pattern of employment floorspace gains and losses over time.

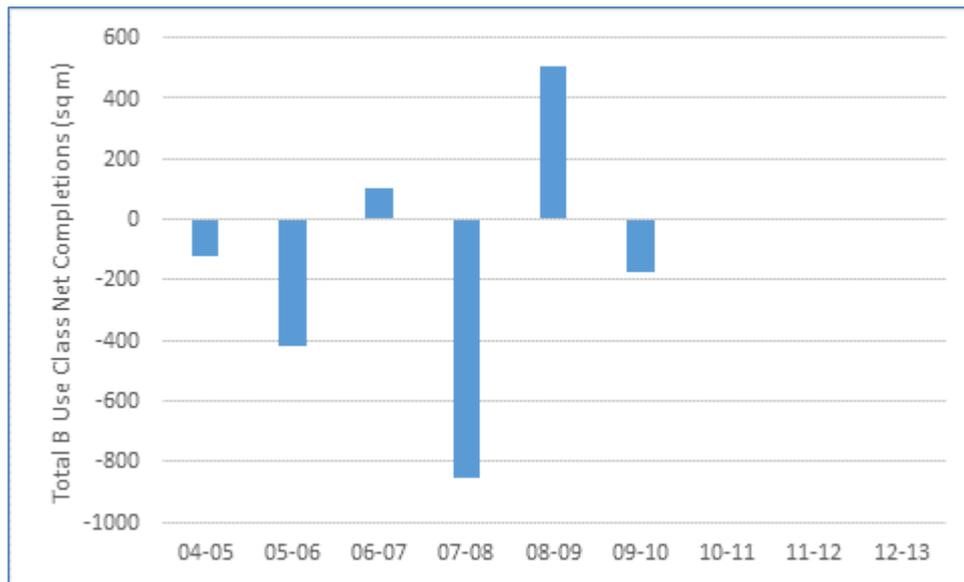
**Figure 23: Net Employment Floorspace Completions in Buntingford, 2004/5 to 2012/13**

Net Completions	B1	B1a	B1b	B1c	B2	B8	Mixed B	Total
04-05	0	0	0	0	0	-123	0	-123
05-06	-105	0	0	0	-190	-123	0	-418
06-07	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	100
07-08	0	-261	0	0	-429	0	-166	-856
08-09	-440	0	0	0	948	0	0	508
09-10	0	-175	0	0	0	0	0	-175
10-11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11-12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12-13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>-445</b>	<b>-436</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>-246</b>	<b>-166</b>	<b>-964</b>

Source: Wessex Economics, Hertfordshire County Council

<sup>13</sup> Base: Buntingford Ward

**Figure 24: Net Employment Floorspace Completions in Buntingford, 2004/5 to 2012/13**



Source: Wessex Economics, Hertfordshire County Council

The above data exclude the developments on the Buntingford Business Park. The permission granted for development on the site was for B1c, B2 and B8 use. Three large industrial buildings were built around 2005-06 comprising an estimated 10,100 sq m (108,700 sq m).

## Existing Employment Sites in and around Buntingford

There are 5 key existing employment sites in Buntingford as follows:

- The Former Sainsbury's Depot site
- The Buntingford Business Park
- Park Farm Industrial Estate
- Watermill Industrial Estate
- Silk Mead Industrial Estate

Brief information is provided on each of these sites. In bringing the analysis of these sites together, Wessex Economics has drawn upon the following sources:

- The 2008 East Herts Employment Land Review undertaken by Halcrow, and more recent work undertaken by EHDC to update the 2008 Employment Land Review. Site assessments prepared by EHDC are provided in Appendix 1
- The assessment made of these sites by Coke Gearing in the report '*Viability Report in Respect of the former Sainsbury's Depot*' (January 2014) prepared on behalf of Fairview Homes and submitted with the planning application for the proposed mixed use development of the former Sainsbury's Depot

- The assessment made of these sites by JLL in the report ‘*Assessment of Future Employment Potential*’ (October 2013) prepared on behalf of Fairview Homes and submitted with the planning application for the proposed mixed use development of the former Sainsbury’s Depot
- Site visits undertaken by Wessex Economics to each of the sites and discussions with a number of local agents active in the office and industrial property market in the area.

With the exception of the former Sainsbury’s Depot site, the assessment made by different parties – the Council and commercial property consultants – is very similar. This section only briefly describes the Sainsbury’s Depot site, but this is given full consideration in Section 6, where the issue of what demand there would be for employment use on the site is addressed. Similarly the description of the other sites is quite brief, since Wessex Economics broadly agrees with the assessment of these sites made by both EHDC and by the commercial property advisors who are advising Fairview Homes.

### The Former Sainsbury’s Distribution Depot

The former Sainsbury’s Distribution Depot is located on the A10 at the southern end of the town of Buntingford. The site covers 10.94 ha (27 acres). There are a number of industrial and warehouse buildings on site with total floorspace of 53,070 sq m (571,200 sq ft). The site has been unused since 2004 when the depot closed, though Wessex Economics understand that occasional use has been made of the depot during the Christmas season in subsequent years. However, for all practical purposes the buildings and the site have been unused for 10 years.

The entire site is identified as a designated employment area as part of the saved Local Plan policies. Wessex Economics would agree with JLL’s assessment that ‘*the buildings provide no aesthetic or functional purpose for the town*’ (para 2.2). Wessex Economics would envisage that any commercial occupier that might be interested in occupying the site would be highly likely to demolish most of the existing buildings. The issue of whether there is a realistic prospect of attracting employment use on the entire site is considered in detail in Section 6, along with the issue of whether it would be possible to attract employment development on part of the site.

However, while there is an issue about what type and quantum of development could be secured on this site, it is important to acknowledge that in terms of location, the site is, in principle, a good site for employment uses. This is by virtue of its location, with direct access to the A10 in a southwards direction. The site must have the necessary on site infrastructure in terms of utilities that would be required for development of new employment floorspace, and is already serviced in terms of access roads. Given it is a decade since the property was in use, it would be important to appraise what telecoms infrastructure is in place and the quality of broadband connection that exists or could be delivered to the site.

The emerging planning policy for the site recognises its suitability for employment development, while recognising that redevelopment is required, and that the site is over-large in terms of the scale of employment development that could be secured. Thus, the draft District Plan published in January 2014 states that ‘*in*

*order to meet the District's short term housing requirement and to provide for the housing needs of Buntingford, development is proposed to the south of Buntingford on land to the east of London Road on land formerly known as the Sainsbury's Distribution Depot site. Given the site's connections to the A10, development to the south of the town will need to provide a mix of uses, including residential and employment development.'* (Para 6.2.5).

### The Buntingford Business Park

Buntingford Business Park is located to the east of Buntingford town centre at the intersection of the A10 Buntingford bypass and the Baldock Road. Three large industrial buildings have been built since around 2005-06 comprising an estimated 10,100 sq m (108,700 sq ft). The occupational history of these can be summarised as follows:

- A number of EHDC functions are run from the estate, including the ground maintenance services, parking office, and recycling service plus EHDC's domestic waste service, run under contract by Veolia Environmental Services
- Another unit is let to Amwell Systems Ltd, which manufactures and installs washroom cubicles
- A third unit of around 3,500 sq m is reported by Coke Gearing to have been let originally to a technology company, but has been marketed without success for the past four years. Another agent reports that the building has now been let to an electrical warehouse distributor
- Data from CoStar indicate achieved rental of £6.75 per sq ft on one of the buildings. JLL indicate that the vacant property has been marketed at £5.95 per sq ft.

The business park is well located in terms of accessibility, has high visibility and is of good quality, though the remaining development land on the south and east side of the site is scruffy, and does not create a positive impression. There is quite a lot of parking on the internal estate roads. Planning permission has been secured to provide a car park to the west of the existing buildings. This should alleviate the parking issue, unless people not working on the estate are choosing to park there.

The existing planning consent is for B1c/B2/B8 development, and to the extent that the site attracts further commercial interest, it is likely to attract more of the same sort of development. Given the distribution activities of a number of the tenants, there are likely to be significant levels of commercial vehicle movement. There appears to be significant traffic associated with the Veolia depot. This might possibly deter some potential occupiers. Although the estate is close to the town centre, it sits apart from the town.

Wessex Economics would describe the site as functional rather than attractive. This will make it more difficult to attract smaller, more image conscious occupiers, with an element of office based employment. Wessex Economics' assessment is that it is therefore likely to attract more of the same type of occupiers – essentially large (for the area) and medium sized occupiers, with a bias to B8 and B2 users. As discussed below, there is capacity for further development on the business park, through an additional allocation to the north of the existing business park.

## Park Farm Industrial Estate

Park Farm Industrial Estate is a well-established industrial estate on the north side of Buntingford accessed from Ermine Street. The units are arranged in terraces, and comprise a mix of old and more modern units, including two storey small office units. The units available are predominantly small, single storey units. In total there are around 45 units though some occupiers have created larger units by amalgamation of a number of adjacent units.

Wessex Economics would agree with the EHDC assessment that the industrial estate scores well in terms of general quality, with a mix of better quality small units and more basic units. The industrial estate has quite a range of occupiers, including office based activities, service businesses, some small scale manufacturing and motor-related businesses.

The estate has a high level of occupancy, which indicates it is meeting a real need. Coke Gearing report that the current vacancy rate is less than 5%; and that when the practice marketed a unit of 125 sq m (1,350 sq ft) in June 2012, it attracted strong interest and went to 'best bids'. However, interest in the units is reported to be either from existing occupiers on the estate or other locally based businesses.

This confirms that the businesses located on the estate are likely to have strong local ties, either in the sense that they are owned and run by those living in the general Buntingford area, or they are long established local businesses with a well-established labour force. Still others are likely to be engaged in servicing relatively local customers.

The majority of the units have been sold on long leases, with relatively few retained by the landowner and less on shorter occupational leases. At present there are only two vacant units, Units 6 and 8, offering accommodation of 200-300 sq m (2,150-3,200 sq ft). These have been vacant for a number of years. Indicative rents from CoStar are in the range £5.00 to £6.00 psf, though given variation in the quality of units the range of rents may be wider than this.

The estate lacks prominence, but this would not seem to be an issue to the type of businesses that are attracted to the estate. Access to the A10 is relatively poor, with the option being to go north along Ermine Street, or to weave through the centre of Buntingford to access the A10 via the Baldock Road or Station Road/London Road.

One agent spoken to indicates some negative feedback from tenants about the quality of broadband access, and difficulties in recruiting and retaining good staff, which is felt to be because of poor transport links between Buntingford and other towns.

## Watermill Industrial Estate

The Watermill Industrial Estate is located on the south side of Buntingford off the Aspenden Road. Access is quite difficult. To access the A10, vehicles have to travel back towards Buntingford along Aspenden Road. The EHDC ELR update describes this road as being '*narrow in width and poor in alignment*'. Once the London Road is reached, drivers would turn south to access the south bound A10. Alternatively vehicles have to go through the town centre and out on the Baldock Road to the A10 bypass junction on the west of the town.

The industrial units on the estate are of varying ages, but there are no modern units, and a number of properties are in poor condition. The estate access road is quite narrow, and often vehicles are parked on the road. Access for larger goods vehicles would be quite problematic. Generally the estate is of poor quality, but the level of vacancies is low, so the estate clearly serves a useful function within the town.

Coke Gearing report that they were recently involved in the sale of one of the older end-of-terrace units. Despite the poor condition of the property, the property sold, indicating underlying demand for small units in the Buntingford market, even if they require investment in repair and maintenance. No rental information is available but rents and rates are likely to be low, and this is likely to be the principal appeal of the industrial estate.

Occupiers include the following businesses: a number of vehicle service and repair businesses; glaziers, joiners, building contractors, building supplies; manufacturers, including plastic injection/moulding and spring makers; graphics businesses and sign makers; and vending services.

## Silkmead Industrial Estate

The Silkmead Industrial Estate is located about 2 miles to the east of Buntingford on the B1368 at Hare Street. The estate comprises about 9 units, although some businesses occupy more than one unit, in the form of small wooden units. Occupiers at January 2013 included a vintage car spray business; a small engineering business; a furniture maker; a maker of bespoke kitchens and a small fabrications business. All the units are classed as being in B2 use. The estate clearly fulfils a need, but that need is likely to be for local firms that require cheap space.

## Land for Employment Development in and around Buntingford

The former Sainsbury's Depot is currently the largest site allocated for employment use. The potential and the need for employment development on this site are considered in Section 6, but the requirement to retain all or part of the Sainsbury's Depot site depends in part on what employment land is available elsewhere in and around Buntingford, and the suitability and attractiveness of that land for commercial development.

There are three employment sites available for development of new B class business space in Buntingford, each linked to one of the industrial estates in Buntingford; and EHDC has put forward proposals for a further employment land allocation as part of the Draft District Plan. The sites are as follows:

- **Park Farm Industrial Estate:** The EHDC Draft District Plan identifies a 1.58 ha site for employment uses immediately to the north of the existing Park Farm Industrial Estate. The site can be accessed through the existing estate. Given that there is proven demand for space at Park Farm, Wessex Economics are of the view that there is a good prospect over the plan period of this being developed either for small business units or possibly a single larger unit. Given that land to the north of this site has now secured planning consent, it is envisaged that any development should take the form of B1 development, most probably B1c units, though the possibility of an element of B1a office or B1b R&D units or hybrid B1 units should not be precluded. Good broadband speeds would be needed to secure such development.
- **Watermill Industrial Estate:** Within the area of land allocated for employment use at the Watermill Industrial Estate, there are around 1.47 ha (3.64 acres) of land available for employment development. There is an existing planning consent for 2,740 sq m (29,500 sq ft) for B1c development but the planning consent will expire in the middle of 2014. The site has been marketed for some years without success. The site is understood to have some drainage and landscaping issues. The poor quality of access and the appearance of the industrial estate are also likely to deter interest. The agent indicates that there is more interest from yard users and sui generis users who are less sensitive to the quality of the environment. Wessex Economics would doubt that good quality development of B1c floorspace would come forward given these considerations, and certainly not on the scale of the current planning consent.
- **Buntingford Business Park:** Around 1.5 hectares of land remain for development at Buntingford Business Park. This comprises the south east corner of the site, fronting both the Baldock Road and the A10, though any development would be accessed through the main business park entrance. It is understood that development on this site could be brought forward under the original consent for B1c, B2 or B8 development. The development of these sites is potentially more sensitive than that of the existing development, since they would effectively front both the Baldock Road and A10 at a prominent entry point to Buntingford. A development that turns it back on the road frontage would do little to enhance the town. However, the site is reasonably screened by embankment planting. Therefore, B1c, B2 or B8 uses that look inward to the site might be acceptable. Alternatively, if there were demand for B1a or B1b uses these might support development of a good standard and that could look outwards across the junction while being serviced from the rear. However, the scale of demand for B1 uses in Buntingford may be too limited to see this site brought forward in this format.
- **Buntingford Business Park Phase 2:** The East Herts Draft District Plan identifies proposals for the allocation of further 3 ha of employment land to the north of the existing business park. This would be accessed through the existing business park. Wessex Economics envisage that the format of development would follow that of the existing Business Park, being a mix of B1c, B2 and B8 uses. However, this second phase could entail the development of buildings with a smaller footprint – though this clearly depends on market demand and viability. It seems unlikely that any B1a or B1b floorspace,

assuming that there is demand for such space, would come forward in this location, given the dominance of B8 activity on the current business park. It is more likely, if there is a demand for an element of office space, that this would come forward in the form of hybrid units.

### Estimating the Employment Potential of Sites Allocated for Employment Uses

It is relevant to the development of policy for Buntingford, and more specifically for the former Sainsbury's Depot site, to know how many jobs could be created were the other existing sites in Buntingford to be developed. Similarly it is important to estimate how many jobs would be created on the Sainsbury's Depot site were it to be developed on a different scale or with a different mix of activities to that proposed in the current planning application.

**It is important to realise that an assessment of site capacity is not an estimate of how many jobs will be created on a particular site; this will be a function of demand and the economics of development. Sites may differ significantly with respect to the costs of development and the market appeal of any floorspace development on that site, given the site's location, accessibility, the quality and type of development, broadband capacity, etc.**

In making estimates of how many jobs are associated with the development of a site, a number of assumptions have to be made about the nature of the development and the type of economic activities that take up space. The key assumptions are as follows:

- **The proportion of the site area that is developed (referred to here as site coverage).** Wessex Economics have modelled two different assumptions, one based on 30% site coverage and one on 40% site coverage. Higher levels of site coverage are sometimes achieved in dense urban developments, but this level of site coverage is deemed appropriate for a development adjacent to a residential area, where quality of parking and environment may be important to attracting occupiers. Fairview Homes' current proposals for development assume a very much lower density of development – 1,700 sq m on a site of 1.21 ha<sup>14</sup>, a site coverage ratio of around 15%. This is very substantially below the level of site coverage assumed by Wessex Economics in this study (see below).
- **The type of development and the number of storeys of development.** The amount of floorspace delivered on a particular development footprint depends on the number of storeys of development. In turn this is related to the type of development. It has been assumed that on the existing sites in Buntingford all development will take the form of B1c Light Industrial development (as distinct from B1a office development, B2 industrial development, or B8 warehouse development). Traditionally B1c development is single storey but there is a growing trend involving provision of mezzanine floorspace – in essence a second storey covering all or part of the footprint of the building. Wessex Economics has

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<sup>14</sup> Area of land identified for employment purposes in Fairview Homes' Response to Draft Buntingford Employment Strategy, May 2014

assumed that a proportion of new development will come forward with a second storey – typically of office type floorspace.

- The number of jobs for a given amount of floorspace (often referred to as employment densities).** The Government has published guidance on amount of floorspace (in sq m) associated with a full time equivalent job for different types of employment floorspace.<sup>15</sup> Thus, for example, on average some 47 sqm of space is associated with one full time equivalent job in light industrial (B1c) space, while for office developments every FTE job is associated with 12 sqm of floorspace. The guidance does indicate that smaller units may be associated with higher densities (para 4.35) but no indication is given as to the extent of divergence from the average; and paragraph 4.6 of the same guidance indicates that, over time, employment densities in industrial and warehousing spaces are likely to fall. Wessex Economics have therefore adopted the standard practice of using the employment densities
- The ratio of the external footprint of the building to the usable internal floorspace.** The employment densities used in this report, taken from the HCA guidance, are based on the Net Internal Area of buildings; this includes the usable floorspace of office or light industrial units including entrance halls, kitchens and cleaners' cupboards, but excluding corridors, internal walls, stairwells, lifts, WCs and other communal areas. Site coverage ratios are based on Gross External Area (GEA), so an adjustment has to be made to convert from the GEA to the NIA floorspace. Wessex Economics have used a baseline assumption of a 1:0.9 ratio of GEA:NIA, but examined an alternative scenario based on a 1:0.95 ratio of GEA to NIA. The ratio of GEA to NIA will generally be lower for office (B1a) developments than B1c, B2 and B8 developments.
- Full Time Equivalent and All Jobs:** Employment densities quoted in the HCA guidance are expressed in terms of square metres per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) job. Around 1 in every 3 jobs is part time. Therefore if one wants to know the total number of jobs created in connection with a development then the FTE jobs need to be multiplied by 1.2 to establish the number of jobs created.

## The Employment Potential of Existing Sites

Wessex Economics have assessed the potential jobs that could be created were all the existing employment sites, including the proposed 3 ha site at Buntingford Business Park, to be fully developed. Four different scenarios have been examined based on different assumptions. These assumptions are as follows:

- Scenario 1: Development of all available employment land with B1c space based on 30% site coverage, with a mix of 1 and 1.5 storey development; net internal floorspace based on 90% of Gross External floorspace; and an assumed employment density of 47 m<sup>2</sup> per FTE job. An estimated 676 jobs (563 FTE jobs) would be created under this scenario (see Figure 26).

<sup>15</sup> Employment Densities Guide, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Homes and Communities Agency, 2010

- Scenario 2: As scenario 1, but with an assumed site coverage of 40% (rather than 30% as in Scenario 1); and Net Internal floorspace based on 92.5% of Gross External floorspace (as distinct from 90% in Scenario 1). An estimated 926 jobs (771 FTE jobs) would be created under this scenario (see Figure 27).
- Scenario 3: Development of all available employment land, excluding the site at Watermill Industrial Estate. This reflects the analysis presented above that indicates that it is likely be hard to secure significant development at the Watermill Industrial Estate. This would reduce the estimated total number of jobs that can be created on existing sites by 84 FTE jobs or 101 jobs. However in compensation for this, the scenario considers including some two storey development at Buntingford Business Park (as distinct from 1.5 storeys in Scenario 1) an element of which (1,080 sq m) would be developed for B1a (office) floorspace (most likely in hybrid buildings); net internal floorspace based on 90% of Gross External floorspace; and an assumed employment density of 47 m<sup>2</sup> per FTE job. An estimated 662 jobs (551 FTE jobs) would be created under this scenario (see Figure 28).
- Scenario 4: As scenario 3, but with an assumed site coverage of 40% (rather than 30% as in Scenario 3); and Net Internal floorspace based on 92.5% of Gross External floorspace (as distinct from 90% in Scenario 3). An estimated 907 jobs (755 FTE jobs) would be created under this scenario (see Figure 29).

**Figure 26: Scenario 1: Estimate of Jobs Created if All Employment Sites (other than Sainsbury's Depot) Developed (All Sites, 30% site coverage, NIA 90% of GEA)**

	Site Area in Ha	Site Area in m2	Site Coverage	Storeys	GEA in m2	NIA in m2 @ 90% of GEA	Sq m per FTE Job	FTE Jobs	Total Jobs	Assumed B Class
Park Farm Industrial Estate	1.58	15,800	30%	1	4,740	4,266	47	91	109	B1c
Watermill Industrial Estate	1.47	14,700	30%	1	4,410	3,969	47	84	101	B1c
Buntingford BP Existing	1.50	15,000	30%	1.5	6,750	6,075	47	129	155	B1c
Buntingford BP Proposed	3.00	30,000	30%	1.5	13,500	12,150	47	259	310	B1c
<b>Total</b>	<b>7.55</b>	<b>75,500</b>			<b>29,400</b>	<b>26,460</b>		<b>563</b>	<b>676</b>	

Source: Wessex Economics, HCA Employment Densities Guide, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2010

**Figure 27: Scenario 2: Estimate of Jobs Created if All Employment Sites (other than Sainsbury's Depot) Developed (All Sites, 40% site coverage, NIA 92.5% of GEA)**

	Site Area in Ha	Site Area in m2	Site Coverage	Storeys	GEA in m2	NIA in m2 @ 92.5% of GEA	Sq m per FTE Job	FTE Jobs	Total Jobs	Assumed B Class
Park Farm Industrial Estate	1.58	15,800	40%	1	6,320	5,846	47	124	149	B1c
Watermill Industrial Estate	1.47	14,700	40%	1	5,880	5,439	47	116	139	B1c
Buntingford BP Existing	1.50	15,000	40%	1.5	9,000	8,325	47	177	213	B1c
Buntingford BP Proposed	3.00	30,000	40%	1.5	18,000	16,650	47	354	425	B1c
<b>Total</b>	<b>7.55</b>	<b>75,500</b>			<b>39,200</b>	<b>36,260</b>		<b>771</b>	<b>926</b>	

Source: Wessex Economics, HCA Employment Densities Guide, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2010

**Figure 28: Scenario 3: Estimate of Jobs Created if All Employment Sites (other than Sainsbury's Depot) Developed (All Sites ex Watermill, 30% site coverage, NIA 90% of GEA, some B1a)**

	Site Area in Ha	Site Area in m2	Site Coverage	Storeys	GEA in m2	NIA in m2 @ 90% of GEA	Sq m per FTE Job	FTE Jobs	Total Jobs	Assumed B Class
Park Farm Industrial Estate	1.58	15,800	30%	1	4,740	4,266	47	91	109	B1c
Watermill Industrial Estate	1.47	14,700	30%	1		0				B1c
Buntingford BP Existing	1.50	13,000	30%	1.5	5,850	5,265	47	112	134	B1c
		2,000	30%	2	1,200	1,080	12	90	108	B1a
Buntingford BP Proposed	3.00	30,000	30%	1.5	13,500	12,150	47	259	310	B1c
<b>Total</b>	<b>7.55</b>	<b>75,500</b>			<b>25,290</b>	<b>22,761</b>		<b>551</b>	<b>662</b>	

Source: Wessex Economics, HCA Employment Densities Guide, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2010

**Figure 29: Scenario 4: Estimate of Jobs Created if All Employment Sites (other than Sainsbury's Depot) Developed (All Sites ex Watermill, 40% site coverage, NIA 92.5% of GEA, some B1a)**

	Site Area in Ha	Site Area in m2	Site Coverage	Storeys	GEA in m2	NIA in m2 @ 92.5% of GEA	Sq m per FTE Job	FTE Jobs	Total Jobs	Assumed B Class
Park Farm Industrial Estate	1.58	15,800	40%	1	6,320	5,846	47	124	149	B1c
Watermill Industrial Estate	1.47	14,700	40%	1		0				B1c
Buntingford BP Existing	1.50	13,000	40%	1.5	7,800	7,215	47	154	184	B1c
		2,000	40%	2	1,600	1,480	12	123	148	B1a
Buntingford BP Proposed	3.00	30,000	40%	1.5	18,000	16,650	47	354	425	B1c
<b>Total</b>	<b>7.55</b>	<b>75,500</b>			<b>33,720</b>	<b>31,191</b>		<b>755</b>	<b>907</b>	

Source: Wessex Economics, HCA Employment Densities Guide, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2010

The existing sites in Buntingford (excluding the Sainsbury's Depot site) could, if fully developed, be expected at least to make up for most of the loss of employment in the town since 2004, following the closure of the Sainsbury's Depot. Some 800 jobs have been lost between 2004 and 2012, with the development scenarios indicating the possibility on existing sites excluding the Sainsbury's Depot of creating around 660 to 930 if they were fully developed. However, there is no guarantee of ensuring this scale of development.

The site on the Watermill Industrial Estate is not necessary to achieve this if it is possible to secure an element of B1a office development on the other sites, perhaps delivered in small units, or perhaps in hybrid properties.

Development at higher ratios of site coverage as assumed in Scenarios 2 and 4 (40% rather than 30%) would deliver around 250 more jobs than Scenarios 1 and 3. This would still leave a significant deficit in terms of the relationship between local jobs and the number of people in Buntingford who are economically active and in work, and make only a partial contribution to creating opportunities for local employment in response to the growing workforce of the town as new homes are built, assuming this to be an objective the Council is keen to pursue.

**As emphasised above, these figures are only measures of capacity, not the likelihood of delivery. The market appeal of available sites can differ very substantially and this will have a major bearing on actual delivery of employment floorspace and the actual creation of jobs.**

## 6. The Market for Business Floorspace in Buntingford

This section moves from the review of the patterns of employment and the availability of employment land in Buntingford to consider what the demand is for employment land. This is particularly pertinent to answering the following questions:

- Should the former Sainsbury's Depot Site be retained in full for employment uses?
- If not, should part of the site be retained for employment uses?
- What contribution would the proposed Fairview development of employment floorspace make to job creation?

In answering these questions, Wessex Economics have drawn on the following sources of information:

- The assessment made of the market for commercial floorspace contained in the JLL report '*Former Sainsbury's Distribution Depot, London Road, Buntingford; Assessment of Future Employment Potential*' (October 2013) prepared on behalf of Fairview Homes and submitted with the planning application for the proposed mixed use development of the former Sainsbury's Depot
- The assessment made of employment sites and the market for employment floorspace by Coke Gearing in the report '*Viability Report in Respect of the former Sainsbury's Depot*' (January 2014) prepared on behalf of Fairview Homes and submitted with the planning application for the proposed mixed use development of the former Sainsbury's Depot
- The review of the commercial property market undertaken in the Wessex Economics report '*Bishop's Stortford Town Wide Employment Study*' published in June 2013; and the district wide assessment of future employment floorspace trends contained in the DTZ study '*East Herts Employment Forecasts and Strategic Economic Advice*' dated November 2012
- The 2008 East Herts Employment Land Review undertaken by Halcrow and more recent work undertaken by EHDC to update the 2008 Employment Land Review
- Site visits undertaken by Wessex Economics to each of the sites and discussions with a number of local agents active in the employment floorspace market.

It should be noted that while Wessex Economics have been provided with some information on the viability of the proposed development, it has not been part of our brief to comment on the viability of the overall development, and the impact that a larger allocation of land might have on the overall viability of the proposed scheme. However one would expect that Fairview Homes in acquiring the site (at a purchase price of £12 million + VAT)<sup>16</sup> would have taken into account that the site was an allocated employment site, and that EHDC would have an expectation that some of the site be retained for employment uses).

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<sup>16</sup> As recorded by HM Land Registry

## Retention of All of the Former Sainsbury's Depot Site for Employment Use

Wessex Economics have reviewed the JLL report '*Former Sainsbury's Distribution Depot, London Road, Buntingford; Assessment of Future Employment Potential*' dated October 2013. Wessex Economics are largely in agreement with the analysis contained within this report and the broad conclusions set out by JLL in Section 5 of their report covering existing employment land and Section 6, the market commentary. In this section the focus is on identifying the common ground and areas where Wessex Economics' assessment is different to those that have submitted evidence in connection with the current planning application for the former Sainsbury's Distribution Depot site.

Wessex Economics are in agreement with the conclusions reached by JLL in their assessment that there are no realistic prospects of securing a single large business occupier for the site. This conclusion is supported by the evidence contained in a variety of studies undertaken for Hertfordshire County Council and East Herts District Council.

The key reasons why it is very unlikely that any single large occupier would be attracted to the site can be summarised as follows:

- B1 office floorspace accounts for most of the anticipated growth in employment floorspace in East Herts District. No office developers would be interested in a 12 ha development site. Office development, to the extent that it occurs in the District, will be concentrated to a large extent in the District's major towns. However, most of this will be relatively small scale simply because of the modest size of the District's towns. Large scale office development in the sub-region will be concentrated either in the town centres or business parks in the A1(M) corridor, and to a lesser extent (given the lower population density) in the M11 corridor
- The JLL report sets out the evidence clearly why large distribution operations will look to locate in the A1(M) or M11 corridors – if indeed they even consider this location, and this is in line with the analysis contained in the Regeneris report on Hertfordshire Strategic Employment sites. Proximity to a motorway junction is a key factor in the location of distribution centres. Given the size of many centres, access to a large labour force is also important. There are very few large industrial (B2) requirements, and manufacturers need access to a good pool of skilled labour. Growth in the UK manufacturing sector is largely being driven by the SME sector (small and medium enterprises).

Wessex Economics note the seeming contradiction with the analysis presented by JLL – which is in line with the findings of other studies – and the planning application made by Sainsbury's and ProLogis, which was approved in January 2013, for demolition of the existing buildings and the development of a new storage and distribution centre. Wessex Economics do not have the in-depth knowledge that JLL have in the logistics sector, so are not able to comment on the detailed comments JLL make on the operational shortcomings of the proposed building in the format which has been granted planning permission.

However, Wessex Economics' own assessment of the locational requirements of distribution businesses, and that contained in numerous other studies, support the view that the development of a new large scale distribution centre for a single occupier on the former Sainsbury's Distribution Depot site is very unlikely. Moreover, given the proximity of residential properties, it may not be appropriate. However, the fact that it is unlikely the site would attract a single occupier does not automatically lead to the conclusion that the site should be released for other uses in part or wholly.

In practice this issue can be quickly dealt with. The evidence of previous studies undertaken for EHDC and that presented in this report is that the quantum of demand for employment floorspace in Buntingford is relatively modest. Demand will arise from small and medium sized occupiers, with relatively modest space requirements. It is not possible to conceive that demand from this type of occupier would warrant retention of all 13 ha of the existing site.

**Wessex Economics conclude that at least part of the site of the former Sainsbury's Distribution Depot should be released for other uses.** The question then arises how much of the existing designated employment site should be retained for employment uses.

### Retention of Part of the Former Sainsbury's Depot Site for Employment Use

How much, if any, of the former Sainsbury's Distribution Depot site should be retained for employment use? To answer this question there is a need to answer three questions:

- First, is there demand for new employment floorspace in Buntingford?
- Second, how well suited is the former Sainsbury's Distribution Depot site to employment uses?
- Third, how does the site compare with other available sites for employment uses?

The first question is extremely hard to quantify, but the evidence is that demand has remained strong for property on both the Park Farm Industrial Estate and the Watermill Industrial Estate throughout the recession, with both industrial estates having high levels of occupancy. The large unit on the Buntingford Business Park which has been vacant for a number of years has recently been taken up.

This demand is, however, essentially from local businesses, and businesses that regard Buntingford as a central location from which to serve customers in the surrounding ring of towns. This is confirmed in the report prepared by Coke Gearing which says of Buntingford that *'employment (is) largely characterised by local companies servicing the immediate market and, to a lesser extent, the wider hinterland.'*

Over the past decade the only significant new development has been the Buntingford Business Park, with the main buildings completed in 2006 and a 950 sq m extension built in 2009/10. There appears to have been no other significant development since then, though that is hardly surprising, given the general economic conditions and the difficulties smaller developers have faced in securing development finance.

However, Coke Gearing's report states that *'clear signs that the demand... is beginning to emerge into concrete offers for premises. This is particularly true at the smaller and owner occupier end of the market due to the reasonable availability of relatively cheap funds in the commercial mortgage market. This renewed activity has translated into developers dusting off commercial schemes and considering development'*.

The Coke Gearing report summarises their current register of enquiries known to be active in the market place. In total, Coke Gearing is aware of 47 requirements in the size range of 0-500 sq m, with a total requirement of 12,600 sq m and an average requirement of 268 sq m. Coke Gearing's appraisal of the supply and demand position in Buntingford is informative: *'the immediate supply situation in Buntingford is very limited and consequently we are of the view that a marketing campaign in relation to a new built facility would attract interest'*.

This analysis is confirmed in a letter dated 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2014 from JLL to Fairview Homes which analyses the take up of space in East Hertfordshire over the period 2008-2013, which highlights that the take up of space in the District is dominated by smaller sized units. Over the 6-year period, 2008-13, 37% of deals were for units of less than 280 sq m (3,000 sq ft); and a further 24.5% of transactions were for units between 280 sq m and 465 sq m (3,000 to 5,000 sq ft). JLL state that this shows the *'local nature'* of the demand for industrial and warehousing property.

Looking at the supply side, JLL report that there is only current availability for 3 units of less than 280 sq m (3,000 sq ft) and only 7 units of between 280 sq m and 465 sq m (3,000 to 5,000 sq ft). JLL conclude that there is *'an imbalance of supply and demand with a shortage of smaller units. Some 43.5% of available units are less than 5,000 sq ft and yet over 60% of take up is in this range'*.

Therefore, Fairview Homes' advisors both take the view that there is demand for smaller B1c/B2/B8 units in East Herts and in Buntingford, and are supportive of the proposals put forward by Fairview for development of around 1,700 sq m of employment floorspace to be provided in small units.

**There is clear evidence of a demand for employment floorspace in Buntingford evidenced by high levels of occupancy on existing industrial estates providing small units, and recent take up of vacant space at Buntingford Business Park. The emergence of demand more broadly in the East Herts economy is evidenced by Coke Gearing, this taking the form of requirements for small business space on both a freehold and leasehold basis for units of less than 500 sq m (5,380 sq ft), with an average requirement of 268 sq m (2,880 sq ft). This fits the historic pattern of demand in East Herts analysed by JLL.**

As noted in Section 5, Wessex Economics' assessment of the former Sainsbury's Distribution Depot site is that this is intrinsicly a good location for employment uses. The site has remain unoccupied for the last decade because there has been no demand for a distribution depot of this size in this location, and until the current application by Fairview Homes no proposals for redevelopment for other employment uses has emerged.

Wessex Economics also note that in many ways it should be easier to develop employment floorspace on the former Sainsbury's Depot site than on the other available employment sites in Buntingford. Much of the essential infrastructure is available on site; there is an established access point from the site onto the A10 which should require no further upgrading; and there is the ability to create a new employment quarter in Buntingford with a distinct character and appeal.

As noted previously, it has not been part of Wessex Economics' remit to investigate the viability of development of B class floorspace, but Fairview Homes have submitted a viability appraisal undertaken by Coke Gearing. This report concludes with respect to the proposed employment floorspace in the application that *'the proposed development, if completed, would (be) commercially viable and would provide much needed additional stock...'* The Coke Gearing appraisal is undertaken on the basis of a 20% return for the developer, and provides a land value of £495,000 per ha (£200,000 per acre). This would indicate clearly that development of employment floorspace in this location is viable.

**The former Sainsbury's Distribution Depot site is clearly well suited to development, in part, for employment uses.**

Wessex Economics are of the view that the site is:

- intrinsically a more attractive location for development of employment floorspace than the Park Farm Industrial Estate by virtue of its accessibility and visibility, and the scope to create an employment zone designed with buildings constructed to modern standards
- has the potential to offer something different to the Buntingford Business Park, which is characterised by relatively large format B8 distribution buildings with ancillary offices; our view is that the remaining land on the current allocation and the proposed additional land will attract more of the same
- the Watermill Industrial Estate does not come close to the former Sainsbury's site in terms of accessibility or the ability to create an attractive, modern business park.

**The former Sainsbury's Depot site is better suited to development of modern employment floorspace than the Park Farm and Watermill Industrial Estates, and is therefore more likely to secure development and occupiers than these sites. The Sainsbury's Depot site has the potential to be developed in a different format and hence to complement development on land at Buntingford Business Park. Part of the former Sainsbury's Distribution Depot site should therefore be retained for employment uses.**

## Proposed Job Creation in the Proposed Development

The application put forward by Fairview Homes envisages using 1.21 ha, 11% of the developable area of the site (10.94 ha), for employment purposes. The other 4.44 ha of the total site area of 15.38 ha relates to Buntingford Town Football Club's site. Fairview Homes' application proposes development of 1,700 sq m (18,300 sq ft) of B1 floorspace (reduced from a proposed 2,000 sq m in earlier documents). In addition the Fairview Homes application contains proposals for a care home which will also create jobs.

JLL in their main report indicate that a development of 2,000 sq m will support the creation of 60-150 jobs based on a broad assumption of 11-33 sq m of floorspace per employee. The basis for these assumptions is not stated. Development of a smaller amount of floorspace as now proposed means that the numbers of jobs created by the current Fairview proposals would be more like 50 to 127 jobs based on the JLL assumptions (85% of the previous forecast).

Wessex Economics note that the general presumptions in both the JLL and Coke Gearing reports are that the office content of any development will be quite modest. To the extent that the great majority of the development takes the form of B1c development, then Wessex Economics would estimate that the proposed scheme would create around 36 FTE jobs, or 43 jobs in total, based on standard employment density of 47 sq m per FTE employee for B1c development as set out in the HCA Employment Densities Guide.

This number of jobs could be boosted if there is a reasonable proportion of office space with the scheme. This would probably take the form of office space in hybrid units or small office suites. If one assumes a 25% office content to the proposed 1,700 sq m scheme then the scheme could be expected to create 63 FTE jobs or 75 jobs in total.

To these jobs can be added Fairview's estimate that around 60 jobs will be created in the care home that forms part of the development proposals.

Thus Wessex Economics estimates that the current Fairview proposals are likely to create between 103 jobs (43 in the employment floorspace development and 60 in the care home) and 135 jobs (75 in the employment floorspace development and 60 in the care home). The question arises of whether Buntingford needs additional jobs on top of this, given other sites available for development of employment floorspace; and whether the former Sainsbury's Depot would be more likely to attract such jobs to Buntingford than other sites. This issue is considered in the following section.

## 7. Retaining Employment Land on the Sainsbury's Depot Site

This section considers how much land should be retained on the Sainsbury's Depot site. It particularly focuses on whether there is a requirement for retention of more land than the 1.21 ha of employment land proposed by Fairview. It should be noted that Fairview propose to develop only 1,700 sq m of employment floorspace on this allocation, a site coverage ratio of less than 16%. This can be compared to the site coverage ratios of 30% and 40% in the scenarios used by Wessex Economics in estimating the employment potential of different sites in Buntingford.

### The Time Frame for Policy Making

In considering how much land should be retained for employment use, a key question is the time frame within which decisions about allocation of employment land should be made. EHDC have a duty to plan for the employment needs of Buntingford over the long term, so it seems entirely appropriate that the decision of how much land is to be retained be based on the requirement for employment land in the Local Plan period.

**The draft Local Plan covers the period to 2031. Wessex Economics recommend that EHDC decide on the quantum of land to be retained at the Depot Site on the basis of the requirements for employment land over the period 2014-31, a 17-year period.**

JLL have indicated (para 8.9) that they would envisage that the 2,000 sq m (now 1,700 sq m) proposed by Fairview Homes could take a period of *'two-three years for all of the space to be occupied'*. Coke Gearing likewise have based their viability assessment on the basis of the provision of 2,000 sq m of floorspace taking place in two phases, the first to be built within 12 months, the second 18 months thereafter, to give adequate spacing for the market to absorb the accommodation.

Both consultants therefore expect the proposed development of 2,000 sq m (the amount of floorspace has now been reduced to 1,700 sq m in the revised application) to be taken up within a 3-year period of completion. Neither consultant comments on the scale of demand for floorspace in Buntingford in the period up to 2031.

The creation of around 100 to 135 additional jobs (Wessex Economics' estimate of job creation associated with the proposed 1,700 sq m development plus care home development) represents a modest contribution to job creation in Buntingford, in view of the loss of around 950 jobs over the last decade in the town.

**Wessex Economics conclude that, on the basis of the applicant's evidence, the proposed level of employment floorspace will only meet the demand for employment floorspace in Buntingford in the near future and provide only a modest boost to employment in Buntingford. To provide choice and flexibility, Wessex Economics would advise EHDC to look to retain more than 1.2 ha of employment land to meet**

requirements that may arise in the latter part of the Local Plan period, particularly given the very low proposed density of employment development on the site proposed by Fairview Homes in their application.

It is entirely appropriate for East Herts District Council, as the planning authority, to determine the quantum of employment land to be retained at the former Sainsbury's Depot site in the light of the overall requirements for employment in Buntingford over the Local Plan period, informed by assessment of potential demand for employment floorspace in this period. This reflects the status of the site as an existing designated employment site, and the fact that it is clearly better suited to employment uses than two of the other employment sites in Buntingford, and probably superior to the Buntingford Business Park.

### Indicative Jobs Capacity of Land on the Sainsbury's Depot Site

There is no precise way to determine the potential future demand for employment floorspace in the Buntingford market, but EHDC needs to adopt a precautionary approach. Unless well located serviced land is available, it is certain that there will be no development of employment floorspace in the town. If demand fails to materialise, it is always be possible to release employment land for other uses at a later stage in the plan period.

JLL in their report '*Assessment of Future Potential*' provide details of average take up rates of B2/B8 space and of B1 space in East Hertfordshire. This indicates that over the 5-year period 2008-12, average take up of B2 and B8 space has been around 13,115 sq m per annum (141,160 sq ft); while average take up of B1 space has been 3,960 sq m pa (42,619 sq ft). One would expect take up to have been generally rather depressed in 2008-12, given the state of the national economy, so long run rates of take up of B class floorspace might be higher than this.

Wessex Economics have prepared an indicative development mix for a 2 and a 3 ha scheme as shown in Figures 30 and 31. These scenarios take as given Fairview Homes' proposals to develop 1,700 sq m of employment floorspace on 1.2 ha of the former Sainsbury's Depot, but then use more conventional estimates of site coverage ratios for the balance of the schemes. It has been assumed that the Fairview proposals have an element of office floorspace which boosts job numbers above what Wessex Economics would expect a pure B1c development would deliver.

The indicative development scenarios for the balance of the 2 or 3 ha site use more conventional site coverage and gross to net conversion ratios than indicated by the Fairview Homes' proposals for their 1.2 ha site, and thus achieve much higher job densities measured in terms of jobs per hectare. There is clearly an issue to be considered as to why Fairview Homes propose so little floorspace on the site they propose be retained for employment purposes.

The indicative scenarios also have an element of B1a office development (c31%), which Wessex Economics would expect to be delivered as small office units or the office components of hybrid B1 properties, (discussed

in more detail below), with the balance being a mix of B1c and B1b development, with floorspace also developed for non-B class uses appropriate to co-location with B1 uses.

Developments for non-B class uses such as health and education facilities are likely to have job densities closer to those of office developments, while leisure developments are more likely to have employment densities closer to B1c light industrial uses.

**Figure 30: Scale and Mix of Indicative 2 ha Development on the former Sainsbury’s Depot Site and Associated Job Creation**

	Site Area In Ha	Site Area In m2	Site Coverage	Storeys	GEA in m2	Ratio of NIA to GEA	NIA in m2 @ 92.5% of GEA	Sq m per FTE Job	FTE Jobs	Total Jobs
Fairview	1.20	12,000	15%	1.0	1,838	92.5%	1,700		63	75
Care Home									50	60
B1b/c + 5ui Generis	0.60	6,000	35%	1.5	3,150	92.5%	2,914	47	62	74
B1a office + D1	0.20	2,000	35%	1.5	1,050	90.0%	945	12	79	95
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>20,000</b>			<b>4,200</b>		<b>5,559</b>		<b>254</b>	<b>304</b>

Source: Wessex Economics

Note: It is assumed that the 1,700 sq m development proposed by Fairview comprises 75% B1c development and 25% B1a development

**Figure 31: Scale and Mix of Indicative 3 ha Development on the former Sainsbury’s Depot Site and Associated Job Creation**

	Site Area In Ha	Site Area In m2	Site Coverage	Storeys	GEA in m2	Ratio of NIA to GEA	NIA in m2 @ 92.5% of GEA	Sq m per FTE Job	FTE Jobs	Total Jobs
Fairview	1.20	12,000	15%	1.0	1,838	92.5%	1,700		63	75
Care Home									50	60
B1b/c + 5ui Generis	1.35	13,500	35%	1.5	7,088	92.5%	6,556	47	139	167
B1a office + D1	0.45	4,500	35%	1.5	2,363	90.0%	2,126	12	177	213
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.00</b>	<b>30,000</b>			<b>11,288</b>		<b>10,382</b>		<b>430</b>	<b>515</b>

Source: Wessex Economics

Note: It is assumed that the 1,700 sq m development proposed by Fairview comprises 75% B1c development and 25% B1a development

It should be noted that the indicative schemes assume development of buildings of no more than two storeys, with a significant proportion of single storey buildings, or hybrid units with mezzanine floors. This matches the anticipated patterns of demand identified by Wessex Economics, and reflects the analysis of JLL and Coke Gearing in terms of the pattern of demand and the format of development that could be attracted to Buntingford. Higher density (2-3 storey) development would only work if there is scope to attract somewhat larger B1a office users to Buntingford. This is unlikely, given the relatively small size of the town.

This proposed density of development on the balance of employment land under the 2 ha and 3 ha employment land retention scenarios is considerably greater than likely to be yielded by the proposed Fairview scheme on the 1.2 ha Fairview Homes anticipate being retained for employment uses. The sort of scale of development indicated by the 2 ha and 3 ha scenarios should be considered in the overall time frame of the emerging East Herts Local Plan – a 17-year period.

On the basis of the take up figures quoted by JLL, assuming these remain constant over the 17 years remaining to 2031, then:

- the 2 ha indicative development scenario would only account for 1.9% of all B2/B8 take up in East Herts and 2.0% of total B1 take up in the District (see Figure 32)
- the 3 ha indicative development of this scale would only account for 3.5% of all B2/B8 take up in East Herts and 3.8% of total B1 take up in the District (see Figure 32)

Neither of these shares of total take up in the District seems disproportionate with the market potential of Buntingford, recognising that the town is growing; albeit, it is acknowledged that this does not take account of development on other employment sites in Buntingford.

**Figure 32: Indicative Scheme Floorspace Benchmarked against Annual Average Take Up and Total Take Up over the Plan Period**

	B2/B8	B1
East Herts Average Annual Take up in sq m	13,114	3,959
2 ha Indicative Development NIA sq m	4,189	1,370
3 ha Indicative Development NIA sq m	7,831	2,551
Take up in Plan Period 2014-31	222,938	67,303
2 ha Indicative Development as % of E Herts Take Up 2014-17	1.9%	2.0%
3 ha Indicative Development as % of E Herts Take Up 2014-17	3.5%	3.8%

Source: Wessex Economics, JLL

## Anticipated Uses and Format of Development

The proposals for employment floorspace development put forward by Fairview Homes are for B1 use, but appear to anticipate that demand will be predominantly for B1c light industrial floorspace. This is in line with the type of floorspace that has generally been developed in Buntingford. However, the general expectation in East Herts is that a significant part of employment growth in the District will give rise to additional requirements for B1a office floorspace.

Buntingford has very little office floorspace, and it would appear that much of the office floorspace in the town centre is being lost to residential uses. There is some office accommodation on the Buntingford Business Park and some small units on the Park Farm Industrial Estate, but if one thinks over a 17-year time frame to 2031, it would be surprising if there were not a growing number of requirements across East Herts District for relatively small office developments, and that some of this requirement can and should be met in Buntingford.

However, this requirement for office type space may not emerge in the format of traditional pure office space and this is likely to work to Buntingford's advantage. Over the next 17 years the division between the different categories within the B1 use class is likely to become increasingly blurred. The advent of 3D printing

is likely to create demand from businesses for a mix of production and design/marketing office space<sup>17</sup>. Often, this requirement might be met by a ground floor production unit and mezzanine office space.

Similarly, a growing number of businesses may sell mainly via the internet and need space for order fulfilment. The requirements of such businesses might include offices, a call centre, but also storage and dispatch facilities. By implication, the sorts of sites suited to B1 uses are becoming more strongly differentiated to B2 industrial sites and B8 warehousing sites. The scheme brought forward on the Sainsbury's site should consciously seek to differentiate itself from the Buntingford Business Park.

It is increasingly appropriate therefore to anticipate the requirement to plan for sites which are developed for a mix of B1 uses, and allow for the fact that the different subdivisions of the B1 Use Class may be accommodated in the same building. There is also a requirement for flexible space that is cost effective to build and run, but can be fitted out in a number of ways to suit occupier requirements.

Conventional employment floorspace forecasting has not yet caught up with these changing dynamics. It is likely to result in increased demand for well-located sites in terms of general accessibility, with good broadband internet connections; and an overall higher quality specification of buildings than traditional industrial estates. In a town such as Buntingford it means that there may be a much more diverse range of potential occupiers than currently anticipated.

It is also important to note the diversity of activities located in good quality developments that primarily focus on B1 development with an element of B1a office provision. Alongside conventional offices and B1b and B1c units, one can often find dentists', doctors', physiotherapists' and vets' practices; nurseries and schools; gyms and alternative therapy centres. Some of these activities occupy 'office' space; sometimes accommodation for such uses is purpose built, but essentially takes the same built form as offices.

In a town such as Buntingford with little scope for new development in the historic core of the town, it is important to provide buildings for new customer focused service activities. With the growing population of the town, service providers may find that their existing premises are too small. They may also be expensive to run and would yield a useful capital receipt if sold for residential development. It is important that EHDC plan for these types of uses in the light of the anticipated growth of the population of Buntingford.

By implication much of the growth in employment that occurs in non-B class developments might be beneficially located on land retained for 'employment' uses (broadly defined as uses which create jobs, which would include D1 (non-residential institutions), D2 uses (assembly and leisure) and sui generis uses. The Sainsbury's Depot site, given that it is being planned for mixed use development, is a much better place to locate such activities than any of the other employment sites in the town.

This calls for careful thought about the quality of development, the creation of a sense of place, the

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<sup>17</sup> See the report *The Future of Manufacturing*, JLL, June 2013

integration with the adjacent, residential, uses; and how quite a complex mix of different occupiers is managed. The concept is definitely not of an industrial estate – it is more akin to a local centre where quite a diverse range of activities happen which simply could not be accommodated in the town centre.

As Buntingford grows, and attracts higher skilled, better qualified residents (likely to be the buyers of new housing provided in the town), Wessex Economics would expect that Buntingford will gain credibility as a location for small service sector businesses whose predominant requirement is for hybrid buildings that include an element of office space. Somewhat contrary to expectation, as larger urban areas become more congested, particularly at peak hours, the fact that people who live in the towns surrounding Buntingford would be driving against the flow of traffic, could make Buntingford seem relatively accessible compared to town centre locations.

Provided quality is not compromised, then a development with an element of hybrid units incorporating an element of office space, and more publicly orientated activities (D and sui generis use class) should be fully compatible with development of B1c and B1b uses. This is also compatible with the release of the remainder of the site for residential development.

### The Cumulative Employment Potential of Sites in Buntingford

These indicative schemes based on indicative retentions of either 2 or 3 ha of the Sainsbury's Depot site for employment purposes would, over the duration of the Local Plan period, make a useful contribution to job creation in Buntingford, and provide enhanced opportunities for the growing working population of Buntingford to work locally, while not restoring the local level of jobs to what it was in the period 1998 to 2004.

As noted above, the development is anticipated to also incorporate development of floorspace for non-B class uses, which cannot be accommodated in the town centre. Employment growth on the Sainsbury's Depot site would also support the service businesses in the town centre, as employees, even if they do not live locally, are likely to use local services.

However, decisions about the quantum of floorspace that should be retained at the Sainsbury's Depot site need to take into account the overall capacity of all employment sites in the town, the deliverability of development and hence jobs on this portfolio of sites, and the jobs that may be created elsewhere in the town. This assessment can then be compared with the perceived need for jobs in the town.

Wessex Economics have generated two scenarios of employment potential associated with the development of all employment sites in Buntingford, other than the site at the Watermill Industrial Estate which is deemed to have poor prospects of attracting any development that will generate significant levels of employment. The figures incorporate the current proposals made by Fairview Homes for 1.2 ha of employment and Wessex Economics' estimate of jobs associated with that development.

The assumptions made about site coverage, gross to net floorspace, the mix of uses and employment densities are set out in Figures 33 and 34 for respectively a 2 ha employment land retention and a 3 ha employment land retention at the Sainsbury's Depot site.

**Figure 33: Scenario 1: Indicative Floorspace Potential and Jobs of Employment Sites in Buntingford with 2 ha retained at Sainsbury's Depot Site**

	Site Area in Ha	Site Area in m2	Site Coverage	Storeys	GEA in m2	Ratio of NIA to GEA	NIA in m2	Sq m per FTE Job	FTE Jobs	Total Jobs	Assumed Use Class
Park Farm Industrial Estate	1.58	15,800	35%	1.0	5,530	92.5%	5,115	47	109	131	B1c
Watermill Industrial Estate	1.47	14,700	35%	1.0	0	92.5%	0				B1c
Buntingford BP Existing	1.50	13,000	35%	1.5	6,825	92.5%	6,313	47	134	161	B1c
		2,000	35%	2.0	1,400	90.0%	1,280	12	105	126	B1a
Buntingford BP Proposed	3.00	30,000	35%	1.5	15,750	92.5%	14,569	47	310	372	B1c
Sainsbury's Depot Site, Fairview Proposal	1.20	12,000	15%	1.0	1,838	92.5%	1,700	27	63	75	B1c/B1a
Sainsbury's Depot Site Fairview Care Home									50	60	C2
Sainsbury's Depot Site B1b/c + Sui Generis	0.60	6,000	35%	1.5	3,150	92.5%	2,914	47	62	74	B1b/c
Sainsbury's Depot Site B1a office + D1	0.20	2,000	35%	1.5	1,050	90.0%	945	12	79	95	B1a + D
<b>Total</b>	<b>9.55</b>	<b>95,500</b>			<b>35,543</b>		<b>32,816</b>		<b>912</b>	<b>1,094</b>	

Source: Wessex Economics

**Figure 34: Scenario 2: Indicative Floorspace Potential and Jobs of Employment Sites in Buntingford with 3 ha retained at Sainsbury's Depot Site**

	Site Area in Ha	Site Area in m2	Site Coverage	Storeys	GEA in m2	Ratio of NIA to GEA	NIA in m2	Sq m per FTE Job	FTE Jobs	Total Jobs	Assumed Use Class
Park Farm Industrial Estate	1.58	15,800	35%	1.0	5,530	92.5%	5,115	47	109	131	B1c
Watermill Industrial Estate	1.47	14,700	35%	1.0	0	92.5%	0				B1c
Buntingford BP Existing	1.50	13,000	35%	1.5	6,825	92.5%	6,313	47	134	161	B1c
		2,000	35%	2.0	1,400	90.0%	1,280	12	105	126	B1a
Buntingford BP Proposed	3.00	30,000	35%	1.5	15,750	92.5%	14,569	47	310	372	B1c
Sainsbury's Depot Site, Fairview Proposal	1.20	12,000	15%	1.0	1,838	92.5%	1,700	27	63	75	B1c/B1a
Sainsbury's Depot Site Fairview Care Home									50	60	C2
Sainsbury's Depot Site B1b/c + Sui Generis	1.35	13,500	35%	1.5	7,088	92.5%	6,556	47	139	167	B1b/c
Sainsbury's Depot Site B1a office + D1	0.45	4,500	35%	1.5	2,363	90.0%	2,126	12	177	213	B1a + D
<b>Total</b>	<b>10.55</b>	<b>105,500</b>			<b>40,793</b>		<b>37,639</b>		<b>1,088</b>	<b>1,305</b>	

Source: Wessex Economics

If it can be assumed that all the identified employment land identified in Figures 33 and 34 is in fact developed, and to the densities assumed, then it can be expected that between 1,100 and 1,300 jobs would be created in Buntingford on employment sites. In policy development terms this needs to be considered against the loss of some 950 jobs in the town since 2002.

It is also important for EHDC to consider the anticipated growth of the workforce of Buntingford over the period to 2031. The workforce of the town (excluding the self-employed) is expected to grow by around 700 people on the basis of proposed housing developments already approved (see Figure 21). If all the housing schemes that are currently approved, plus current applications and proposals being brought forward (Scenario D in Figure 21), the employed population of Buntingford can be expected to increase by some 1,600 people.

Fairview Homes propose that 1.2 ha of employment land be retained at the Sainsbury's Depot site. If more land than this is retained on the Sainsbury's Depot site, then some new housing will have to be sacrificed, and this would reduce the number of new homes provided in Buntingford under scenarios B, C and D set out in Figure 21 of this report.

Retention of an additional 0.8 ha (a 2 ha retention of employment land) would reduce the growth of the employed population of Buntingford by around 28 people; and retention of an additional 1.8 ha of employment land (at 3 ha retention of employment land) would reduce the growth of the employed population of Buntingford by around 65 people.

Consideration also needs to be given to the likelihood that not all of the identified employment sites will be fully built out in the Local Plan period. The assessment of different sites set out in Section 5 makes it clear that the existing and proposed employment sites in Buntingford are likely to have differing appeal to potential occupiers and this will affect the prospects for development. The Sainsbury's Depot site is identified as the best located site and the site with the greatest scope to create a quality development.

### The Retention of Employment Land on the Sainsbury's Depot Site

In deciding how much employment land should be retained on the Sainsbury's Depot site, EHDC need to weigh a number of considerations:

- How many jobs would it be desirable to have located in Buntingford? This should be informed by the scale of anticipated population growth, and the expected growth in the workforce in the town. The scale of population and workforce growth depends on decisions about planned housing growth
- Consideration needs to be given to the demand for employment floorspace, including demand for development on employment sites that might arise from other non B class uses which create jobs; and the scale of job growth on non-employment sites in the town, particularly in the town centre
- The relative preference of EHDC for more homes vs more jobs – given that if more employment land than proposed by Fairview Homes is retained on the Sainsbury's Depot site, this will come at the expense of fewer homes, which could lead to more pressure for housing development on other sites in the town
- The implication of a larger allocation of employment land on viability and delivery of the overall development scheme, including the delivery of the proposed element of employment floorspace in the current Fairview Homes' application.

Not all of these issues are within the remit of the study, particularly issues concerning viability. Moreover, on many of the other issues (particularly the balance between jobs and homes in a particular town), people may come to a different judgement on the issue because there is no precise way to determine what is the optimal balance between jobs, homes, resident population, workforce and travel to work patterns.

However, it is incumbent upon Wessex Economics to provide EHDC with its professional judgement of the issues, to help inform the Council in its decision making, and explain the basis for our conclusions. **From an economic development perspective, Wessex Economics recommend that EHDC retain at least 2 hectares, and up to 3 hectares of land for employment use on the former Sainsbury's Distribution Depot. This is to ensure that economic development in Buntingford over the plan period is not constrained by a shortage of**

well-located employment land capable of accommodating good quality development of a variety of different types of employment (B1 class) uses and also non-B class activities that may find it difficult to find suitable alternative sites in Buntingford.

## **8. An Employment Strategy for Buntingford**

This section builds on the analysis presented in the previous sections of the report to outline an overall strategy for development of employment land in Buntingford. The focus is on employment uses that can be accommodated on land allocated for employment purposes (B class) land, but it is important to appreciate that the retention and growth of employment in Buntingford town centre is significant to the overall strategy.

The proposed strategy is presented for consideration by EHDC and its partners. It is not set in stone, and in presenting the strategy Wessex Economics are keen to set out the principles that underpin the recommendations made, and to be explicit about the value judgements that have been made when advising on such an important issue as how a town should develop over time.

However, we take as a given that the population of Buntingford will grow significantly over the next decade, and that it will probably continue to grow thereafter. Decisions already made mean that the population can be expected to grow by around 1,700 persons; and other proposals in the pipeline could double this figure to a population increase of over 4,000 persons over the period of the emerging Local Plan, which runs to 2031.

To explain the development of the strategy, this section identifies a series of questions. We summarise the evidence and set out how we would answer each of these questions. The questions are as follows:

- Is it desirable to increase the number of jobs in Buntingford? Why?
- What sort of jobs should, ideally, be attracted or developed in Buntingford? Why?
- What actions need to be taken to achieve the desired outcomes?
- How realistic is the achievement of these goals? In what time frame might they be achieved?

### **Is it desirable to increase the number of jobs in Buntingford? Why?**

The current position is that there are around 300 businesses in Buntingford, which together employ some 1,320 people. Around 4 out of every 5 businesses in Buntingford employ fewer than 5 people and 92% of all the businesses in the town employ fewer than 11 people. In addition, 525 Buntingford residents are self-employed. Buntingford today has a small business economy – with the biggest employers probably located on the Buntingford Business Park.

From 1998 to 2004 there were more than 2,000 jobs located in Buntingford. Employment in the town has therefore fallen significantly to its current level of some 1,320 people. Much of this loss of employment has been associated with the closure of the Sainsbury's Distribution Depot. Those living locally are best placed to make a judgement of what impact this has had on the town and whether it has been positive or negative.

Around 2,675 Buntingford residents are in work. Large numbers of Buntingford residents travel to work outside the town. Wessex Economics' best estimate is that currently some 750 people live and work in Buntingford – a self-containment ratio of 26%. It is estimated that some 1,920 Buntingford residents travel to

work outside the town, and some 885 people travel into Buntingford to work. There is therefore an estimated net-commuting outflow of 1,040 people from town.

In terms of sustainable development it is, in principle, desirable that people should be able to live and work locally to minimise the time, cost and environmental impacts of their journey to work. In practice the nature of modern society is that the factors that determine where people choose to live, and where they find work, are many and varied, and the cost and time of travelling to work is only one of many factors that inform the choices of where people live in relation to their place of work.

In particular, the specialist nature of many jobs means that it is worth people travelling some distance to work, since by so doing they can secure a much better paid job, than they could if they worked locally. People are willing to commute, both because the salary they can command in a job more than outweighs the cost of commuting, and because they have reasons why they wish to live where they are, be that family connections, children in local schools, a preference to live in a market town rather than a bigger settlement, etc.

As a result, there is no certainty that an increase in the number of jobs located in Buntingford will reduce the level of out-commuting. It would reduce the level of net out-commuting, but this might be achieved by larger inflows of workers to Buntingford and larger outflows. **However, increasing the number of jobs in Buntingford would create *enhanced opportunity for people to live and work locally*.** In Wessex Economics' view this would be of value.

Increasing the opportunity for people to live and work locally is of particular importance to people who wish to work part-time, since the costs incurred in getting to work account for a larger share of their take home pay than that of a full time employee doing the same job. Likewise, local opportunities for employment are much more important for people who can only secure lower skill, lower paid jobs since the cost of travel to work is proportionately higher for them than people who can command higher pay.

There are other benefits of increasing the employment base of a town like Buntingford not linked to any impact it may have on travel to work patterns. In a small town such as Buntingford with an attractive town centre, a larger daytime population resulting from an influx of people from outside who work in the town will help sustain local shops, pubs, restaurants, etc. Given that small shops, pubs and cafes are under pressure, this is important to maintaining the viability of the town centre.

**Wessex Economics therefore conclude that it is a desirable objective to increase the number of jobs located in Buntingford.** This is particularly important in the light of the following considerations:

- a lower proportion of Buntingford residents have degree level qualifications than in East Hertfordshire, and a significantly higher proportion have no qualifications (21% compared to 17% in East Herts as a whole)
- Buntingford has lost a significant number of local jobs over the past decade, including probably many more semi-skilled and skilled manual jobs than high skill jobs

- The working population of Buntingford is set to grow significantly; if development of new homes is limited to just those recently approved, the working population of the town will increase by 860 people
- If all the various housing schemes recently approved and those that are currently emerging were developed, then the working population of the town would increase by over 2,000 people
- The town has a significant number of family households, including those with school age children. It is commonplace for one parent in such households to work part time. New housing development may appeal particularly to family households
- EHDC will seek to ensure that a significant proportion (40%) of all new homes is provided in the form of affordable homes, which house lower income groups, who are more likely to depend on local jobs
- The population of Buntingford over retirement age (65) is likely to increase, but economic activity among those over 65 is likely to increase as the pension age is increased and more older people continue to work, either because they enjoy it or because they want to supplement their income.

To summarise, Wessex Economics are of the view that EHDC should be proactive in seeking to deliver an increase in the number of jobs in Buntingford, primarily as a means of ensuring local job opportunities for lower income, lower skills groups; but with the added benefit that a larger number of people working in the town will help ensure the vitality and viability of Buntingford town centre and other consumer service businesses.

### **What sort of jobs should be attracted or developed in Buntingford? Why?**

As outlined above, it is those with fewer qualifications or those who wish to work part time who benefit most from being able to work locally, since the costs of travel to jobs further afield has a proportionately larger impact on their effective pay after travel costs than those in higher paid or full time jobs. There is a particular advantage therefore in seeking to increase the availability of the sorts of jobs that can be undertaken on a part time basis, and which are suited to those with lower level qualifications.

As a general rule, the consumer services sector (retail, personal services) tend to provide quite large numbers of part time jobs, and entry level jobs for those with fewer qualifications. The increase in the population of the town will support an expansion of these jobs, provided that residents do not travel to the towns surrounding Buntingford to access these services – which seems unlikely unless the services offered in Buntingford fails, or is unable, to respond to the increasing population of the town.

Employers outside the consumer services sectors are likely to be located on business parks or industrial estates. Most of these employers will provide a range of job opportunities at various skill levels. There is no particular merit therefore in targeting any particular employers more than others on the basis of the mix of jobs they will provide. All employers, regardless of the nature of business, are likely to bring benefits to the town, in terms of enhanced town centre expenditure and a broader range of jobs for local residents.

The key focus of the employment strategy has to be on what type of employers would consider Buntingford as a possible business location and what actions can be taken to ensure that Buntingford is attractive to those businesses.

### What actions need to be taken to achieve the desired outcomes?

Local authorities such as EHDC have limited powers to encourage development. The decision of where to locate a business is a decision for each enterprise. The success of a business is the product of the actions of the owners, managers and staff. However, local planning authorities can forestall growth of business by failing to plan appropriately for business and housing growth.

Wessex Economics believe that, on the basis of national and local policy objectives, EHDC should be seeking to achieve the following objectives in relation to provision of employment land across the District:

- The Local Plan should include plans for provision of a quantity of employment land that is consistent with projected development requirements
- There is a need to provide choice within the portfolio of employment land identified to accommodate occupiers with a requirement for development land in different locations
- Even within a single settlement, policy should seek to provide a range of sites suitable for different commercial activities in different sorts of location (eg town centre, edge of centre)
- Even within a single settlement, there is the scope for different business sites to develop a different character that will appeal to different businesses, so choice is important
- Accessibility in terms of both road and public transport networks is a relevant consideration in the identification of appropriate sites
- Deliverability is a key issue, so sites should be easily capable of development without the requirement for major infrastructure investment
- It is vital that consideration is given to the speed and capacity of broadband connections to each site, since this is now essential infrastructure for most businesses.

Translating these District wide objectives to the local level, Wessex Economics are of the opinion that the main task of EHDC in Buntingford is to ensure that there is sufficient land in appropriate locations to enable business and employment growth.

This report has reviewed the existing employment sites in Buntingford. Wessex Economics' conclusions are that the focus for future employment growth in Buntingford will be associated with attracting businesses to the Buntingford Business Park, and the part of the former Sainsbury's Distribution Depot to be retained for employment uses. It is important to consider the different roles that employment land in each of these two locations can play.

Buntingford Business Park has been partly developed for large format B2 and B8 space, with provision of some ancillary office space. The existing buildings and operations on the site are likely to mean that further

development on the remaining allocated land and the additional allocation proposed in the Draft District Plan is likely to appeal most to similar types of operation, though it may be that in future the site can attract development for smaller businesses with similar operations.

Land retained for employment purposes at the former Sainsbury's Distribution Depot should be planned to cater for a different target market, namely smaller occupiers looking for B1 space. The dominant demand is likely to be for B1c clean tech space, but is likely to include an element of office space (B1a) or hybrid buildings that contain a mix of these different uses. Provision of space in this location should be qualitatively different to that provided at the Buntingford Business Park or Park Farm Industrial Estate, with higher design standards, and generous parking standards.

It is also to be expected that, if the new employment floorspace is developed to a good standard, as would be appropriate for a scheme developed in close proximity to new housing, non-B class uses could be attracted to the site. It is important in Buntingford to ensure that there are development sites for health, consumer service business such as gyms, or pre-school provision, given the scale of anticipated population growth in the town. The former Sainsbury's Depot site would be an appropriate location for such development, given the absence of development sites in the town centre.

The quantum of land to be retained at the former Sainsbury's Distribution Depot should be sufficient to meet the maximum requirements for this type of space to 2031, the end date of the emerging Local Plan. There is no scientific way to establish what the scale of demand for this type of B1 space might be over the next 17 years, but Wessex Economics' recommendation is that between 2 to 3 ha of the existing site be retained for employment use. This would still leave almost 8-9 ha of land for development for other uses.

It is estimated that the development of 2 ha of employment land for a mix of B1a, B1b and B1c uses could allow provision of 5,560 sq m of employment floorspace, which would accommodate around 300 jobs (255 FTE 255 jobs) including 60 jobs associated with the proposed care home development (see Figure 31). Development of a 3 ha scheme for a similar mix of business activities could allow provision of 10,380 sq m of employment floorspace and accommodate in excess of 500 jobs (430 FTE jobs) including the care home jobs (see Figure 31).

Development on this scale makes a material contribution to building the employment base in Buntingford, and is not an unrealistic target to be achieved over the 17 years of the emerging Local Plan. It would mark a break with the past, in that Buntingford has had modest development of B class space, but in the last decade Buntingford has had no housing development, and for all practical purposes no growth in its population base. In terms of location, the former Sainsbury's Depot is the best site in Buntingford for a mixed development for small and medium sized businesses wanting a good quality business environment.

Our recommendation is informed by the fact that planning permission has now been granted for over 700 new homes in Buntingford, and there are other housing sites that may secure planning consent in the near future. We have considered whether employment land could be incorporated into these other developments and

have concluded any such allocations would be less satisfactory than retained employment land at the former Sainsbury's Distribution Depot.

Our recommendation is also informed by the consideration that many modern business parks attract a wide range of users that would not be deemed to fall within B class users. As noted in Section 6, these include vets' and doctors' surgeries; gyms and alternative therapy centres; nurseries and even schools. Wessex Economics have not identified other sites within the town suited for modern development for such service orientated activities. An attractive, well managed business park on part of the former Sainsbury's site would meet the criteria of such operators.

### Overall Provision for Employment

The recommendations set out here, if adopted, would provide the capacity to support the creation of an additional 1,110 to 1,300 jobs in Buntingford (around 900 to 1,100 FTEs), the lower figure associated with retention of a 2 ha of employment land at the former Sainsbury's Depot site; and the upper figure with retention of 3 ha on the Sainsbury's Depot site. These figures also assume that both the existing land and the proposed allocation at Buntingford Business Park are developed and that the site at Park Farm Industrial Estate is developed.

It is important to realise that these figures represent an assessment of job creation potential, not a forecast of how many jobs will be created by 2031. The strategy for employment growth should deliberately seek to ensure provision of choice in development sites for employment uses and non B class uses that are appropriately co-located with business uses, in order to maximise the opportunities to capture employment creating growth. Actual jobs created by 2031 are likely to be lower than the capacity of the various employment sites in Buntingford.

### Supporting Delivery

There are a number of other actions that EHDC and its partners should consider pursuing to deliver the employment strategy for Buntingford. These are as follows:

- Undertake a full assessment of broadband capacity and achievable speeds on the key employment sites in the town (the Sainsbury's Depot Site, Buntingford Business Park and Park Farm Industrial Estate) and address any deficiencies. Marketing of sites will be significantly hampered if Buntingford cannot provide the same quality of connectivity as major towns in East Herts
- EHDC needs to work with the developers of the former Sainsbury's Depot Site to develop an attractive environment for businesses that is well integrated within the overall mixed use development, recognising the different standards that different occupiers may seek. The design and functional operation of this larger site will be important to its success

- EHDC as planning authority will need to be flexible in terms of its development planning decisions for the retained employment site on the Sainsbury's site, recognising that this is key to successful promotion of the site, so uses other than purely B1 use (eg sui generis and health and education uses) should in principle be allowed on the site, as long as they do not compromise other objectives
- It is not clear yet what the overall quantum of housing development in Buntingford will be in the Local Plan period to 2031. EHDC should review with Hertfordshire County Council whether a case can be made for the dualling of the single carriageway section of the A10 to the south of Buntingford. This would help the marketing of the employment proposals at Buntingford
- If a key part of Fairview Homes' proposition is that it is willing to commit to the construction of new employment space as part of the overall development scheme (as distinct from simply promoting or marketing retained allocations), then EHDC need to ensure that there are enforceable conditions that determine the timing and quality of the development to be delivered
- If Fairview Homes are not committing to the construction of new employment floorspace, conditions should be placed on any developer of the Sainsbury's site that they ensure that the employment site is effectively promoted and marketed; the ideal position would be to ensure that the land is sold to a developer who has a proven track record of delivery of commercial floorspace and experience of working on smaller sites, delivering a good quality of development in smaller formats
- Loans are available through the Local Enterprise Partnerships to open up and develop new employment sites (notably the Growing Places Fund). If there is a need to improve telecoms or other infrastructure, this may provide a means of forward funding such improvements. EHDC should be willing to work with developers to bring sites forward.

## Appendices

Appendix 1: East Herts Employment Land Review Update 2013: Buntingford Site Proformas

Part 1. Summary

<b>Estate: Buntingford Business Park, Baldock Road, Buntingford</b>				
<b>Owner: N/K</b>				
<b>Managing Agent: N/K</b>				
<b>EH 2007 Local Plan:</b> BUN4 – Existing and new employment areas. In accordance with policy EDE1, the .....former Sunnyside Nursery site and the site adjoining the former Sunnyside Nursery site...are reserved for industry comprising B1 Business and B2 General Industrial Uses				
<b>Halcrow 2008 Comments and Rating:</b> Buntingford Business Park located directly on the A10 is a new development with large, high-quality units. It scores well in most qualitative areas and is a particularly attractive location for local occupiers based on the quality and range of its offering. It is recommended that it is safeguarded for employment use. <b>Assessment: Green.</b>		<b>EHDC 2012 Comments and Rating:</b> As for Halcrow. Modern B1, B2 and B8 development. Approximately 30% of floor space (one building) currently vacant. (Paul Wallace currently marketing 36,257ftsq for £244,734ftsq which equates to £6.75ftsq.) Particulars refer to ‘interest being sought for development of the final phase’. Permission for a car park should ease existing parking problems. <b>Assessment: Green</b> <b>See Appraisal Criteria below</b>		
<b>Outstanding Planning Consents:</b> Consent for a car park				
<b>Opportunities for Enhancement:</b> N/A				
<b>Proposal:</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Costs</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Priority</b>

Part 2 – Occupiers @January 2013

Unit 1. John O’Connor/EHDC Ground Maintenance/EHDC Parking Office/EHDC Recycling/Veolia	Milton Park – Amwell Systems – washroom contractors/suppliers
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**Part 3– Appraisal Criteria**

<b>Estate Appraisal Criteria 1: Fitness for purpose</b>			
1. Is estate fit for its current purpose?	Yes	2. What is the demand/vacancy rate?	Approx 30% vacant
3. What is the quality of the land like?	Good	4. Good accessibility/parking?	Yes
<b>Estate Appraisal Criteria 2: Sustainability</b>			
Is the estate sustainable for its present use?	Yes	Is there conflict with adjacent uses?	No
Does the estate have good accessibility and parking provision	Yes		
<b>Estate Appraisal Criteria 3: Marketability</b>			
Is the estate marketable?	Yes	Is the estate in a good position?	Yes
Is the estate visible	Yes	Is the estate flexible?	Yes
Is the general quality of the environment good?	Yes	Is there any conflict with adjacent uses?	No
Is the market perception positive?	Yes		



**Part 1. Summary**

<b>Estate: Park Farm, Buntingford</b>				
<b>Owner:</b> Lapinag Industries				
<b>Managing Agent:</b> Jaggard Baker 01494 677755 – Graham Atkinson				
<b>EH 2007 Local Plan:</b> BUN6 – Park Farm Industrial Estate				
The Park Farm Industrial Estate is split into two areas, as defined on the Proposals Map. Proposals for development are expected to conform to the following guidance:				
a) the larger area to the south and west is, in accordance with Policy EDE1, primarily reserved for industry comprising B1 Business and B2 General Industrial uses.				
b) The smaller area to the north-east, fronting Ermine Street, is reserved for live/work units. Careful planning and attention to detail is expected to prevent any cause for bad neighbour nuisance to arise. A condition and/or planning obligation is likely to be required to prevent the separation of the residential element from its employment element on this site				
c) improved or introduced landscaping features are expected on the northern edges of both parts of the site.				
<b>Halcrow 2008 Comments and Rating:</b> <b>Park Farm Industrial Estate</b> Park Farm Industrial Estate provides smaller, older units that cater for smaller businesses. It scores well in terms of general quality and its high occupancy rate indicates strong demand from local businesses. <b>Assessment: Green</b>			<b>EHDC 2012 Comments and Rating:</b> No change from Halcrow. Good accessibility to A10  <b>Assessment: Green</b> <b>See Appraisal Criteria below</b>	
<b>Outstanding Planning Consents:</b> No significant permissions				
<b>Opportunities for Enhancement:</b> None				
<b>Proposal:</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Costs</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Priority</b>

### Part 2 – Occupiers @January 2013

1. vacant	26. ?
2.	27.?
3	28.Markey Coffee Communicator ?
4. Idrums – sale of drum kits (main retail premises Chelmsford)	29.Buntingford Gym SG
5. ?	30.Caron Engineering Services B2
6. Vacant	31.vacant – Cook Gearing
7. ?	32. Buntingford Services – streetworks contractors B2
8. To let – 3190ftsq Atchison Raffety	33.Premier Design and Print Printers B2
9 ?	34.Ball Spinning Company Ltd – Metal spinning/fabrication B2
10. Evergood Associated Medical recruitment agency B1	35.PMC Polythene – polythene suppliers B8
11. S.J. Tokely Car Repairs B2	36. “ “
12. “ “ “	37. “ “
13.	38. “ “
14. Sharp Print Printing Services B2	39.to let, ,
15. Scenic Design Printing Services B2	39a/b Evergood
16.Thomas Electrical Electrical contractor B2	39c GX blinds – blinds and canopies B2
17.Keri Systems door access systems sales office B1	39d to let
18. Specialised Security Products – security systems supply/mnfr B2	40.BV tools Storage and distribution B8
19. “ “ “	41.First Class Business Solutions B1
20. “ “ “	42.LBT computer services B1
21. “ “ “	43.as 41 B1
22.Buntingford Mowers B2	44.as 41 B1
23.Buntingford Engine Services B2	45.as 41 B1
24.Herts Air Ambulance – B1	
25	

### Part 3– Appraisal Criteria

<b>Estate Appraisal Criteria 1: Fitness for purpose</b>			
1. Is estate fit for its current purpose?	Yes	2. What is the demand/vacancy rate?	9 units vacant (25%)
3. What is the quality of the land like?	Good	4. Good accessibility/parking?	Yes
<b>Estate Appraisal Criteria 2: Sustainability</b>			
Is the estate sustainable for its present use?	Yes	Is there conflict with adjacent uses?	No
Does the estate have good accessibility and parking provision	Yes		

<b>Estate Appraisal Criteria 3: Marketability</b>			
Is the estate marketable?	Yes	Is the estate in a good position?	Yes
Is the estate visible	Yes	Is the estate flexible?	Yes
Is the general quality of the environment good?	Yes	Is there any conflict with adjacent uses?	No
Is the market perception positive?	Yes		



**Part 1. Summary**

<b>Estate: Sainsbury's Depot, London Road, Buntingford, SG9 9JR</b>				
<b>Owner: Sainsbury's Supermarkets, 33, Holborn, EC1 2HT</b>				
<b>Managing Agent: N/A</b>				
<b>EH 2007 Local Plan:</b> Policy EDE1 – Employment Areas: BUN5 The Former Sainsbury Distribution Depot In accordance with Policy EDE1, the Former Sainsbury Distribution Depot is primarily reserved for B8 Storage and Distribution Uses. Proposals for the alternative use and/or development of the site will be considered against the recommendations of the latest Employment Land Study for East Hertfordshire. In the event that the retention of the whole or part of the site for B8 Storage and Distribution Use has been explored fully without success evidence must be supplied to the satisfaction of the District Council to demonstrate this. Any proposed alternative use and/or development of the site will be expected to be subject to a Development Brief prepared or approved by the District Council.				
<b>Halcrow 2008 Comments and Rating:</b> <b>Sainsbury's Distribution depot</b> This site scores well across most qualitative criteria and benefits from its good location and visibility. It is recommended that it is safeguarded for employment use. <b>Assessment: Green</b>			<b>EHDC 2012 Comments and Rating:</b> No Change. Current (1/1/13) application from Prologis for demolition and redevelopment with a new storage and distribution depot (B8) <b>Assessment: Green</b> <b>See Appraisal Criteria below</b>	
<b>Outstanding Planning Consents:</b> None				
<b>Opportunities for Enhancement: N/a</b>				
<b>Proposal:</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Costs</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Priority</b>

**Part 2 – Occupiers @January 2013**

Vacant	
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**Part 3– Appraisal Criteria**

<b>Estate Appraisal Criteria 1: Fitness for purpose</b>			
1. Is estate fit for its current purpose?	Yes	2. What is the demand/vacancy rate?	n/a
3. What is the quality of the land like?	Good	4. Good accessibility/parking?	Yes
<b>Estate Appraisal Criteria 2: Sustainability</b>			
Is the estate sustainable for its present use?	Yes	Is there conflict with adjacent uses?	Along northern boundary
Does the estate have good accessibility and parking provision	Yes		

<b>Estate Appraisal Criteria 3: Marketability</b>			
Is the estate marketable?	Yes	Is the estate in a good position?	Yes
Is the estate visible	Yes	Is the estate flexible?	Yes
Is the general quality of the environment good?	Yes	Is there any conflict with adjacent uses?	No
Is the market perception positive?	Yes		



**Part 1. Summary**

<b>Estate: Silkmead Industrial Estate, Buntingford</b>				
<b>Owner: Lapinag, 35 Potter Street, Bishops Stortford</b>				
<b>Managing Agent: Derrick Wade and Waters</b>				
<b>EH 2007 Local Plan:</b> OSV7 Employment Areas: In accordance with Policy EDE1 the following sites are defined as Employment Areas on the Proposals Map and will be reserved for industry comprising Classes B1 Business and B2 General Industrial Uses, subject to sub-section (II) of this policy; and, where well related to the transport network, B8 Storage and Distribution Uses: <b>Silkmead Farm, Hare Street.</b>				
<b>Halcrow 2008 Comments and Rating:</b> Silkmead Industrial Estate in Hare Street is an isolated small estate in the north of the District and based on its isolation it scores poorly in terms of marketability. Its isolation however means that it achieves a good score in terms of competition as there are no other employment sites in the locality. The estate is made up of small wooden units further restricting its score in terms of market perception and general quality of working environment. <b>Assessment: Amber</b>		<b>EHDC 2012 Comments and Rating:</b> No change from Halcrow  <b>Assessment: Amber</b>  <b>See Appraisal Criteria below</b>		
<b>Outstanding Planning Consents:</b> None				
<b>Opportunities for Enhancement:</b> None				
<b>Proposal:</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Costs</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Priority</b>

**Part 2 – Occupiers @January 2013**

1d Vintage Paintworks car spraying B2	1-4 Silkmead Furniture – bespoke kitchens B2
7a Turnfast Components – Precision Engineers	9a Silkmead Fabrications - Manufacturing B2
9b,c – Naturally Wood – handmade wood furniture B2	

**Part 3– Appraisal Criteria**

<b>Estate Appraisal Criteria 1: Fitness for purpose</b>			
1. Is estate fit for its current purpose?	Yes	2. What is the demand/vacancy rate?	Some vacancies
3. What is the quality of the land like?	Poor	4. Good accessibility/parking?	Yes
<b>Estate Appraisal Criteria 2: Sustainability</b>			
Is the estate sustainable for its present use?	Yes	Is there conflict with adjacent uses?	No
Does the estate have good accessibility and parking provision	Yes		

<b>Estate Appraisal Criteria 3: Marketability</b>			
Is the estate marketable?	Yes for low rent tenants	Is the estate in a good position?	Yes
Is the estate visible	No	Is the estate flexible?	Yes
Is the general quality of the environment good?	Poor	Is there any conflict with adjacent uses?	No
Is the market perception positive?	No		



**Part 1. Summary**

<b>Estate: Watermill Estate, Buntingford</b>				
<b>Owner: Bernard Greenwood, 10 The Woods, Radlett</b>				
<b>Managing Agent: N/K</b>				
<p><b>EH 2007 Local Plan:</b> 16.7.3 In respect of the Watermill Industrial Estate, part of Aspenden Road approaching the site is narrow in width and poor in alignment. It is therefore considered that it would be detrimental to the safety of persons and vehicles using the road to allow further significant expansion of the site without improvements having been made to this access. The findings of the East Hertfordshire Employment Land Study 2004 confirmed this view. BUN7 Watermill Industrial Estate - Improvement to Aspenden Road No further planning permission for significant traffic generating developments will be granted on the Watermill Industrial Estate until improvement works have been carried out on Aspenden Road.</p>				
<p><b>Halcrow 2008 Comments and Rating:</b> Watermill Industrial Estate benefits from its relative proximity to the A10 but the fact that it is located in the north of the District and consists of generally small, poor quality units meant that in terms of marketability it scores poorly. A few vacant units indicate demand could be stronger. Refurbishment of units would lead to improved image and perception. An application for a total of seven new B1 units has been recently approved by the Council. <b>Assessment: Amber.</b></p>			<p><b>EHDC 2012 Comments and Rating:</b> The estate is still constrained by poor access but a recent agreement by EHDC to sell a small area of land at the junction with Aspenden Road will enable to units referred to by Halcrow to be constructed. This site is currently being marketed by Paul Wallace 01992 440744 <b>Assessment: Amber</b> <b>See Appraisal Criteria below</b></p>	
<b>Outstanding Planning Consents:</b> 3/08/0538/FP – Erection of 5 B1 Units – 27.7.11. Erection of 2 B1 office/workshops 27.7.11				
<b>Opportunities for Enhancement:</b> Improved access				
<b>Proposal:</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Costs</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Priority</b>

**Part 2 – Occupiers @January 2013**

1. The Willows- Nicholas and Knight – marketing/advertising	Unit 1. The Firs Business Park - Pure Graphics
Unit 5A – Lewden Joinery	Unit 5b – Liberro – electronic smoking appliances
Suite 6, Unit P3 - Community Transport Training	HCC Household Waste Transfer Station

## Part 3– Appraisal Criteria

<b>Estate Appraisal Criteria 1: Fitness for purpose</b>			
1. Is estate fit for its current purpose?	Yes	2. What is the demand/vacancy rate?	Some vacancies
3. What is the quality of the land like?	Average to poor	4. Good accessibility/parking?	average
<b>Estate Appraisal Criteria 2: Sustainability</b>			
Is the estate sustainable for its present use?	Yes	Is there conflict with adjacent uses?	No
Does the estate have good accessibility and parking provision	No		

<b>Estate Appraisal Criteria 3: Marketability</b>			
Is the estate marketable?	Not a favoured location	Is the estate in a good position?	No
Is the estate visible	No	Is the estate flexible?	Yes
Is the general quality of the environment good?	No	Is there any conflict with adjacent uses?	No
Is the market perception positive?	No		

