

## 10. LEISURE, RECREATION AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

### 10.1 Introduction

**10.1.1** Leisure pursuits encompass a range of activities, including indoor and outdoor sports and recreation, entertainment, cultural interests and tourism. These activities can have major land use implications. As the amount of available leisure time people enjoy increases, the demand for leisure facilities will grow.

**10.1.2** There is often an overlap between leisure facilities and community facilities. Both provide important facilities and services for local people, as well as a focal point for community activities.

**10.1.3** For the purposes of the Local Plan, leisure facilities are taken to be those available for formal and informal sport, recreation, entertainment, play, and cultural activities. Community facilities include a variety of buildings and land for purposes such as schools, nurseries, child care and health care facilities, hospitals, libraries, halls and meeting places, allotments and places of worship.

**10.1.4** The aims and objectives listed below set out the Council's planning strategy for meeting the needs of leisure, recreation and community facilities.

#### Aims

- A. To encourage and promote leisure pursuits through sport, recreation, entertainment and cultural interests and activities, for the benefit of the whole community.
- B. To encourage and promote tourism, for the benefit of the local community and economy.
- C. To encourage and promote community facilities for the benefit of the whole community.
- D. To encourage and promote leisure and community facilities which reduce the need to travel and are accessible by non-car modes of transport.

#### Objectives

1. To maintain and encourage the provision of an effective level of appropriately located leisure and recreation facilities and, wherever possible, make such facilities available to everyone, including the elderly and those with disabilities.
2. To take full account of the community need for recreation space, and ensure that adequate land and water resources are identified for both organised sport and informal recreation.
3. To safeguard and resist pressures, which conflict with the wider public interest, for the development of land with recreational and amenity value.
4. To encourage and promote the provision of additional land, facilities and water areas, in suitable situations and locations.
5. To take account of the value of open space, not only as an amenity, but as a contribution to the conservation of the natural and built environment of the District.
6. To encourage and promote suitable tourism facilities and the provision of additional tourist accommodation, in appropriate locations, to cater for the growing needs of the local community and visitors to the area.
7. To provide for the identified needs of the community by encouraging the retention, and/or improvement of, existing facilities and enabling the development of new community provision in suitable situations and locations.
8. To ensure that provision of leisure and community facilities are properly co-ordinated with all forms of development and land use policies.

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### 10.2 Sport, Recreation and Open Space

#### *Assessments of Needs and Opportunities*

**10.2.1** PPG17 recognises that open space, sport and recreation underpin people's quality of life, contributing to the health and well being of the individual whilst having valuable social, economic and educational roles. It is a key objective of this Plan that everyone has access to the appropriate amounts of open space, sport and recreational facilities to meet present and future needs. The District Council's Cultural Strategy also seeks to provide and improve opportunities for everyone to participate in sport and active recreation.

**10.2.2** To ensure effective planning for open space, sport and recreation, PPG17 states that local authorities should undertake robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities. Local authorities are also required to undertake audits of existing facilities.

**10.2.3** In August 2004, the District Council appointed Consultants to undertake a PPG17 assessment of local needs and an audit of open space and indoor sport and recreational facilities across the District.

**10.2.4** The study was undertaken in accordance with PPG17 and its Companion Guide "Assessing Needs and Opportunities" (September 2002).

**10.2.5** The overall aim of the project was to:

- Consider the local context of open space in East Herts;
- Undertake an audit of existing provision to cover all aspects of open space, sport and recreation;
- Undertake consultation to ascertain the demand for open space within the District;
- Set and apply robust local provision standards based on local needs and aspirations;
- Ensure that any shortfall or surplus in provision is identified against these standards.

**10.2.6** The study has provided:

- an overview of the open space resource within the District according to definitions provided within PPG17;
- a review of relevant plans and strategies and national developments;
- detailed consultations using various methods including household questionnaires, Community Voice sessions and consultation with internal and external agencies to establish the key issues and needs;
- consideration of relevant and appropriate provision standards;
- a summary of key issues based on the main findings from the supply and demand analysis in terms of quantity, quality, and accessibility.

**10.2.7** The study shows that East Herts is well provided for in terms of total amount of open space as well as specialised types of provision, but there are localised problems and issues in certain typologies within the District.

#### *Maintaining an Adequate Supply of Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities*

**10.2.8** PPG17 states that existing open space, sport and recreational buildings and land should not be built on unless an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown them to be surplus to requirements.

**10.2.9** The Town and Country Planning (Playing Fields) (England) Direction 1998 applies to any proposal for development of any playing field, owned by a local authority, or used by an educational institution. Where Sport England object to a planning application, but the local planning authority proposes to grant permission, the Direction requires the local planning authority to notify the Secretary of State, who will decide whether to intervene or leave the matter for the local planning authority to decide.

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### LRC1 Sport and Recreation Facilities

Proposals which will result in the loss of public or private, indoor or outdoor, sports, recreation and open space facilities, or school playing fields, will be refused unless:

- (a) suitable alternative facilities are provided on site or in the locality, which are at least equivalent in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility to the ones that would be lost; or
- (b) it can be demonstrated that the facility is no longer needed and that there is no viable demand for an alternative facility.

### 10.3 Joint Provision and Dual Use

**10.3.1** The joint provision and dual use of suitable leisure facilities is an efficient use of land and resources, and indeed, can increase the amount of facilities available. The District Council will seek to encourage the joint provision and dual use of leisure facilities.

**10.3.2** Joint provision includes the planned provision of enhanced facilities, normally for education and community benefit, and dual use involves their regular use by those for whom they were not primarily intended.

**10.3.3** This provision is generally made at schools, which are well placed to serve the community. The availability of other public and private facilities should, however, not be ignored and the District Council would wish to encourage their wider use.

**10.3.4** The provision of leisure facilities in the countryside can be met through dual use of school facilities, the use and provision of village halls, or appropriate conversions of farm buildings. Such facilities could serve several villages.

### LRC2 Joint Provision and Dual Use

The District Council will in appropriate locations continue to:

- (a) promote the joint provision and dual use of educational and other leisure facilities;

- (b) encourage the use of multi-purpose buildings for leisure activities.

### 10.4 Recreation Requirements in Residential Developments

**10.4.1** The District Council's Cultural Strategy aims to facilitate partnerships and good communication between district, town and parish councils and the voluntary sector to provide and improve play facilities within the District.

**10.4.2** Where there is an identified deficit in the quality and quantity of provision, the Council will negotiate for new and/or enhanced outdoor recreation space in new residential developments, in accordance with the standards contained in Appendix IV.

**10.4.3** In existing residential areas, where there may be a shortfall in recreation space or play areas, the District Council will seek to address these deficiencies whenever opportunities arise, and when need, land availability and resources justify or allow it.

### LRC3 Recreational Requirements in New Residential Developments

- (I) The Council will seek to negotiate for the provision of adequate and appropriately located open space, sport and recreation facilities in conjunction with new residential development, in accordance with the standards outlined in Appendix IV of this Plan.
- (II) Indoor sports facilities may also be sought on larger developments, as identified in the Settlement Chapters.
- (III) Developers will be expected to provide either on site provision or, where appropriate, a financial contribution towards either off-site provision, or the enhancement of off-site facilities.

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### 10.5 Arts, Culture and Entertainment

**10.5.1** The District Council's Cultural Strategy aims to actively promote, encourage and facilitate people of all ages and abilities, people from the public, voluntary and education sectors and people living in rural areas to take part in arts activity.

**10.5.2** The Strategy's policy relating to museums seeks to collect, document, preserve, interpret and present the heritage of East Hertfordshire for the enjoyment and education of local people and visitors.

**10.5.3** Many of the cultural and entertainment facilities in East Hertfordshire are located in the five main towns of Hertford, Ware, Bishop's Stortford, Sawbridgeworth, and Buntingford and are provided by public and private enterprise, as well as the voluntary sector.

**10.5.4** These facilities include buildings and halls available for various activities, concerts and dances, notably Castle Hall, Hertford, museums and various private clubs and places of entertainment. The Council aims to improve access to those facilities in its ownership to ensure they can be used by all sections of the community. This includes encouraging accessibility by passenger transport.

#### LRC4 Arts, Culture and Entertainment

The District Council will:

- (a) encourage the provision of new cultural and entertainment facilities and the maintenance and improvement of existing facilities in appropriate locations; and
- (b) resist proposals which would result in the loss of public or private cultural or entertainment facilities, unless suitable alternative facilities are provided in appropriate locations, or it can be demonstrated that the facility is no longer needed and that there is no viable demand for a replacement facility.

### 10.6 Countryside Recreation

**10.6.1** The enjoyment of the countryside through informal recreation such as walking, cycling, or horse riding is increasing, along with more organised activities, some of which have environmental and/or noise nuisance implications.

**10.6.2** A balance needs to be struck between encouraging access to, and the use of, the countryside for such purposes, and safeguarding the character of the countryside.

#### LRC5 Countryside Recreation

In the Green Belt and Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt, the District Council will permit, where appropriate and providing there are no significant adverse effects on the natural environment or local amenity:

- (a) the provision of suitably located facilities for informal recreation;
- (b) opportunities for increasing public access to countryside recreation.

### 10.7 Golf Courses

**10.7.1** With changes in agricultural economies and practice, an increasing emphasis on diversification of farming activities and incomes, and changing recreational demands, there has been growing pressure for the use of land for the provision of golf courses.

**10.7.2** The potential impact of golf courses in the countryside is great, due to the large areas of land affected, ancillary developments which are usually necessary for their operation, associated developments, landscaping and traffic generation. It is important to protect the rural character of the countryside and in some cases the rural environment could accommodate a properly designed golf course without detriment to the quality of the landscape - indeed it would sometimes be possible to enhance the landscape with careful course design and sensitive landscaping.

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### LRC6 Golf Courses

- (I) Proposals for the use of land, within the Green Belt and in Rural Areas Beyond the Green Belt, for the provision of golf courses must only include development which is necessary for the operation of the proposed golf course. Any buildings and other associated developments should be located and designed, and constructed of such materials, as to be unobtrusive in the countryside.
- (II) The developer will be expected to enter into a planning obligation under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (or as subsequently revised), to provide satisfactorily for the following where appropriate:
- (a) future landscape management arrangements which will be subject to continual review at appropriate intervals to ensure relevance and implementation;
  - (b) protection, maintenance and creation of wildlife habitats;
  - (c) protection and enhancement of rights of way in terms of amenity and safety of users and creation of new rights of way;
  - (d) funding of and access for archaeological investigations of the site;
  - (e) the prevention of the use of the buildings as a clubhouse and associated uses prior to the completion of the golf course or independent of the use of the premises as a golf course.

### 10.8 Water Based Recreation

**10.8.1** The District's waterways and water areas, which includes rivers, the Lee and Stort Navigations, lakes and other enclosed water areas, such as quarries and former gravel pits, offer many

opportunities for recreation. Water based leisure pursuits, such as angling and boating, can be enjoyed along with walking and cycling. The waterways also contribute to the character of the towns through which they flow, notably Bishop's Stortford, Hertford and Ware.

**10.8.2** The Lee Valley Regional Park contains many of the areas of water utilised for leisure and there are a number of other water areas used for such purposes. The District Council will seek to encourage the recreational use of waterways and water areas in East Hertfordshire, and balance such recreational needs with those of nature conservation. Water based recreation should not damage important nature conservation sites or features. In some areas nature conservation will have priority, while in others the priority can be recreation, and in some places both can be balanced.

**10.8.3** There is pressure throughout the County, due to population growth and its distance from coastal waters, together with the demands of visitors from London, for further water recreation facilities. Sport England identifies the main opportunity for further areas of water for recreational purposes, to be through the restoration of mineral workings to 'wet pits'. There may be potential to connect these wet pits with existing waterways, in order to enhance water recreation opportunities.

### LRC7 Water Based Recreation

Proposals for water-based recreation will be permitted providing:

- (a) the proposal does not have a significant adverse impact on the character, appearance and nature conservation interest of the environment;
- (b) the proposal does not have an adverse impact on any flood alleviation works and does not impede the Environment Agency's access requirements to watercourses.

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### 10.9 Lee Valley Regional Park

**10.9.1** The Lee Valley Regional Park Authority has been creating a strategic leisure resource to meet the ever-increasing needs of people in London, Essex and Hertfordshire. Since its inauguration in 1967, it has created a wide range of facilities for land and water based pursuits. 445 hectares (1,100 acres) of the Regional Park fall within East Hertfordshire District.

**10.9.2** The Lee Valley Regional Park Authority is required, under the Lee Valley Regional Park Act 1966, to prepare a plan showing the future use and development of the Park. Land within the statutory boundaries of the Lee Valley Regional Park is subject to the proposals of the Park Plan. These policies and proposals must be included in the Local Plan by virtue of Section 14(2) of the 1966 Act.

**10.9.3** The review of the Lee Valley Regional Park Plan was adopted in April 2000. The proposals of the Park Plan are supported in Policy LRC8 below.

**10.9.4** The District Council will support the proposals of the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority Plan, within the area defined on the Proposals Map, subject to their general compliance with the Local Plan. In open areas of the park between settlements fishing, horse riding, picnicking, sailing, walking, cycling and like informal recreational activities should be promoted.

#### LRC8 Lee Valley Regional Park

Proposals for leisure related developments within the Regional Park will be permitted provided that intensive land-use leisure activities and associated buildings are located near existing settlements.

### 10.10 Public Rights of Way

**10.10.1** The County Structure Plan requires development proposals to take full account of the need to protect and enhance the Public Rights of Way network. Public Rights of Way have increasingly become used for recreation purposes, most commonly walking and horse riding. The District Council wishes to encourage the management and maintenance of the existing

Rights of Way network and, where appropriate, improve and rationalise it. Improvement should not be at the expense of nature conservation. The network could be used to promote alternative, more sustainable, methods of transport, such as walking, cycling, or horse riding. The Meads towpath between Hertford and Ware is an example of this kind of Right of Way.

**10.10.2** Structure Plan Policy 49 encourages the establishment of strategic footpaths, bridleways, and leisure cycling routes. This includes the London Orbital Bridle route, promoted by the British Horse Society, known as the H25. The route is based on existing bridleways and minor roads and is also available to walkers and cyclists. A diagrammatic route of the H25 is shown in Diagram 1 on page 116. The District Council will encourage the provision of this route in East Hertfordshire.

**10.10.3** The District Council will support the County Council, other District Councils, organisations and groups in the preservation, improvement, rationalisation, management and maintenance of the public rights of way network, for recreational purposes and where appropriate, promoting the use of more sustainable methods of transport such as walking, cycling and horse riding.

#### LRC9 Public Rights of Way

Any proposals for development must not adversely affect any Public Right of Way and, where possible, should incorporate measures to maintain and enhance the rights of way network.

### 10.11 Tourism

**10.11.1** Tourism encompasses not only the annual family holiday, but also shorter visits, weekend breaks, day and part-day trips, and non-leisure tourism e.g. business tourism. PPG17 states that Local Plan policies should take into account the recreational needs of tourists.

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**10.11.2** Government policy, as set out in PPG21, is that the tourism industry should flourish in response to the market, while respecting the environment that attracts visitors. The central object is to achieve sustainable development that serves the interests of both economic growth and conservation of the environment.

**10.11.3** Local Plans should include policies and proposals relating to existing and future provision for tourism, in relation to the development and use of land.

**10.11.4** The County Structure Plan supports development to meet the needs of tourism, subject to the other policies of the Plan, and encourages the greater use of passenger transport. The Plan aims to encourage social and economic benefits of tourism within the County whilst seeking to ensure that environmental and other conflicts do not arise.

**10.11.5** The Cultural Strategy supports local tourism by aiming to develop a planned approach to local tourism development that stresses the need for local partnerships, meets local needs, and is economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable. It is intended to achieve this by effective networking and communication with regional agencies, local authorities and Tourist Information Centres.

**10.11.6** The development of tourism can bring benefits to the local economy by generating additional revenue and providing employment. However, in order to protect the character and amenities of the area, careful management is necessary.

**10.11.7** East Hertfordshire has many attractions, including picturesque villages and historic towns, countryside areas and waterways. One key factor restricting the development of tourism within East Hertfordshire is the limited availability of visitor accommodation. This includes guesthouse and bed and breakfast accommodation as well as hotels.

**10.11.8** New build hotels are by size and nature more appropriately located within towns. However, proposals for small-scale hotel or other visitor accommodation may also be acceptable within other settlements, and the adaptation and re-use of existing buildings for small-scale visitor accommodation may be acceptable in villages and the countryside.

### LRC10 Tourism

The District Council will:

- (a) encourage suitable tourism proposals in appropriate locations;
- (b) give favourable consideration to suitable proposals for visitor accommodation within the District.

### 10.12 Community Facilities

**10.12.1** Community facilities encompass a range of buildings and land uses as described in paragraph 10.1.3, from schools, libraries and health care centres, to places of worship and allotments.

**10.12.2** These facilities are provided by a number of agencies across East Hertfordshire District such as Health Authorities and Trusts, the County, District and Parish Councils, along with private organisations. The District Council does not, therefore, have direct responsibility for providing many of these facilities, but it can assist with the expansion and upgrading of existing facilities and enable deficiencies in provision to be met either through site identification or as a direct requirement of development. The retention of community facilities required to support existing and growing communities is supported by the District Council.

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### LRC11 Retention of Community Facilities

Proposals which will result in the loss of community facilities will be refused unless:

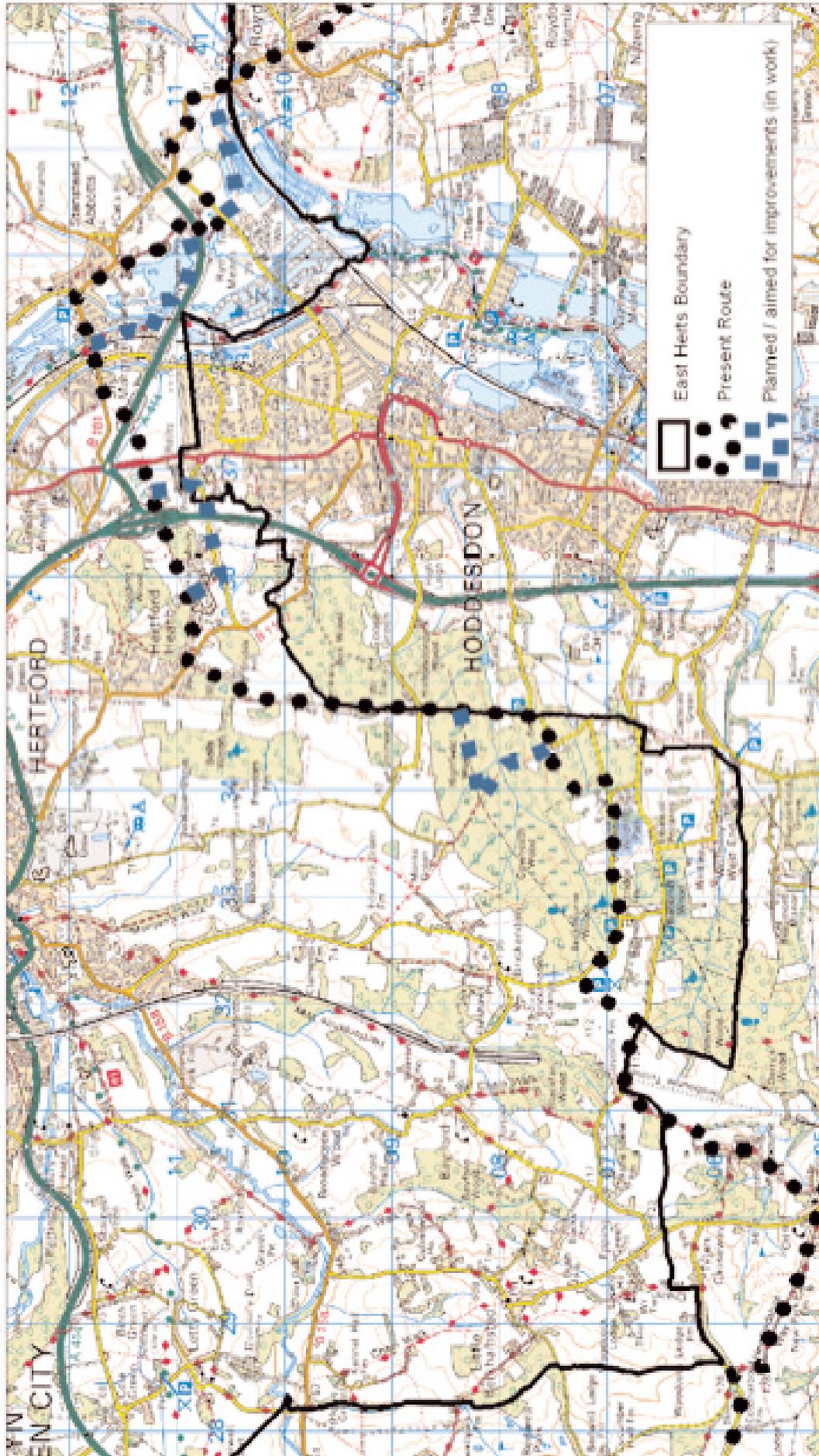
- (a) suitable alternative facilities are provided on site, in the locality or relevant catchment area; or
- (b) it can be demonstrated that the facility is no longer needed and that there is insufficient demand to make an alternative community facility viable.

**10.12.3** Adequate community facilities should be provided to support new development, particularly new housing development. This can be either through the provision of new buildings or facilities within development sites, or through developers making a financial contribution to improve existing or provide alternative facilities. The specific needs of the whole community should be taken into account, when planning new community facilities, including the elderly and those with disabilities.

**10.12.4** There may be scope to include community facilities such as health care facilities in key locations within existing health care sites, shopping centres and residential areas as well as town centres. Proposals may come forward for development independently or as part of mixed-use schemes within large-scale developments as required by Policy IMP1. The District Council will consult with the relevant authorities and organisations over the need for and provision of specific community facilities such as health care provision across the District as large development proposals come forward.

# 10. LEISURE, RECREATION AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

DIAGRAM 1 -  
H25 Route (East Herts Section)



Scale 1 : 50,000

East Hertfordshire District Council

Waltheds  
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SG13 8EQ  
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