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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) has been prepared under the provisions of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Town & Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004.

1.2 In the Act, the Government introduced changes to the planning system for England. At the strategic level, Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) will supersede the County Structure Plans. Thus, the Hertfordshire County Structure Plan will be replaced by the RSS for the East of England: The East of England Plan, prepared by the East of England Regional Assembly.

1.3 At the local level, a new portfolio of documents, known as the Local Development Framework (LDF) will replace the East Herts Local Plan. The statutory element of the LDF will be the Development Plan Documents (DPD), supported by non-statutory Supplementary Planning Documents - these will replace the existing Supplementary Planning Guidance notes. In addition, Hertfordshire County Council will prepare statutory Minerals and Waste Planning documents - these will replace the existing Minerals and Waste Local Plans.

1.4 The legislation also contains provisions for those local authorities, which are in the course of reviewing Local Plans under the 1990 system. On 18th April 2007 East Herts adopted its Local Plan Second Review. Under the 'transitional arrangements' this Plan will be saved for three years from its date of adoption.

1.5 East Herts Council is committed to the early replacement of the Local Plan

Second Review with a set of Local Development Documents. Details are set out in the East Herts Local Development Scheme LDS, which can be viewed on the Council's web-site at www.eastherts.gov.uk or obtained from the Council's Development Plans Team.

1.6 Several Supplementary Planning Documents will be prepared to accompany the Local Plan Second Review. This SPD is part of that series.

Purpose & Status

1.7 The overall purpose of this SPD is to provide guidance on the framework for sustainability appraisal in East Herts and the ways in which the Council are applying the principles of sustainable development to the planning process in the District. The SPD supplements Policy SD1 (Making Development More Sustainable) in the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007. Policy SD1 states:

"All proposals for development of 15 dwellings or more (or sites of 0.5 hectares or more irrespective of the number of dwellings), or for commercial development (including changes of use) of 250 sq metres floorspace or more, will be expected to be accompanied by a Sustainability Statement which explains how the proposed development will:

- *create healthy, socially integrated communities;*
- *encourage sustainable movement patterns through design and transport infrastructures;*
- *achieve the sustainable use of resources such as land, water, energy, materials and waste;*

- *be physically well integrated and respond to local character and distinctiveness;*
- *protect and enhance the natural and built environment;*
- *create a flourishing and healthy local economy.”*

Application

1.8 The Council intends to use the document in various ways. The baseline information (Section 4.0) and District Level Indicators (Appendix 1) will be used to give an overview of the sustainability of the district at any one time. Changes can then be monitored over time to assess the “direction of travel” in sustainability terms.

1.9 The appraisal objectives (Section 6.0) have already been used as the basis of the Sustainable Appraisal of the Re-Deposit Local Plan and accompanying Supplementary Planning Documents. It is anticipated that these will continue to form the basis of future Sustainability Appraisals of development plan documents.

1.10 The Site Level Indicator Model (Appendix 2) is intended to be used to accompany planning applications. Policy SD1 of the Local Plan Second Review requires “Sustainability Statements” from developments of 15 or more dwellings (or sites of 0.5 hectares or more) or commercial development of over 250 square metres. It is expected that the Site Level Indicator Model will form the basis of these “Sustainability Statements” and will be submitted by applicants for planning permission alongside their planning application.

1.11 Development will be expected to meet the targets set out in the Site Level

Indicator Model. Where a development does not meet these targets, comments can be added to explain why the target has not been met. In this way the model can help to identify scope for amendment and improvement to development proposals and should be used as early as possible in the planning process, preferably at the pre-application stage.

1.12 If the relevant improvements are not made and there are no mitigating circumstances, the Council will need to make a judgement as to the overall sustainability of development proposals and whether it is appropriate to grant planning permission.

Consultation

1.13 The underlying objectives of this document have already been subject to consultation through earlier processes - as part of a “Sustainability Study” of the District (November 2004 and March 2005) and via the Sustainability Appraisal of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review Re-Deposit Version (November 2004).

1.14 The Council consulted on a draft version of the SPD for a period of six weeks during February and March 2006. The Council has given careful consideration to all the representations and comments received in preparing this final version.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 With the commencement of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the changes to the development plan system, there is a requirement for all plans to be subject to a Sustainability Appraisal. In addition, any plan or document must satisfy the requirements of the European Union Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

2.2 East Herts Council has taken these provisions fully on board. In early 2004, the Council commissioned the firm Land Use Consultants to prepare a Sustainability Appraisal Study of the District. This study was funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). The completed version of the study included a Baseline Report (November 2004) and a methodology for the process of Sustainability Appraisal. The methodology was deployed on Sustainability Appraisals of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review Re-Deposit Version (November 2004) and the draft Supplementary Planning Document on Affordable Housing (February 2005). In addition, the consultants completed a Sustainability Appraisal of the Bishop's Stortford Masterplanning Study (*Land Use Consultants, March 2005*).

2.3 Following the successful application of the appraisal process, the Council has decided to adopt the Sustainability Indicators as a Supplementary Planning Document. This will give definitive guidance and advice, especially to planning officers and potential developers on the practical application of the appraisal technique and how it will be used in the future. As this document is concerned solely with sustainability, a separate appraisal of it has not been undertaken.

3. CONTEXT: Relationship with other plans, programmes and sustainability objectives

3.1 When preparing any appraisal, it is important to establish the policy context within which it will operate. This is important as it ensures that relevant external objectives are reflected in the framework for Sustainability Appraisal, as well as enabling the appraisal of any cumulative effects of policies from different sources and at different levels. A complex hierarchy of policy exists that has implications for this document and for the Development Plan as a whole. This section will identify the key policy objectives influencing this document.

3.2 Certain policy documents determine the parameters for the Development Plan and this SPD. The most important is the UK Sustainable Development Strategy *Securing the Future*, together with the UK and Devolved Administrations' strategic framework for sustainable development *One Future - different paths* (March 2005).

3.3 The UK strategy contains four basic aims for sustainable Development, as follows:

- social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;
- effective protection of the environment;
- the prudent use of natural resources, and;

- the maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

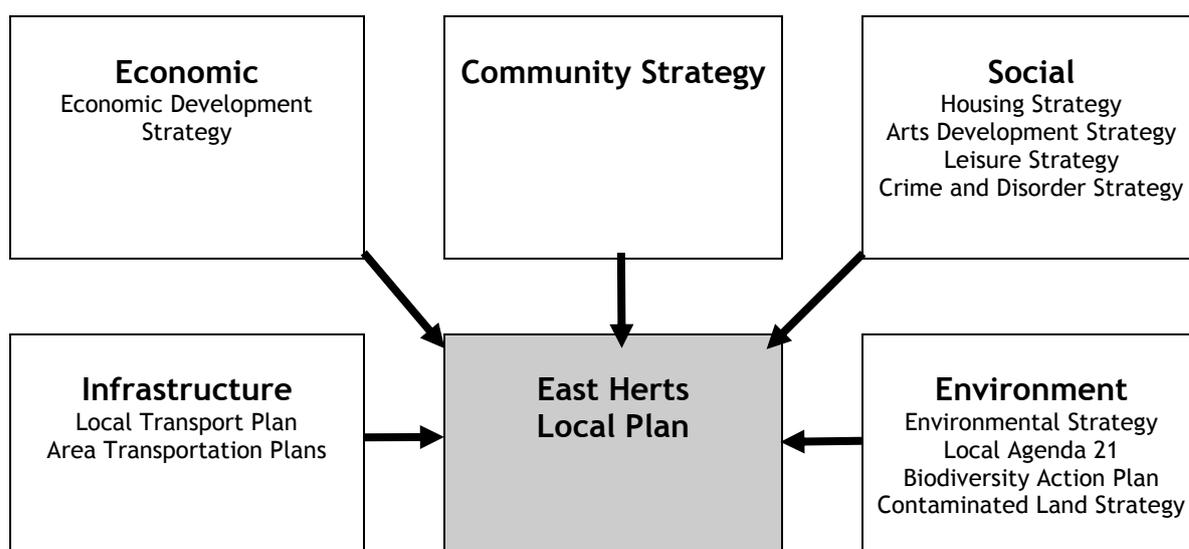
3.4 These aims are repeated in Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1) *Delivering Sustainable Development* (January 2005). The Statement sets out very clearly the view of the Government - that sustainable development should be at the heart of the planning system. PPS1 is one of a series of 25 Planning Policy Statements and Planning Policy Guidance Notes, which contain a range of advice to users of the system. In their decision-making, Local Planning Authorities must have regard to PPSs and PPGs. Government Circulars also provide more detailed advice and guidance on specific planning issues.

3.5 At the regional level, an increasing influence will be the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) the *East of England Plan*, a draft of which has been prepared by the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA). This has been subject to an Examination in Public and a final version will be prepared for the approval of the First Secretary of State, anticipated in autumn 2007.

3.6 At the county level, the main current influence is the Hertfordshire County Structure Plan, adopted in 1998. Until the final approval of the RSS, this will provide the strategic "direction" for the county.

3.7 In East Hertfordshire, there are numerous other strategies and plans, whose objectives need to be acknowledged and, where appropriate, reflected in the Local Plan. Figure 1 below indicates the main influences on the Local Plan and this document:

Figure 1: Policy Influences on the Local Plan



3.8 The strategies referred to in Figure 1 have been evaluated to determine their level of “fit” with the concept of promoting sustainable communities. This was assessed with reference to sustainability strategies and objectives at the national, regional and county levels. The four aims of the UK Sustainability Strategy were taken to provide the over-arching high-level objectives. Regional level objectives were taken from the East of England Sustainable Development Framework and the county-level Objectives were from the Adopted Hertfordshire County Structure Plan (1991-2011).

3.9 It is important to record that the strategies were not evaluated by simply identifying whether they included specific actions or targets that would relate directly to sustainability objectives. Instead, they were evaluated in terms of whether their overall priorities or proposed actions would contribute to sustainability objectives at the national, regional and/or the county levels.

3.10 The strategies’ levels of “fit” with the concept of promoting sustainable communities is discussed below under

the four over-arching national objectives. The regional- and county-level objectives, which are aligned to the national set, are also discussed below. The level of “fit” is discussed with reference to the evaluation of the following corporate strategies of East Herts Council:

- Capital Strategy 2003/04 - 2005/06 (summary version)
- Community Strategy 2003
- Crime and Disorder Strategy 2002 - 2005
- Cultural Strategy 2002 - 2005 (summary version)
- Economic Development Strategy 2002 - 2005 (summary)
- Homelessness Strategy 2003 - 2008
- Housing Strategy 2003 - 2006
- Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Hertfordshire 2002 - 2024
- Hertfordshire Police Authority Policing strategy (2004-2005) and Strategic Plan (2003 - 2005)

National Objective: Safeguarding the environment through effective protection

Regional objectives:

- To protect and maintain our most valuable (regional) assets such as designated habitats, landscapes of natural beauty, and our historic built heritage, and to improve the wider environment, by means of adequate investment and management.
- To deliver more sustainable patterns of development, including employment and housing.

County Objectives:

- Maintain and enhance biological diversity.
- Reduce pollution and the effects it has on ecosystems and human health.
- Maintain “critical” national and local environmental assets, which would be impossible/difficult to replace.
- Maintain and, where possible, increase stocks of less critical elements.
- Apply the precautionary principle where the potential damage to the environment is uncertain and significant.
- Reduce overall demand for resources (including land and water).
- Improve the overall quality of life, meeting human needs within a safe, healthy and diverse environment.

3.11 In general, the corporate strategies contain more initiatives that indirectly contribute to the national, regional, and county-level sustainability objectives listed above, than initiatives that address them directly. Four of the strategies evaluated - the Community, Cultural, Housing and Waste Strategies, outline proposals that contribute positively.

3.12 Of these, the strategy that most directly addresses these objectives is the Community Strategy, which outlines specific measures to protect and preserve the environment and the uniqueness of the landscape and character of the District. For example, it aims to encourage energy efficiency, enhance biodiversity and engage local communities in improving the local environment. In addition, the Housing Strategy describes several actions that would directly contribute to the objectives. For example, it proposes to develop 66% of new housing on previously-developed land, which not only delivers more sustainable patterns of development, but also contributes directly to objectives listed below under the second over-arching objective *Prudent Use of Natural Resources*.

3.13 These two strategies, in addition to the Cultural and Waste Strategies, also contain many indirect contributors to the sustainability objectives listed above. For example, the Cultural Strategy aims to enhance access to cultural facilities, such as heritage and the countryside, which will indirectly contribute to their protection. The Waste Strategy outlines investment proposals for waste recovery, treatment and disposal, which will indirectly improve the wider environment. This measure also contributes to several sustainability objectives under the second over-arching principle, demonstrating inter-linkages between individual initiatives and a number of sustainability objectives.

National Objective: Providing for future generations through prudent use of natural resources

Regional Objectives:

- To reduce our consumption of fossil fuels.

- To use natural resources, both finite and renewable, as efficiently as possible, and re-use finite resources or recycled alternatives wherever possible.
- To avoid using the global environment to underwrite our own unsustainable way of life (e.g. dependence on unsustainable produce and/or transported food imports or timber).

County Objectives:

- Reduce overall demand for resources (including land and water).
- Make the most efficient use of renewable and non-renewable resources (including land).
- Increase the use of renewable resources where this would not be detrimental to other aims.
- Mitigate the possible causes and effects of climate change.
- Reduce pollution and the effects it has on ecosystems and human health.
- Increase the rate of carbon fixing.

3.14 The principal strategies that contribute to regional and county-level sustainability objectives listed above include the Community, Housing, Waste and Economic Development Strategies. These all contain direct initiatives, which focus on energy efficiency in homes and avoiding the use of the global environment to underwrite an unsustainable way of life in East Herts. For example, the Community and Housing Strategies include objectives to improve home energy efficiency and to encourage sustainability in building design. The Waste Strategy and the Economic Development Strategy aim to create local outlets for recycled materials and encourage the selling of local produce through local outlets.

National Objective: Supporting communities through social progress which recognises the needs of everyone

Regional Objectives:

- To achieve a more equitable sharing of the benefits of prosperity across all sectors of society and fairer access to services, focussing on deprived areas in the region.

County Objectives:

- Improve overall quality of life, meeting human needs within a safe, healthy and pleasant environment.
- Improve equality of opportunity in economic and social terms.
- Increase community awareness and involvement.

3.15 The national, regional and county-level sustainability objectives relating to supporting communities through social progress are the most frequently referred to in the corporate strategies. All of the documents, with the exception of the Waste Management Strategy, outline specific actions or targets that support and contribute towards these objectives. This reflects the social focus of most of the strategies evaluated.

3.16 The initiatives, which most frequently address the community objectives, focus on affordable housing and increasing community involvement through, for example, engagement with local communities and encouraging access to local facilities. The Housing Strategy focuses in particular on meeting local housing needs and improving the quality of the housing stock. The Policing Strategy seeks to involve communities in developing local crime and disorder reduction strategies, and its four policing priorities will contribute to meeting the

needs of all and a safer environment. Other initiatives contribute to these objectives, but within the context of the specific focus of a strategy. For example, the Leisure Strategy and the Arts Development Strategy aim to increase access to leisure and cultural pursuits, whereas the Economic Development Strategy aims to assist deprived areas to achieve more profitable economic activities.

National Objective: Promoting prosperity for all by maintaining high and stable levels of economic growth and employment

Regional Objectives:

- To achieve sustainable levels of prosperity and economic growth.
- To revitalise town centres to promote a return to sustainable living.

County Objectives:

- Improve overall quality of life, meeting human needs within a safe, healthy and pleasant environment.

3.17 More than half of the corporate strategies describe specific aims or initiatives that would promote prosperity in East Herts by maintaining high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

3.18 Of these, the Economic Development Strategy will contribute most directly to the sustainability objectives listed above. This strategy aims to support and maintain economic success and prosperity in the District and ensure the viability and vitality of its five towns. Other strategies also contain direct measures to address the objectives. For example, the Cultural Strategy aims to enhance the quality of life by making East Herts a more prosperous and attractive area for

businesses. The Crime and Disorder and Policing Strategies will contribute through their aims to improve the safety of town centres by improving street lighting, CCTV coverage, and high profile policing. The Housing Strategy contributes to supporting economic objectives, by providing affordable and key worker housing within the District.

Conclusion

3.19 In summary, the assessment demonstrated that the majority of the national, regional and county-level sustainability objectives are being addressed within one or more of the corporate strategies of the Council.

3.20 Several of the strategies are more narrowly focussed, however, for example, the Capital, Crime and Disorder, and Homelessness Strategies tended to include fewer initiatives that contribute to wider sustainability objectives.

3.21 The strategy that most comprehensively addresses all four overarching sustainability objectives is the Community Strategy. This reflects the requirements of the Local Government Act 2000, which states that:

“Every local authority must prepare a strategy (referred to...as a community strategy) for promoting and improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK.”

4.0 BASELINE INFORMATION

Overview

4.1 East Hertfordshire is the largest of the ten District Councils in Hertfordshire, with a population of just under 130,000 and an area of 476 square kilometres. The District includes five historic market towns, with over 100 smaller villages and hamlets. It covers approximately one third of the area of the county and remains a predominately rural area. Attractive towns and villages set in a rolling landscape are a key feature of the District.

4.2 The five market towns in the District are Bishop's Stortford, Hertford, Ware, Sawbridgeworth and Buntingford. The Green Belt secures the containment of these towns, together with three other large villages at Stanstead Abbots, Hertford Heath and Watton-at-Stone. Beyond the Green Belt there are two other large settlements - Buntingford and Standon/Puckeridge. Stansted Airport, whilst outside the District, lies immediately to the east of Bishop's Stortford, and exerts a strong influence on the whole of East Hertfordshire.

Environmental Characteristics

4.3 The District has a high quality environment, with the centres of all five towns and over 40 villages designated as Conservation Areas. There are over 4,000 listed buildings, of which just over 7% are Grade I or Grade II* (of outstanding architectural or historic interest), and the remainder Grade II. There are 42 scheduled ancient monuments, which have been designated for their national importance. In addition, there are 450 known sites of archaeological significance identified in the County Historic Environment Record and 15 Registered Parks and Gardens.

4.4 About one third of the District is covered by Green Belt.

4.5 The geology of East Hertfordshire is relatively simple, comprising mainly chalk, with later Tertiary deposits overlaying it in some areas. The chalk not only determines the topography of the District, but also forms an important freshwater aquifer.

4.6 More recent deposits include chalky boulder clay, which covers most of the District, together with gravel and other clay deposits. Boulder clay is highly fertile and therefore has tended increasingly to be farmed intensively for arable crops.

4.7 Woodland comprises 9% of the District area, a total of 4,250 hectares (national average 9%). Of this, 59% is semi-natural broadleaved, and 36% is planted (mainly mixed woodland). Broxbourne Woods in the south of the District is the only National Nature Reserve in Hertfordshire.

4.8 Grassland accounts for 8,190 hectares (17%) of the District. Most is improved or semi-improved, which are generally species-poor. Only 453 hectares of the unimproved variety remain and are of high ecological value.

4.9 East Hertfordshire has a relatively high density of rivers and streams compared to the rest of the county. There are 34.3 hectares of wetland habitats in the District, with an additional 107 hectares of open still water, plus 1,135 registered ponds. Streams and rivers occupy a total length of 307.1 kilometres (a significant characteristic within the context of the East of England region). At the same time, the District is located in the driest region in the UK and is susceptible to water shortages - this will become a significant factor in the future due to

climate change and development pressures.

4.10 There are two sites of international conservation importance:

- (Potential) Special Protection Area (SPA) - Rye Meads, Lee/Stort Valley - this area has extensive reed swamp and wet meadows, as well as aquatic habitats important for birds;
- (Candidate) Special Area of Conservation (SAC) - Wormley-Hoddesdonpark Wood, characterised especially by having sessile oak as opposed to the more widespread pedunculate oak.

4.11 There are 15 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), including Great Horstead Park, which has ancient woodland, and Moor Hall Meadows, which is one of the most important county grasslands of nature conservation interest.

4.12 During the period 1970 - 1990, there were significant changes in land use, including the losses of agricultural land and woodland.

4.13 Two million tonnes of waste were generated in Hertfordshire in 2002/2003 of which 525,600 tonnes was household waste, representing a 0.7% fall in household waste since the previous year. In 2003/2004, East Hertfordshire generated 44,600 tonnes of household waste (representing 8% of Hertfordshire's total for that year). Almost all of the

District's waste arisings are exported from the county for disposal.

4.14 Recyclable materials are collected separately, mainly from the Council's 44 recycling points ("bring" sites). It is calculated that 14.2% of household waste was recycled in the District in 2003/2004, compared to 11.99% in 2002/2003. (This figure excludes waste, which is composted by households in their own gardens, as well as waste collected at Household Waste Sites, which are managed by the County Council).

4.15 Altogether, 96% of streets, grass and landscaped areas achieved high or acceptable levels of cleanliness (litter only). In a survey, 72% of residents were satisfied with the Council's Cultural Services for the standard of parks and open spaces.

4.16 Traffic flows in Hertfordshire as a whole are 35% higher than the national average, with significant commuting flows to Greater London. Car ownership is the fourth highest in the country, at 0.522 cars per head. Road safety is a major concern in East Hertfordshire. County figures put total County casualties at 18% higher than the 1981-85 average, which far outstripped the regional and national increases.

4.17 Modal choice in the District is overwhelmingly the private car, as reflected in Table 4.1 below:

Table 4.1: Modal choice in East Herts - March 2003

	Bus	Car	Cycle	Other	Walk
Leisure (% people)	5.7	84.4	0.3	4.8	1.0
Leisure (miles average trip)	7.5	24.9	1.5	95.1	7.0
Shopping (% people)	4.7	85.7	0.4	Nil	8.4
Shopping (miles av. trip)	2.5	7.2	0.7	95.1	4.8
Work (% people)	1.7	72.7	1.7	16.9	0.8
Work (miles average trip)	3.0	30.9	26.0	Nil	0.7

Source: Hertfordshire County Travel Survey (March 2003)

4.18 Traffic congestion is also a problem in the District. In the past this has been especially bad on the A10 to the north of Ware, but this has been eased by the opening of the Wadesmill bypass in 2004, although congestion has been diverted to the A120, between Puckeridge and the M11 to the east of Bishop's Stortford, particularly at the Little Hadham traffic lights. Other problems occur on the A414 through Hertford and on the A1184 between Bishop's Stortford and Harlow. Traffic congestion is particularly acute through Sawbridgeworth. At the same time, increasing traffic levels on rural roads raises safety and amenity issues. Rail congestion is also an issue, particularly on the route running through Bishop's Stortford to London Liverpool Street.

4.19 Key environmental issues may be summarised as follows:

- Protecting high quality natural and built environments;
- Minimising the loss of natural environment to development pressures;

- Reducing the amount of waste generated and ensuring it is managed sustainably and locally;
- Protecting the water environment, water quality and supply;
- Reducing traffic congestion and reliance on the car.

Economic Characteristics

4.20 East Hertfordshire's economy is buoyant compared to the rest of the East of England and the UK. Unemployment is low (0.8%) and there is high labour demand.

4.21 The economy is dominated by the service sector. About 23.3% of the work force are in banking, finance and insurance (16% nationally), with 75.9% employed in services overall (close to the national average of 74.7%).

4.22 Local businesses are predominantly micro- and small businesses (97%). There are a few key multi-national firms, such as GlaxoSmithKline (in Ware).

4.23 There is a predominance of employment in managerial or

professional occupations, although this may reflect the numbers of people commuting into London, rather than employment within the District. Full-time earnings are high - the average full-time wage for people in employment who live in the District is £31,146 per person per annum (ppa). The average full-time wage for people who work in the District (and may not necessarily live there) is £25,142 ppa. This difference is largely attributable to the 17% of East Herts' working population who commute to London.

4.24 Generally, educational attainment is high, with a third of the District's comprehensive schools in the top 50 nationally. In Hertfordshire, 54% of Year 11 pupils gain 5+ GCSE passes at grades A to C (46.3% nationally), with most East Hertfordshire secondary schools exceeding the county average. For those that do not, the GCSE results have improved considerably over recent years. Altogether 81% of students remain in education after Year 11, whilst one in ten 16 year olds leave school for a job. Very few young people join a training scheme or become unemployed. Qualification Levels are high, with 25% of the population educated to degree level or above. At the same time, however, 21% have no qualifications.

4.25 Despite the educational record, a skills shortage exists in the District. This is particularly evident in traditional trades, where the vocational skills are not available to support such services. This has a significant effect in making the District dependent on surrounding areas for service provision.

4.26 The rural nature of the area and scattered settlement pattern has resulted in a complex transport network that prioritises north-south movements. Traffic has increased across the county over past decades, although traffic levels

in East Hertfordshire dropped slightly between 2001 and 2003. Car ownership is high, with only 13% of households without access to a car.

4.27 Stansted Airport has a strong influence on the District's economy and employment patterns. Proposals to extend the airport would have repercussions throughout the District. Proposals in the East of England Plan to regenerate Harlow would also affect the District's economy and patterns of travel.

4.28 Key economic issues are as follows:

- Maintaining and enhancing the District's diverse economy and supporting small local businesses and start-ups;
- Improving and strengthening the economic links between the market towns and their surrounding rural areas;
- Supporting the "greening" of businesses, including the encouragement of Green Travel Plans and flexible working practices;
- Minimising the potential negative impacts of the M11 Growth Corridor (e.g. loss of employment sites to housing), whilst maximising the positive opportunities;
- Encouraging sustainable commuting patterns.

Social Characteristics

4.29 Of the 354 Districts in England, East Hertfordshire is ranked at number 344, in terms of social deprivation. In this and many surveys, it is ranked as one of the most affluent and successful areas in the UK, there are some areas within the District, however, which are less well-off.

4.30 In terms of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2004), the least deprived area of the District (known as a “Super Output Area”) was the eastern part of Hertford, while the north-western part of the same town was the most deprived in the District. This index includes access to health, housing, education, and income levels.

4.31 Affordable Housing is a major issue in the District. An individual buyer would need to earn £40,800 and a couple a combined salary of £52,000 in order to buy a flat in the District. The Housing Needs Survey 2004 suggested a total of 4,158 affordable dwellings are needed in the period 2004-2011. Most properties in the District are owner-occupied, with only 13% of dwellings classified as social housing. In 2003/2004, 25.1% of new housing was affordable, compared to 16% in 2002/2003.

4.32 In terms of employment deprivation, East Hertfordshire is ranked at 277 of all districts in England and 273 in terms of income deprivation (where 1 is the most deprived and 354 is the least deprived). Unemployment is generally lower than in the county as a whole - 0.8% in April 2004, compared to 1.4% in Hertfordshire. This is well below the national average of 2.5%.

4.33 East Hertfordshire has relatively low rates of violence against the person compared to the rest of the county. It also has the lowest concentration of robbery. District statistics indicate the low incidence of crime. There is an average of 3,770 incidents per 100,000 population compared to a national figure of 9,814 per annum.

4.34 The statistics show generally low levels of crime, but also indicate a number of worsening trends. The number of violent offences is rising, particularly in public or under the influence of

alcohol or drugs. It is clear from recent public meetings that anti-social behaviour is a key issue for residents.

4.35 Life expectancy in most areas of Hertfordshire is above the national average, for both males and females. Levels of health are relatively high generally.

4.36 Young people in the rural areas of the District suffer from a lack of after-school and holiday activities. This is compounded by the lack of public transport connections to nearby towns.

4.37 The District Council owns a number of community leisure facilities, including five swimming pools and a theatre. The wider role of the authority as an enabler to generate recreational and cultural activities is seen as more important in terms of their overall contribution to meeting community needs in the District.

4.38 Key social issues are summarised as follows:

- Provision of affordable housing;
- Providing adequate community and health facilities in the face of increased demand from the anticipated expansion in the M11 Corridor, to ensure that the health and quality of life of residents does not suffer;
- Providing for local needs first and foremost;
- Ensuring wealth and access to services are shared equitably;
- Improving provision and access to transportation and facilities for young people.

5.0 KEY SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

5.1 In order to gain maximum value from the use of the Sustainability Appraisal, it will need to be targeted to a consideration of the issues of importance to the District. These issues are set out below: they have been derived from the baseline data summarised in Section 4 and the Baseline Report (November 2004).

5.2 One of the most important issues for local residents is the affordability of housing. This concern is strongly demonstrated by the baseline data. The speed at which house prices have increased has meant that buying a house is beyond the reach of many local people, particularly the young. There are considerable sustainability implications associated with this problem which need to be taken on board and drawn out as part of the appraisal process.

5.3 The District's environmental and historic quality is one of its key assets - one that residents value highly. Landscape and rural character are among the defining features of East Hertfordshire. The diversity of species and habitats within this landscape are of vital importance to biodiversity, both locally and nationally. The natural environment "closer to home" is also important, however. Gardens and open spaces within towns are often significant wildlife habitats as well as valued recreational resources for residents. Whilst securing affordable housing is an acknowledged priority, this must be balanced against safeguarding and enhancing the environmental quality of the District. This balance needs to be reflected in the appraisal process, and the policy choices made explicit.

5.4 The District has a strong economy and a key-planning objective must be to consolidate and strengthen economic performance. The provision of affordable housing is an important factor in maintaining a healthy balance between jobs and housing availability.

5.5 Transport is a key concern for the District and it has social and economic, but perhaps most importantly, environmental implications. The car is overwhelmingly the choice of travel mode. The implications of this become more and more apparent as the District's roads become congested, air quality deteriorates and access to services by non-car modes becomes increasingly difficult. The location of affordable housing can have a considerable influence on travel patterns - this linkage can be investigated as part of the appraisal.

5.6 Future use of the sustainability appraisal process will enable policy makers and development control staff to evaluate a full range of environmental, social and economic issues. Particular attention is drawn to the key issues outlined above.

6.0 THE APPRAISAL OBJECTIVES

6.1 The first stage of the Sustainability Appraisal Study established what sustainability means in the context of East Hertfordshire. The consultants did this with the help of stakeholders from the Local Strategic Partnership, plus community input through the Community Voice Forum of Bishop's Stortford. This culminated in a series of sustainability objectives for the appraisal process. These have been used for the appraisals of the Local Plan Second Review and the Affordable Housing SPD, as well as the Bishop's Stortford Masterplanning Study. As a result of these experiences, the objectives have been further refined through the process of consultation and scrutiny. The objectives are set out below.

Sustainability Objectives

- Healthy, socially-integrated neighbourhoods
- Everyone has access to a decent home they can afford and local housing needs are addressed
- Transport infrastructure which provides for, and encourages, sustainable movement patterns
- Sustainable resource use is achieved through the efficient use of land, water, energy, and materials/waste
- Development is physically integrated with, responds to and enhances local character and distinctiveness
- The local environment is protected and enhanced to form the green infrastructure framework for development

- Self-sufficient sustainable communities, which support a flourishing and healthy economy.

6.2 The objectives will form the criteria against which documents, strategies, and development proposals will be appraised. Following the establishment of the objectives, a series of more detailed sustainability indicators and targets was drawn up by the consultants, again with assistance from members of the Local Strategic Partnership, District and County Council officers, and with input from the Government Office for the East of England. These are set out in the next section.

7.0 SUSTAINABILITY INDICATORS AND TARGETS

7.1 The sustainability indicators set out in this chapter are intended to be used to measure performance of the plan or strategy against the sustainability objectives at two levels:

- i) District Level
- ii) Site Level

7.2 Two sets of indicators were therefore prepared by the consultants. The District Level set will be used to appraise documents in the Local Development Framework as well as the Community Strategy. They will also be used to track the performance of the District as a whole on an annual basis, providing an input into the Annual Monitoring Report. The Site Level toolkit will be used to assess development sites in their performance against those sustainability indicators that can be evaluated at site level. There are a number of indicators, which can be tracked at both levels.

7.3 When defining indicators, the following criteria were used:

District Level Indicators should be measurable:

- to track progress against sustainability objectives
- at the District scale (i.e. not national, regional or county)
- on an annual basis (with a small number of exceptions)
- using data that is already being collected where possible
- without significant additional resource implications for the District Council

Site Level Indicators should be measurable:

- to track progress against sustainability indicators
- at site level, i.e. for new development proposals
- to aid developers in preparing their planning applications
- to aid Development Control officers in the decision-making process.

7.4 Where thresholds are suggested for site level indicators, these should generally equate to the ODPM definition of major development (10 or more dwellings or a site of 0.5 hectares or more; or for commercial development 1,000 square metres or more or a site of one or more hectares). These should be used except where there is an established threshold, e.g. for affordable housing, when current and proposed thresholds are normally stated.

7.5 The indicators shown below have been evolved through a series of iterations and applications and have been refined up to and including the completion of the consultants' report on the Bishop's Stortford Masterplanning Study. They were developed as one continuous list, numbered, and then split into District and Site Level tables as shown below. Therefore, when a reference number is missing from one table it will appear in the other.

7.6 The two sets of indicators and targets are set out in Appendices 1 and 2 to this document. Within each model, the sequence of objectives accords with the agreed list in Chapter 6 above, but does not mean to imply that social objectives are more important than the others and vice versa. When using the District Level indicators, reference should also be made to the Baseline Study Report (November 2004). This sets

out the performance of the District against the sustainability indicators for the baseline year of 2004.

Transport Spreadsheet Model

7.7 As part of the Site Level Indicators, a separate Transport Spreadsheet Model has been produced for Indicator T9 - Impact of new development on surrounding transport network (at Appendix 3 to the SPD).

7.8 Indicator T9 is intended to obtain information on the likely impact of the development on the road network. This is usually carried out at a later stage of project definition by means of a full Transport Assessment. Assessing the impact of travel from development is a complex process, and any results obtained by a more simplistic method, outlined in the approach in Appendix 3 to the SPD, can be considered only as a guide to possible outcomes. A full detailed Transport Assessment would still need to be undertaken for developments meeting the County Council Transport Assessment criteria thresholds.

7.9 However, the value of a spreadsheet model, as contained at Appendix 3 to the SPD, even in a simplified form, is that broad brush assessments can be made, and the magnitude of mitigation needed to achieve a satisfactory result can be estimated. A judgement can then be made as to whether the mitigation needed to achieve a satisfactory result is likely to be deliverable and/or affordable.

7.10 The use of the Site Level Indicators will be integrated into the Development Control process to assess development proposals alongside the application of Development Plan policies. It will also assist in pre-application discussions and help developers in the

preparation of planning applications. The aim is not to duplicate current good practices, but to provide a tool that helps officers to draw out the key issues and considerations for a development within the wider context of sustainability. This approach is in line with the new emphasis on spatial planning introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the functions of the planning system to deliver sustainable development.