

CHAPTER 7: CORE POLICIES

7.0 The policies in this section apply across the whole District and are based on themes.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

National Context

7.1 Sustainable development is the core principle underpinning planning. At the heart of sustainable development is the simple idea of ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for future generations. The Government set out four aims for sustainable development in its Strategy for Sustainable Development in the UK (1999):

- Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone
- Effective protection of the environment
- The prudent use of natural resources
- The maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

7.2 National Policy⁶ sets out planning priorities particularly in relation to environmental sustainability. This includes the need to reduce carbon emissions and to promote renewable energy and sustainable transport.

Regional Context

7.3 Sustainable development principles are at the core of the Regional Spatial Strategy⁷. Local Development documents are required to help deliver sustainable development particularly through:

- Reducing carbon emissions and impact on climate change
- Creating sustainable communities with good access to services and facilities
- Protecting and enhancing the environment.

Local Context

7.4 Sustainable development is critical to the delivery of many of the Council's and community's aspirations and is central to the Spatial Vision and Strategic Objectives for the Core Strategy. Time and time again the key priorities of local people are to deliver a strategy which:

- Improves access to jobs, services and facilities for all groups
- Achieves a high quality environment
- Reduces our carbon footprint
- Reduces crime and anti-social behaviour and
- Increases the supply of affordable housing.

7.5 These can all be addressed by future development and ensuring that it is sustainable in terms of its economic, social and environmental impact. The policies and plans in the document have been tested by a Sustainability Appraisal with this in mind.

Building Futures: a Hertfordshire Guide to Promoting Sustainability in Development

7.6 Hertfordshire County Council, together with the Hertfordshire Districts, has produced guidance for planning officers and developers on how to make development in Hertfordshire as sustainable as possible. It offers practical and user-friendly advice for everyone involved in the preparation of development proposals, for local authorities and other agencies in assessing those proposals, and for individuals with an interest

6 Planning Policy Statement: Planning and Climate Change - Supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1

7 Policy SS1: Achieving Sustainable Development

in development in the county. It is a web-based facility which is updated regularly to address emerging policy requirements, legislation changes and new examples of good practice. It can be viewed at: <http://www.hertslink.org/buildingfutures> and includes topic areas on Air, Design, Energy, Materials, Noise, Safety, Waste and Water.

What you said

There was strong support for all future development in Three Rivers to be sustainable, particularly in relation to protecting the environment. Specific comments are covered in detail within each of the relevant preferred policy approaches within this document.

What the Sustainability Appraisal said

The principal objective of the Sustainability Appraisal is to ensure the promotion of sustainable development as part of all plans, strategies and policies. Specific comments are covered in detail within each of the relevant preferred policy approaches within this document.

CP1

Preferred Policy Approach – Overarching Policy On Sustainable Development

The preferred approach is to ensure all development in Three Rivers is sustainable. This means promoting development that takes into account the need to:

- Tackle climate change by reducing carbon emissions, increasing energy efficiency of buildings, promoting the use of renewable energy systems, avoiding development in areas at risk from flooding and using water and other natural resources wisely, including through the use of sustainable building materials (Policies DC9, DC10, DC11)
- Make efficient use of land by guiding development onto previously developed, brown-field land and with mixed-use development wherever possible (CP2, CP3, CP6, CP7)
- Reduce waste going to landfill by re-using and recycling building materials and providing opportunities for recycling wherever possible (Policy DC12)
- Protect our natural, built and historic environments from inappropriate development and improve the diversity of wildlife and habitats (Policies DC2, DC3, DC13)
- Build mixed and sustainable communities by providing housing across a range of tenures and types including affordable housing (Policies CP3, CP4)
- Maintain high levels of employment by attracting jobs and training opportunities for local people (Policy CP6)
- Improve access to jobs, skills, services and facilities particularly within areas of deprivation in the District (Policies CP6, CP7, CP9, DC6)
- Reduce the need to travel by locating development in accessible locations and promoting a range of travel modes other than the private car (Policy CP8)
- Promote buildings and public spaces of a high design quality that respects local distinctiveness and will endure and reduces opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour (Policies DC7, DC8)
- Manage risk of and from pollution in relation to quality of land, air and water and dealing with land contamination (Policy DC14)

As part of their applications for development, applicants will be required to submit a 'Sustainability Statement' demonstrating the extent to which sustainability principles have been incorporated into the location, design, construction and future use of their proposals.

Development will not be permitted unless it is demonstrated that sustainable development principles are satisfied through compliance with the policies of this Core Strategy and other relevant regional and national policy requirements.

Reasoned Justification

7.7 The need for sustainable development at national, regional and local level is well established and is of the highest priority. The preferred policy approach seeks to provide an over-arching framework against which all applications will be considered. It also highlights the more detailed policy requirements set out elsewhere in the Core Strategy and the context for the Sustainability Statements. The requirement for a Sustainability Statement will ensure that sustainability requirements are carefully considered by applicants at an early opportunity and can be integrated within development proposals.

7.8 Further details of the Sustainability Statement will be prepared by the Council (as part of a subsequent stage of the Core Strategy and/or through a separate guidance note). The Statement will include a template covering a range of environmental, social and economic objectives that need to be addressed by development proposals (broadly following those contained within the sustainability checklist within Appendix 1 of the Local Plan). It will also include the requirement for a 'C-Plan' energy statement (Policy DC10).

Options Rejected

7.9 Specific options relating to each of the policy areas referred to are covered in detail within each of the relevant preferred policy approaches in the Core Strategy.

Housing

7.10 National guidance requires that housing provision in the District must fulfil the following four key objectives:

- i. To provide an adequate and continuous supply of housing to meet strategic requirements
- ii. To provide a range of types and sizes of homes to meet needs at an appropriate density
- iii. To address local affordability issues
- iv. To provide accommodation for the needs of Gypsy and Traveller groups and Travelling Showpeople.

Providing an Adequate and Continuous Supply of Housing to meet Strategic Requirements

National Context

7.11 Local planning authorities must ensure a continuous supply of housing land over the next 5, 10 and 15 years to meet local needs. They should undertake a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment to assess the potential to accommodate new housing development within, or adjacent to, urban areas.

7.12 Whilst the priority is to re-use previously developed land (brown-field) and make better use of existing land and buildings, land outside the urban area also needs to be investigated including green field sites and sites in the Green Belt. The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment helps inform decisions on the type, location, availability and phasing of future housing sites over a 15-year period from the date of adoption of the Core Strategy document.

Regional Context

7.13 The East of England Plan⁸ requires Three Rivers to accommodate 4,000 dwellings over the period from 2001-2021, which equates to a target of 200 homes per year.

Local Context

7.14 During the Issues and Options consultation in 2007, it was projected that there would be insufficient capacity in the District to meet the regional target. At that time, this took into account:

- What had already been built since 2001
- What was 'in the pipeline' in terms of sites with planning permission
- The 'capacity' of the urban area to accommodate new houses.

7.15 It was projected that there was likely to be a shortfall of around 900 dwellings over the Plan period, with insufficient annual provision being made, particularly from 2014/15 onwards. As a consequence, the Council consulted on a broad range of housing locations outside the urban area, on the edge of existing settlements, which could potentially meet the identified shortfall.

7.16 The Council has now updated the position regarding future housing supply (through a 'housing trajectory'). Importantly, the trajectory takes into account the emerging results of new research undertaken by the Council; this is known as the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.

7.17 The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2008) has been undertaken with the adjoining authorities (Dacorum and Watford) and in consultation with landowners, developers and housing providers. This updates and extends the 2005 Urban Capacity Study and identifies sites with potential to accommodate new housing development within or adjacent to defined urban areas. It also considers how easily the sites can be developed and the likely time frame for their development. The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment looks beyond the 2021 regional timeframe to 2026, as local authorities are required to plan to meet housing needs 15 years after the date upon which the Core Strategy document has been adopted.

What you told us

Public consultation on the Issues and Options showed that housing development should make full and effective use of land having regard to the character of the surrounding area.

What the Sustainability Appraisal told us

The Sustainability Appraisal indicates that a steady supply of housing is necessary to generate vitality, facilitate economic prosperity, and help support local shops and services required by local residents.

The Future Supply of Housing in Three Rivers

7.18 The findings of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment can be fed into the Council's overall projected supply for housing up to 2021, which is known as the housing 'trajectory'. The figures have changed since those produced as part of the Supplemental Issues and Options consultation in summer 2007. This is a result of updated completions and planning permissions information, and revised estimates of capacities on both brownfield and greenfield/ Green Belt sites based on emerging information from the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.

8 Policy H1: Regional Housing Provision 2001-2021

1	Sites under construction (including allocated sites)	389
2	Sites with full permission	358
3	Sites with outline permission	71
4	Larger Housing Sites	835
5	Smaller Housing Sites (as informed by the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment)	845
6	Windfall allowance (years 13-15 only)	114
A	Total capacity identified (total of 1 to 6)	2612
B	Completions 2001-2008	1595
C	Total projected supply (A+B)	4207
D	Regional Housing Allocation	4000
	BALANCE (D-C)	+207

Figure 7: Housing Trajectory Table 2001-2021 at 2009 Preferred Options⁹

1	Sites under construction (including allocated sites)	389
2	Sites with full permission	358
3	Sites with outline permission	71
4	Larger Housing Sites	835
5	Smaller Housing Sites (as informed by the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment)	845
6	Windfall allowance (years 13-18 only)	304
A	Total capacity identified (total of 1 to 6)	2802
B	Completions 2001-2008	1595
C	Total projected supply (A+B)	4397
D	Regional Housing Allocation	5000
	BALANCE (D-C)	-603

Figure 8: Housing Trajectory Table 2001-2026 at 2009 Preferred Options

7.19 In relation to Figures 7 and 8, details of the Council's preferred 'larger housing sites' are set out in Appendix 4. Details of the Council's preferred 'smaller housing sites', as informed by the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, are set out in Appendix 5. The precise boundaries of sites will be developed as part of a subsequent Site Allocations Document. It should be noted that future development proposals on these sites will be tested in detail as part of the development control process.

7.20 Taking into account the numbers of housing already completed, those 'in the pipeline' with planning permission and those that are expected to come forward on identified sites, it is expected that there will be sufficient capacity in the District to meet the regional target up to 2021. On the assumption that all of the identified housing sites come forward, there will be sufficient capacity to 2022. This reflects that some housing will be located on the edge of existing settlements, within the broad housing areas as referred to in the Preferred Spatial Strategy and Place-Making policies (see chapter 6) and Key Diagram.

⁹ Planning permissions reflect position at 1st January 2009

7.21 Local authorities are required to plan to meet housing needs 15 years after the date upon which the Core Strategy document has been adopted. It is anticipated that the Core Strategy will be adopted in 2010, requiring a continuous supply until 2025. The Council acknowledges that on the basis of sites currently identified, and the continuation of the current East of England Plan target of 200 dwellings per annum after 2021, there is likely to be a shortage in identified housing supply of around 600 dwellings between 2021-2026. However the Council considers that the supply of housing post-2021 will need to be reassessed as part of the review of the Regional Spatial Strategy. At that time the Council will identify broad locations for growth to cover the period up to 2026/2031. It is anticipated that housing supply over this period will continue to come from within, and on the edge of, existing settlements, and may include potential sources of supply identified in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.

7.22 In essence whilst priority will be given to focusing development on sites within the existing settlements, there is recognition that some peripheral locations will also be needed in the longer term to meet need. Regular monitoring will help assess the appropriateness of this strategy over time.

7.23 A broad indication of when housing will come forward over future years can be provided through a phasing strategy. The Council will seek to phase the amount of housing coming forward having regard to the following considerations:

- The need to provide a rolling 5-year supply of housing averaging a minimum of 200 dwellings per annum to meet the Regional Spatial Strategy target
- The deliverability of housing sites on the ground
- The likely infrastructure requirements of development
- The sequential approach whereby previously developed and urban sites come forward in advance of greenfield sites and taking into account flood risk
- Regular monitoring of sites coming forward

7.24 On the basis of the results of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and an assessment of deliverability of sites, Figure 9 gives a broad indication of the likely phasing for housing site delivery. The phasing for specific sites is indicated in Appendix 4 for larger housing sites, and Appendix 5 for smaller housing sites.

Phase	Indicative Dwelling Completions
2001-2006	1010
2006-2011	1255
2011-2016	815
2016-2021	1130
2001-2021	4210

Figure 9: Indicative Phasing Strategy for Housing Supply

CP2

Preferred Policy Approach- Housing Supply

The preferred approach is to identify sufficient land for housing in the District to meet the East of England Plan's regional housing target of 200 dwellings per year by 2021.

This will entail making provision primarily with the existing urban area (approximately 70% of total housing development to 2021), and also within broad areas of housing growth on the edge of existing settlements (approximately 30% of total supply to 2021). The preferred broad areas are identified in Policies PSP2, PSP3 (Place-Making policies) and on the Key Diagram. The supply of land coming forward will be regularly monitored and adjustments made to where and how provision will be made.

Provision will be made through the identification of specific housing sites in the Site Allocations document. This will be based on the Council's Housing Land Availability Assessment (2008) and subsequent updates.

Specific sites will be identified on the basis of a criteria-based approach, taking into account whether development on the site:

- Will be accessible to public transport, services and facilities
- Will not have a significant impact on the environment in terms of visual amenity, wildlife and flood-risk
- Is likely to come forward over the Plan period.

A sequential approach will also be applied whereby preference will be given to:

1. Previously developed land within the urban area, followed by
2. Previously developed sites on the edge of existing settlements, followed by
3. Greenfield sites on the edge of existing settlements

Through a phasing strategy the Council will seek to ensure that a rolling five year supply of land is maintained and overall supply spread throughout the Plan period so that there is not an undue burden on services and infrastructure to the detriment of existing and new householders.

The supply of housing post-2021 will need to be re-assessed at a later date within the context of a review of the Regional Spatial Strategy. At that time the Council will identify broad locations for growth to cover the period up to 2026/2031. It is anticipated that housing supply over this period will continue to come from within, and on the edge of, existing settlements.

Reasoned Justification

7.25 The preferred approach seeks to ensure that a continuous supply of housing can be delivered to meet regional targets and local needs by:

- Identifying sufficient capacity for sites in the District (both in urban and edge of settlement areas)
- Creating a framework for allocating specific sites through the Site Allocation Development Plan Document and
- Providing flexibility in delivery of supply through a phasing strategy and monitoring framework.

7.26 With regard to the allocation of specific sites for housing, the preferred approach acknowledges that allocations, including the determination of precise site boundaries, will be set out in a subsequent Site Allocations Development Plan Document. However, the Council considers it important at this stage to illustrate how, and from where, the total supply of housing to 2021 could be delivered. As such, in addition to the five

larger strategic housing sites (as set out in policies PSP2, PSP3, the Key Diagram and Appendix 4), this document also sets out a range of smaller sites that could contribute to the supply of housing (Appendix 5). These sites have been identified on the basis of the criteria set out in Preferred Policy CP2, and have been selected from the full range of potential sites that are identified in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.

7.27 Whilst consideration of smaller sites is not normally a matter for Core Strategies, the Council considers that the supply of housing from these sites is a critical part of the overall housing supply in the District (as demonstrated in Figures 7 and 8) and central to the achievement of the spatial vision and strategic objectives. The Council is therefore keen to gauge public opinion on the sites identified, in advance of further consideration and consultation through the Site Allocations Development Plan Document process.

7.28 A windfall allowance has been included after the first 10 years in line with previous trends that have been identified through monitoring and the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.

Options Rejected

7.29 As set out in the Spatial Strategy section, the Council believes that there is no realistic alternative to the principle of planning for development needs in the area and meeting regional housing targets in the area.

7.30 A rigorous process of selecting and rejecting broad housing areas on the edge of existing settlements has been undertaken to ensure as far as possible that growth will be sustainable.

Providing a Range of Types and Sizes of Homes to meet Needs at an Appropriate Density

National Context

7.31 The Government wishes to promote and develop high quality housing that creates mixed, sustainable communities across wider local authority areas as well as at neighbourhood levels. This means providing for all members of the community including families with children, single person households, older people and disabled people.

7.32 Local authorities should develop housing density policies having regard to:

- The level of housing demand and need and the availability of suitable land in the area
- The current and future level and capacity of infrastructure, services and facilities
- Using land efficiently and reducing, and adapting to, the impacts of climate change
- The current and future levels of accessibility, particularly public transport accessibility
- The characteristics of the area, including the current and proposed mix of uses and
- The desirability of achieving high quality, well-designed housing.

7.33 Reflecting the above, local authorities may wish to set out a range of densities across the plan area rather than one broad density range, although 30 dwellings per hectare (dph) net should be used as a national indicative minimum to guide policy development and decision-making, until local density policies are in place.

Regional Context

7.34 The Regional Spatial Strategy supports national objectives to promote social inclusion and efficient use of land.

Local Context

- 7.35 85% of the housing stock in Three Rivers is in private ownership. The Council's Private Sector Stock Condition Survey (2006) found that the condition of housing in Three Rivers is generally good. However 9% of properties do not meet the Decent Homes Standard primarily because of deterioration of properties over time and older properties not having reasonably modern kitchens and bathrooms or poor heating/insulation. Most people living in such properties tend to be over 65. Whilst the Council's Housing Strategy (2006) seeks to improve conditions in the existing stock, it will also be important for the planning system to provide a range of high quality housing and offer residents a choice of housing suitable to their needs and circumstances; this will enable the best use to be made of the overall stock.
- 7.36 The Council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2009) looks at the needs of specific household groups and found that:
- The population of the District is projected to increase by 1,200 people (1.4%) by 2021 with most growth in the over 50s
 - The number of households is projected to increase by 2,900 (8.5%), with numbers of single households rising
 - Owner occupation is likely to decrease as a proportion of tenure types.
- 7.37 The Assessment also looks at housing mix in terms of size of accommodation. The following overall proportions are recommended as targets to meet future general housing requirements up to 2021:
- 1 bedroom units: 25%
 - 2 bedroom units: 30%
 - 3 bedroom units: 40%
 - 4+ bedroom units: 5%
- 7.38 Consultation in 2006 considered whether it would be appropriate to require a range in the type and size of dwellings for development or whether it should apply only to a certain size of development (see 'What You Told Us' below).
- 7.39 With regard to housing density, the Council acknowledges that, whilst it is important to make more efficient use of land, particularly to reduce pressure on greenfield sites, this should not compromise the quality of the environment and existing residential areas in Three Rivers, some of which may fall within areas of special landscape or historic value.
- 7.40 Consultation in 2006 considered various options relating to the setting of housing densities. This ranged from:
- Assessing each form of development on its merits, taking into account the character of the area and the location of the site in relation to shops, services and public transport
 - Requiring housing development to meet specific density guidelines set on a settlement-by-settlement basis, whereby the higher order towns, such as Rickmansworth, would accommodate higher concentrations of development and lower order villages, such as Bedmond and Sarratt, the lowest levels
 - Setting specific density guidelines based on accessibility to public transport, services and facilities.

What you told us

There was strong support for a full range of housing to be provided to meet identified needs on all sizes of development; this includes providing a range of dwelling sizes and dwelling types include specialist housing for elderly and those with mobility disabilities.

The results from the public consultation also indicated strong support for development to respect the character of existing areas and for development to be considered on its merits.

What the Sustainability Appraisal told us

The Sustainability Appraisal supports a range of housing as it will help create mixed and balanced communities, social inclusiveness and reducing levels of inward commuting.

The Sustainability Appraisal found that linking the level of density with the level of accessibility was the most beneficial. Setting levels too low may end up forcing development towards greenfield/Green Belt sites. High density options can also lead to social problems without careful attention to design.

CP3

Preferred Policy Approach- Housing Mix And Density

The preferred approach is twofold:

- Promote high quality residential development across the District that caters for a range of housing needs as identified by the Strategic Housing Market Assessment. These will meet the needs of specific groups including young, elderly and disabled people, and Black and Minority Ethnic Groups.
- Provide through new development a range of house types and sizes to reflect the existing and future needs of the Three Rivers population and the characteristic housing in the area.
- Ensure that development makes the best use of land through appropriate density.

The Council will produce guidance as part of an overall Design Guide for the District, as a Supplementary Planning Document. In the meantime, the density of development will be considered on its merits taking into account the need to:

- Maintain an average density of at least 30 dwellings per hectare on new development sites across the District
- Promote higher densities in locations that are highly accessible to public transport, services and facilities
- Respect density levels within existing residential areas particularly within areas of special landscape and/or historic value in the District.

Reasoned Justification

7.41 The preferred policy approach will help meet national and regional requirements to promote social inclusion and make efficient use of land. The range of housing requirements will reflect the findings of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment. The density requirements seek to balance the need to increase densities where possible whilst still respecting the special character of the District.

7.42 The Council's Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document will be used to inform appropriate densities of new development within a particular locality and encourage good and imaginative design of new development so that more efficient use of land can be achieved without compromising the quality of the local environment.

Options Rejected

- 7.43 The option of only seeking a range of dwelling types and sizes on larger developments is rejected. This is because the Council receives a large number of applications for development that are relatively small. Therefore, in order to fully address the objectives for mixed communities and in meeting the community's needs, it is necessary for all development to contribute. The options of specifying density levels only according to the type of settlement or the level of accessibility has also been rejected as it is essential that the character of the area is also taken into account. However, the Council's proposed Design Guide will provide further guidance on densities appropriate to particular areas and locations.

Addressing Local Affordability

National Context

- 7.44 The Government has indicated its commitment to providing high quality housing for people who are unable to access or afford housing on the open market. The Government's definition of affordable includes social rented and intermediate housing¹⁰.
- 7.45 Social rented housing includes rented housing owned and managed by local authorities and registered social landlords, for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime.
- 7.46 Intermediate affordable housing includes housing at prices and rents above those of social rent, but below market price or rents. These can include shared equity products, (e.g. HomeBuy) and other low cost homes for sale and intermediate rent.
- 7.47 Low cost market housing is not included within the Government's definition of affordable housing.

Regional Context

- 7.48 The housing strategy for the London Commuter Belt Sub-Region (LCBSR) recognises that the housing markets of the sub-region are significantly influenced by their proximity to the Capital and its economy and the impact of migration and commuting. As a consequence, access to housing is financially out of reach for a large and growing sector of the population; house price inflation over recent years has consistently outstripped growth in household incomes. The East of England Plan¹¹ sets a target that 35% of all new residential units delivered in the region will be affordable.

Local Context

- 7.49 Within Three Rivers, the Housing Needs Study (2004 update) estimated that 429 affordable dwellings would be needed each year to satisfy need. Such provision would exceed the total number of all housing types in the District in any year.
- 7.50 The Council has undertaken a more up-to-date assessment of need through the Strategic Housing Market Assessment in partnership with some of the Hertfordshire authorities in the London Commuter Belt Sub-Region. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment provides a thorough assessment of current and future housing markets and needs and the housing requirements of specific groups.
- 7.51 The key findings from the Assessment are that:
- The requirement for affordable housing in and around the Three Rivers area remains exceptionally high. This is largely as a result of very high house prices and rents, a constricted supply of suitable sites for all housing types and losses from the existing affordable stock through 'Right To Buy' sales

10 Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing

11 Policy H2: Affordable Housing

- In order to completely satisfy affordable housing requirements, 83% of all future housing supply in the district to 2021 would need to be affordable. This represents the highest requirement amongst the six authorities within the London Commuter Belt (west) sub-region

- In terms of tenure, the requirement for social rented accommodation remains higher than that of intermediate housing (70/30% split to 2021).

7.52 In terms of viability, the Council has also undertaken a Development Economics Study in partnership with adjoining authorities. This study assessed the economic viability of land for housing within the area, taking account of risks to delivery and likely levels of finance available for affordable housing, including public subsidy and the level of developer contribution that can reasonably be secured.

7.53 The study found that the viability of a site can vary across the District depending on:

- Its location within a high or lower house price area
- The density of development
- The nature of site
- The alternative uses available to the landowner.

7.54 The Study concludes that on average a 45% overall target for affordable housing from future housing developments across the District is achievable. It is recommended that a flexible approach be taken on a site by site basis, with greater amounts being sought in some higher value areas and lower amounts in lower value areas.

7.55 It also recommends that the site threshold at which targets are sought should be lowered to one unit to also enable small sites to contribute towards affordable housing provision in the District. In the case of small sites (between one and nine dwellings) it indicates that as an alternative to on-site provision, there is a role for the requirement of commuted payments towards provision off site.

7.56 The Local Plan policy in Three Rivers required all sites providing 25 units or more (or on sites of one hectare or more) to provide an element of affordable housing (previously 30%). National guidance¹² superseded this Local Plan policy approach whereby it indicates a minimum development site threshold of 15 units for local authorities to seek affordable housing. Furthermore, local authorities can now set lower minimum thresholds, where viable and practicable, including in rural areas.

What you told us

- The amount of affordable housing that can be secured through new development should be enhanced by increasing the proportion of affordable housing required and requiring it from smaller sites
- There was support to lower the existing threshold at that time from 25 units to 10 units. There was also support to increase the element of affordable housing sought from 30% to 40%
- There was particular support for allocating sites wholly or mostly for affordable housing and allowing small-scale affordable housing schemes in the rural villages of Bedmond and Sarratt to meet local needs
- There was some concern from developers about the economic viability of providing affordable housing.

12 Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing

What the Sustainability Appraisal told us

- The provision of affordable housing is important in terms of equity and preventing social exclusion, increasing prosperity and growth and revitalizing centres
- Delivering increased amounts of affordable housing will be beneficial in terms of equity and preventing social exclusion, increasing prosperity and growth and revitalizing centres
- Financial viability and impact on creating mixed communities need to be taken into account
- The provision of rural affordable housing will help support and maintain thriving and sustainable rural communities.

7.57 Since the Council undertook public consultation on this issue, the need for affordable housing has become an increasing priority as reflected in the Community Strategy. Monitoring also indicates that the majority of housing sites coming forward in recent years are for relatively small developments (just 7% of sites given planning permission for new housing development in 2007/08 were for sites of 15 or more units). It is clear therefore that, in order to ensure affordability in the District in any meaningful way, a step-change in policy approach and delivery is required. This means lowering the site threshold at which affordable housing is sought as a part of development and increasing the percentage of affordable housing as a proportion of all housing on a site.

7.58 It is proposed that the following Preferred Approach is taken towards affordable housing:

CP4

Preferred Policy Approach – Affordable Housing

Adopting an affordable housing target for development which:

- Contributes to meeting the East of England Plan indicative target of 35% of all new housing to be affordable (including social rented and intermediate housing). In view of the identified and pressing need for affordable housing in the District, the Council will seek an overall provision of around 45%.
- Meets local need as informed by the Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2009 and Development Economics Study 2009. This means in practice that:
 - 45% of all new housing development will be affordable (of which 70% should be social rented, and 30% intermediate)
 - Allocating specific sites, at higher or lower levels of affordable housing depending on site circumstances, location and density of development. In some cases a target of 50% or above may be appropriate. Site specific targets will be set through the Site Allocations Development Plan Document
 - Affordable housing provided must reflect the mix of size and type required for future housing, as identified in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and subsequent updates.
- In most cases affordable housing provision will be made on site, but in relation to small sites delivering between one and nine dwellings, the Council will consider the use of commuted payments towards provision off site. Such payments will be broadly equivalent in value to on-site provision but may vary depending on site circumstances and viability.
- Permitting small-scale affordable housing within the village core areas of Sarratt and Bedmond on the basis of need through the release and allocation of Rural Exception Sites. Allocations will be made through the Sites Allocation Development Plan Document.

In assessing affordable housing requirements the Council will treat each case on its merits, taking into account site circumstances and financial viability. In calculating the percentage of affordable units to be provided as part of a development scheme, the affordable housing requirement will normally be 'rounded up' to the nearest whole number.

Reasoned Justification

7.59 The Preferred Option provides an approach which will help deliver the regional and local affordability targets within the urban and rural parts of the District and provide an increase in the numbers of affordable units that can be delivered in future. It is based on an up-to-date assessment of housing needs and markets in the area and economic viability.

7.60 The Council will also produce further guidance on the provision of affordable housing in the District, in the form of an Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document. This will include guidance on the calculation of commuted payments from small sites and the role and use of such funds in the Council's wider housing strategy. It will be regularly updated, taking into account the findings from new research and monitoring information.

Options Rejected

7.61 Options proposing higher site thresholds and lower target proportions of affordable housing than specified in the Preferred Approach have been considered. They have been rejected because they:

- Will not adequately meet affordable housing needs in the District
- Will not maximise opportunities on different types of site
- Do not reflect the nature of land supply in the District.

Providing for the Needs of Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation and Travelling Showpeople

National Context

7.62 Government policy¹³ requires local authorities to make provision for gypsies and travellers where there is evidence of need, through their Local Development Framework. Need is often expressed in terms of 'pitches' and/or 'sites'. A pitch is an area of land where a Gypsy or Traveller household can reside; typically this may contain a building, parking space and one or more caravans (the average number of caravans per pitch is currently estimated as 1.7), while a site is an area of land comprising multiple pitches.

Regional Context

7.63 The Single Issue Review of the Regional Spatial Strategy¹⁴, indicates that 1,187 new pitches will be required in the region as a whole by 2011. Of this Three Rivers' allocation is 15 additional pitches up to 2011. Beyond 2011, the Review proposes that Districts will need to plan for an annual 3% increase in pitch provision. Whilst accepting that the needs of gypsies and travellers need to met, the Council has expressed its concern about the level of pitch provision proposed for Three Rivers because:

- There is a lack of proven need to justify this level of provision locally
- Account has not been taken of the significant environmental and physical restraints in the District
- It is neither workable nor feasible to suggest that the traveller community would wish to move into Three Rivers from other parts of the Region.

7.64 The Government will determine the final number of pitches required in 2009 following an Examination in Public by Planning Inspectors in October 2008. Once the allocation has been approved by the Secretary of State, the Council will need to make provision through site allocations in the Site Allocations DPD and through the development control process using a criteria-based policy approach.

13 ODPM Circular 01/06: Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites

14 Draft Policy H4: Provision of pitches for Gypsy and Traveller Caravans (February 2008)

Local Context

Evidence of need

7.65 'An Assessment of the Accommodation Needs of Gypsies and Travellers in South and West Hertfordshire,' (known as the CURS Report) was commissioned by Dacorum, Hertsmere, Watford, Three Rivers and St Albans councils and Hertfordshire County Council (2005). The report concluded that within South and West Hertfordshire there was the need for about 125 additional pitches over the next 5 years (i.e. to 2010). This comprised about 90 residential pitches and 35 pitches arising from household growth. In addition a need for 30 additional transit plots was identified. The Assessment provides a useful indication of need in the area, although subsequent analysis indicates that this has been over-estimated.

Scott Wilson Report

7.66 This report follows on from the Assessment of the Accommodation Needs of Gypsies and Travellers in South and West Hertfordshire report and was commissioned by the south and west Hertfordshire authorities to help identify potential Gypsy and Traveller sites in the study area. This consultant report known as the Scott Wilson Report (published in March 2007) identifies 16 sites in Three Rivers as potential sites. However, the findings of the report were not supported by Three Rivers District Council as the majority of the identified sites are located deep within the Green Belt and are remote from services and infrastructure.

What you told us

That additional provision in the District is needed to meet Gypsy and Traveller need but there were more in favour of dealing with applications for sites on an ad hoc basis rather than allocating new sites.

What the Sustainability Appraisal told us

That additional provision will in principle add to social inclusiveness objectives and to promoting balanced and integrated communities.

CP5

Preferred Policy Approach – Gypsy And Traveller Provision

Adopting a policy approach that meets the needs of Gypsy and Traveller groups in the local area by: Allocating sites in a subsequent Site Allocations Development Plan Document which reflects the level of pitch provision set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy Single Issue Review on Gypsies and Travellers (when finalised) up to 2011; beyond 2011 provision will be made for an annual 3% increase in pitch provision (calculated from overall planned provision in 2011).

In the meantime, in accordance with national guidance, a policy approach is proposed that allows the Council to respond to planning applications for Gypsy and Traveller sites, including transit sites and Travelling Showpeople sites. A criteria-based approach will be used to assess applications, which are similar to criteria for other types of residential accommodation. Sites would need to:

- Avoid areas at risk from flooding
- Avoid causing an adverse impact on areas of recognised wildlife and landscape importance, and on the openness of the Green Belt
- Be in or near existing settlements with access to local services, including shops, schools and healthcare

- Be well located to the highway network, with safe and convenient vehicular and pedestrian access
- Provide adequate on-site facilities for parking, storage, play and residential amenity
- Provide adequate levels of privacy and residential amenities for occupiers and not be detrimental to the amenities of adjacent occupiers.

The Council will use the above criteria to help guide the allocation of sites in a subsequent Site Allocations Development Plan Document.

Reasoned Justification

7.67 The preferred policy approach seeks to provide a framework for meeting the needs of Gypsies and Traveller groups in the local area through the future allocation of specific sites once the East of England's policy is finalised. In the meantime a criteria-based approach is proposed for dealing with planning applications.

7.68 The Council will work on the basis of a 3% increase in provision beyond 2011, if the Secretary of State considers this to be justified following the Examination into the RSS Single Issue Review document. It will also continue to monitor provision and assess need through updates of the needs assessment.

7.69 The draft RSS Single Issue Review did not include any level of transit pitch provision nor did it include any consideration of plot requirements for Travelling Showpeople. The Council will have regard to interim advice¹⁵ in relation to meeting needs for Travelling Showpeople. The finalised regional policy may include targets on transit sites and Travelling Showpeople, requiring further joint working between authorities in the region, and ongoing research into needs.

Options Rejected

7.70 The option of not allocating sites and simply determining any application for sites on an ad hoc basis was considered. However, this is considered to be a 'reactive' approach and was rejected on the basis that it is now contrary to Government policy. Whilst the Council proposes to use a criteria-based policy approach in the short term, it recognises that site allocations have the benefit of providing some certainty for local people and Gypsies and Travellers, and provide the best way of planning for provision in the long term.

¹⁵ Circular 04/07: Planning for Travelling Showpeople

EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

National Context

- 7.71 The Government's key aims for employment, as set out in PPG4¹⁶ are to:
- Raise the productivity of the UK economy
 - Maximise job opportunities for all
 - Improve the economic performance of all English regions and reduce the gap in economic growth rates between regions
 - Deliver sustainable development, the key principles of which include responding to climate change
 - Build prosperous communities by improving the economic performance of cities, sub-regions and local areas, promoting regeneration and tackling deprivation.

- 7.72 Employment in planning terms normally refers to 'B Class' employment uses. This means focusing on jobs which occupy factories/workshops, warehouses and offices. However in meeting the Government's aims, a full and diverse range of jobs will need to be promoted including those in retailing and service sectors.

Regional Context

- 7.73 In regional terms, the Regional Spatial Strategy states that the regional economy should be supported and developed in order to improve the quality of life of all those who live and work in the region. It is also important that economic growth is in alignment with growth in housing development, so that there is a balance between homes and jobs. Jobs growth will need to be concentrated where key economic sectors and clusters already exist (including in Hertfordshire).

- 7.74 English regions are required by the Government to deliver an economic growth target. Growth is measured in Gross Value Added per capita growth. The target is one that raises the annual Gross Value Added per capita growth rate above the 1990-2002 baseline period, which for the East of England averaged 2.1 per cent per annum. The Regional Economic Strategy 2008-2031 was launched in autumn 2008 and sets out a target of 2.3% GVA per capita growth to 2031.

- 7.75 In sub-regional terms, Three Rivers forms part of the 'London Arc' area, which also includes Watford, Hertsmere, Broxbourne, St Albans and Welwyn Hatfield Districts. Hertfordshire as a whole will be expected to provide 68,000 jobs up to 2021.

Local Context

- 7.76 The economy of south-west Hertfordshire (Three Rivers, Watford and Dacorum) is dominated by service industries such as those associated with motor vehicles sales and maintenance, computing, post and telecoms, construction, printing and publishing. These are the areas which offer the greatest opportunity for economic growth in the south-west Herts area in future. Three Rivers is particularly attractive to small businesses often relocating from London, and to film and media (as illustrated at Leavesden Park).

- 7.77 As set out in the Background and Context section, the District has a mixed economy of business and industry with large and small companies. There is a daily net outflow of workers to surrounding areas including London.

¹⁶ Planning Policy Guidance 4: Industrial, Commercial Development and Small Firms

7.78 Three Rivers provides for around 31,400 jobs (Annual Business Inquiry, 2007), which can be broken down into the following broad activity sectors:

Distribution, hotels and restaurants	23.6%
Public administration, education and health	18.9%
Finance, IT, other business activities	21.0%
Construction	16.2%
Manufacturing	7.1%
Other services	6.9%
Transport and communications	6.1%

(Source: ABI 2007)

7.79 The existing main employment areas in the District are set out below, and are identified on the Key Diagram (Map 2).

Employment Area	Size (ha)
Croxley/Tolpits Area	37.8
East of Kings Langley	13.85
Leavesden	32
Maple Cross	7.25
South Oxhey	1.0
Rickmansworth Town Centre	2.0
TOTAL	93.9

Figure 10: Summary of Main Employment Areas in Three Rivers

Source: south-west Herts Employment Space Report 2005

Employment Land Study

7.80 The Employment Land Study (2005) undertaken for the Districts in south-west Hertfordshire indicated that on the basis of projected growth within the area, Three Rivers cannot afford to lose any more employment floorspace within the industrial and warehousing sectors. There was however a projected oversupply of offices within Three Rivers, largely as a result of existing commitments at Leavesden Park.

7.81 The Study also identified the need to retain an element of employment land in the District in order to keep a check on existing high levels of out-commuting by Three Rivers residents. There also continues to be a demand for small and medium sized units for all types of employment and it remains important to protect and provide these types of units.

London Arc Study

7.82 Following on from the Issues and Options consultations, the Council has undertaken a further study with other Hertfordshire authorities within the 'London Arc' to assess the implications of the jobs growth targets within the Regional Spatial Strategy in term of land-use and employment sites within the District to 2026.

- 7.83 Findings indicate that Three Rivers should make provision for 2,378 additional jobs between 2006-2026. This can be broken down into Business Class activities such as offices, factories and warehousing (1,568 jobs) and non- Business Class activities such as hotels and catering, transport and communications, retailing, education and health (810 jobs).
- 7.84 Across the Arc area there is evidence that the office market is affected by slow demand for space and that there is likely to remain an oversupply of offices in the District, largely due to poor take up of space at Leavesden Park. The demand for industrial/warehousing is likely to remain particularly in relation to 'Smart Sheds' (high quality, flexible business space) and 'Secondary Sheds' (smaller, lower value, industrial space). The demand for 'Logistics/Big B8 sheds' (very large warehousing space) is also likely to remain in the area.
- 7.85 Taking into account business job growth and the likely demand and supply for employment space, the London Arc Study predicts how much land is likely to be required in each district up to 2026. This can be broken down into offices and general industrial/warehousing:
- In terms of office space, there is likely to be an over-supply of floorspace in order of 60,000-70,000 sq metres in Three Rivers. This is due largely to unimplemented commitments at Leavesden Park. The Study identifies Leavesden Park as having the potential long-term to become one of the more important office sites in the study area. However given the slow uptake in office space, it should also be considered for mixed and alternative uses.
 - In terms of general industrial and warehousing space, this varies according to the two scenarios used in the London Arc Study. This ranges from a surplus of around 5,000 sq metres (Scenario A) to a deficit of around 44,000 sq metres (Scenario B). The Council considers that Scenario A is the closer match to local situation in Three Rivers taking into account past floorspace per head trends, particularly in relation to warehousing space.

What you told us

The Issues and Options consultation carried out in 2006 and 2007 showed strong support for the release of employment land for residential and/or mixed-use development, if the required levels of new homes could not be achieved within existing residential areas. The most popular forms of alternative uses for employment areas was for residential and community uses.

There was also support for seeking local recruitment and training initiatives as part of attracting major economic employers to the area, although some concern was expressed about whether the securing of jobs for local people as part of new development would fall outside the scope of the planning system.

In locational terms there was support:

- To release 45% of land at Leavesden Park for non-employment uses and about one-third of land at Croxley Business Park and Kings Langley Employment Area
- To extend the Maple Cross Employment area eastwards into the Maple Lodge site with some further office/light industrial uses
- To release existing employment land at West Carpenders Park (Delta Gain), primarily for residential use
- To retain office space accommodation in Rickmansworth Town Centre

What the Sustainability Appraisal told us

The release of some employment sites would be sustainable in terms of being accessible to residential areas and making use of previously developed land and creating thriving mixed-use development. Any release of land would also need to cater for services and amenities to enable mixed-use developments to function viably. Where employment land is retained, it may also be sustainable to convert some office space into industrial and warehousing use, particularly as part of developing small and medium-sized businesses.

It is important that some employment areas are retained to some extent and spread evenly throughout the District to help with reducing out-commuting.

The adoption of a local recruitment and training policy would help improve the skills base of the local population and help deliver a skilled workforce.

In terms of locations:

- Leavesden Park – mixed-use development and some release of vacant office space is supported
- Croxley Business Park – office space here is of good quality and should be retained but some possibility of introducing residential uses in longer-term through higher density infilling
- Kings Langley Employment Area- continuation of current trend for some pockets to be converted to mixed-use accepted but large-scale residential could be problematic given the character of the area and present land uses. Some office space could be released to industrial and warehousing
- Maple Cross Employment Area/Maple Lodge site – a viable mixed-use scheme (residential and employment) with added services and amenities on the Maple Lodge site has potential, though account needs to be taken of the environmental constraints in the area. Employment uses are best located to the north-western part of the area
- West Carpenders Park – there are opportunities to promote as part of a viable mixed-use development and it is recommended that at least part of the area is retained for employment use, particularly for office uses which would benefit from public transport links
- Rickmansworth Town Centre – existing office space should be retained in the Town Centre so that it can continue to function as a viable mixed-use area.

CP6

Preferred Policy Approach – Employment And Economic Development

Adopting a policy approach that:

- Sustains parts of the District as attractive areas for business location
- Provides an appropriate number of jobs to meet strategic requirements
- Promotes skills and learning of the local workforce
- Provides for a range of small, medium and large business premises
- Reinforces the south-west Herts area's existing economic clusters including film, printing and publishing, telecommunications and construction
- Further develops knowledge-based industries (including high-tech manufacturing, finance and business services, computing and Research & Development, communications and media industries)
- Aligns economic growth with housing growth in the area in order to balance the provision of homes and jobs and reduce out-commuting

- Retains overall levels of industrial and warehousing floorspace in the District and adopts a more flexible approach to the release of office floorspace for other uses
- Reduces the need to travel by promoting mixed-use development, including ‘live-work’ units (where these can be demonstrated to be appropriate), and homeworking, whilst taking into account the need to protect existing residential amenities.

In spatial terms this means:

- Continuing to focus employment use within the key employment areas within the District: Leavesden Park, Croxley Business Park, Maple Cross/Maple Lodge, Kings Langley Employment Area, Carpenders Park West, Rickmansworth Town Centre
- Ensuring that employment uses are accessible through a range of transport modes including by public transport
- Providing opportunities for the introduction of residential and other uses as part of mixed-use development at:
 - Leavesden Park – releasing about 8 hectares of land earmarked for offices north of the spine road for residential and community uses
 - Kings Langley Employment Area – through small-scale residential infilling where opportunities arise. Based on past rates of mixed-use development, this will result in the release of about 4 hectares of land by 2021
 - Delta Gain- retaining the existing employment activity but releasing a limited amount of underused land by the railway line (0.5ha) for mixed development including residential
- Expanding business activity at Maple Cross- creating around an additional 4 hectares on the adjoining Maple Lodge site

Reasoned Justification

7.86 The preferred policy approach will help ensure that Three Rivers continues to contribute to the economy of the sub-region and provides a range of jobs to meet local needs. It would involve retaining the majority of land previously designated for employment use. This is important in both retaining jobs locally and reducing out-commuting to other areas such as London.

7.87 It also recognises that in order to meet housing needs in the area, a proportion of employment land can be allocated to residential and other uses. The approach sets out the preferred spatial locations where employment land can be released (Leavesden Park), intensified/infilled by residential development (Kings Langley Employment Area and expanded (Maple Lodge site). Where new development within employment areas is permitted, this will normally be as part of a mixed development approach which allows the opportunity to retain an element of the area in employment use. Mixed-use development, where compatible, can allow people to live close to where they work and therefore reduce the need to travel.

7.88 The preferred approach takes into account the findings of the London Arc study and other evidence base. The site specific proposals reflect the predicted growth in business jobs and the likely demand and supply for employment space. A reduction in committed office space at Leavesden is justified on the basis of a continued over-supply of office space in the District. The loss of some employment space at the Kings Langley Employment Area is proposed primarily on the basis of improving the local environment and reduction in heavy lorry traffic in the area. The creation of new employment space at Maple Cross provides the flexibility to offset any loss of employment space at Kings Langley, and to accommodate any future growth in employment, particularly in the industrial and warehousing sectors. It also provides the opportunity to provide more flexible space, including smaller incubator units, across all sectors. New employment opportunities will also help address deprivation in the Maple Cross area.

- 7.89 It is anticipated that the predicted number of non- Business class jobs can be met through the supporting uses associated with growth in housing including health, education and community uses, and general construction. The proposed modest increase in retail floorspace across the District (see Town Centres and Shopping Chapter-CP7) will also contribute towards future jobs provision.
- 7.90 It will be important to monitor closely economic development trends and jobs uptake during the lifetime of the Plan, so that land re-allocations can be adjusted and phased accordingly.
- 7.91 The areas referred to are illustrated on the Key Diagram and are reflected within the Preferred Spatial Strategy (see earlier section). The precise boundaries and extent of land allocated for mixed-use development will be clarified in the Site Allocations Development Plan Document. This will include consideration of the need to reserve land for services and amenities to enable mixed-use development to function viably.

Options Rejected

- 7.92 The options considered are also closely related to those associated with housing provision in maintaining a balance between homes and jobs and these are reflected in the proposed spatial strategy.
- 7.93 In terms of spatial options, the release of employment land at Croxley Business Park was not taken forward on the basis of the quality of existing accommodation in the area, the limited opportunities for intensification in the short-medium term and the environmental risks in terms of flooding and the impact on wildlife sites. The re-designation of all the employment land at Carpenders Park West to residential was also rejected on the basis that there are few other employment opportunities in the area and its proximity to public transport would make it particularly suitable for employment use. However, a small underused part of this area is proposed for mixed-use development.

TOWN CENTRES AND SHOPPING

National Context

7.94 National retail planning policy¹⁷ requires local authorities to set out a hierarchy or network of centres within their areas, which identifies their various roles and position. They are required to plan positively for the growth of, and development within, existing town centres and define the extent of primary shopping area within them, and identify subordinate but complementary centres which meet people's day-to-day needs.

7.95 Government policy also sets out that shopping provision should generally be concentrated in existing centres rather than outside them, so that the vitality and viability of existing centres are protected. Using retail assessments to identify needs and gaps in provision over the plan period, local authorities are charged with allocating sufficient sites to meet a five-year need.

Regional Context

7.96 The East of England Plan¹⁸ sets out that thriving, vibrant and attractive town centres are fundamental to the sustainable development of the region and should continue to be the focus for investment, environmental enhancement and regeneration. Local development documents should:

- Define the role of each town centre and include a strategy to manage change, promote a healthy mix of uses, build upon positive elements of its distinctive character and reflect local heritage
- Ensure sufficient land is allocated or can be made available to meet the town centre's needs
- Protect and enhance existing neighbourhood centres and, where the need is established, promote the provision of new centres of an appropriate scale and function to meet local day-to-day needs.

Local Context

7.97 The main existing shopping centres in the District are shown on the Key Diagram. **Map 6** also shows the size and relative importance of each centre and helps to define the 'retail hierarchy' for the District. The main centres in the hierarchy are set out in the following table:

Town Centre	
Rickmansworth Town Centre – the principal shopping and service centre in Three Rivers containing a range of facilities and services, serving a District-wide catchment area	
District Centre	
South Oxhey Abbots Langley Chorleywood	} centres comprising a varied but more limited range of shops and services and serving a smaller community
Local Centres	
Croxley Green (Watford Road) Mill End (Money Hill Parade)	} smaller centres serving more local needs
Local Shops	
A range of local shopping parades, groups or individual shops distributed throughout the District normally serving very local convenience needs	

Figure 11: Hierarchy of Retail Centres

17 Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres

18 Policy SS6: City and Town Centres

- 7.98 Each centre can be further broken down by area according to the level of retail activity and importance within those areas. The main centres contain both 'Primary' and 'Secondary' frontages; primary frontages are generally located within the core parts of the centres, with secondary frontages on the edges. The extent of these frontages will be set out in future on the Proposals Map.
- 7.99 The quality of shopping provision in the District is generally good, although the Council is aware that some centres need environmental enhancements to maintain and/or improve the appearance and vitality of local shopping centres across the District. Recent enhancements have been made to Tudor Parade, Mill End and Baldwins Lane, Croxley Green. The Council will continue with its programme of enhancements to retail parades.
- Three Rivers Retail Capacity Study**
- 7.100 A retail capacity study was undertaken by the Council (March 2007) in order to assess the need to plan for additional retail floorspace within Three Rivers over the coming years.
- 7.101 This involved undertaking research within the Three Rivers catchment area; this includes the area in and around the District from where shoppers originate. On the basis of projected expenditure by shoppers, the ability of existing centres to retain and attract shoppers (market shares) and the population changes anticipated up to 2021, the Study found two main conclusions for the District as a whole:
- There is likely to be an oversupply in relation to convenience goods (food shopping) in the order of 450 square metres to 2021. Whilst this means that no further large-scale supermarkets are needed in the District over the next 10 years or so, it does not prevent smaller-scale local convenience stores being considered within the key settlements where there is a particular local need and where such provision will reduce journeys to centres further away.
 - There is likely to be an undersupply in relation to comparison goods (non- food retail such as clothes, footwear, electricals etc.) The predicted deficit is around 2000 square metres to 2021. If this came forward, it would represent an increase of 10.7% in total retail floorspace that currently exists, or is planned, within the District over the next 14 years. In terms of size this roughly equates to the existing Tesco store in Rickmansworth (2230 square metres net).
- 7.102 The Issues and Options consultation in 2007 set out various spatial options as to where the additional comparison goods floorspace should be located (see Spatial Strategy section in chapter 5).
- 7.103 Whilst larger towns such as Watford, Hemel Hempstead and St Albans are likely to remain the primary destination for residents for comparison goods, the centres in Three Rivers will continue to provide an important function in meeting all types of local needs.

What you told us

- There was support for continuing to guide retail development within existing shopping areas subject to it being appropriate to the character and function of those areas
- There was a mixed response about whether existing shopping centres should have greater or less protection from the introduction of non-retail uses into these areas
- There was less support for the need to plan for additional retail floorspace (although results of retail capacity study were not yet known)
- In terms of spatial options there was support for a multi-centre focus amongst all five centres, though Abbots Langley, South Oxhey and Rickmansworth were seen as the areas which should be considered for enlargement and/or improvement.

What the Sustainability Appraisal told us

- Encouraging retail development within existing shopping centres has the potential to provide positive economic benefits and employment opportunities.
- Retail markets offer good opportunities to enhance the vitality and viability of town and local centres. Where non-residential uses are introduced such as leisure use, there is potential also to develop the evening economy.
- However, the introduction of excessive non-retail food and drink uses in centres can lead to nuisance and anti-social behaviour problems
- The Sustainability Appraisal considers that spreading development amongst all five key centres is potentially the most sustainable in so far as encouraging the viability of all centres in the District. Ensuring that all centres can provide the basic daily requirements for local shoppers will also help avoid the need to travel further. A broad geographical spread of facilities would also ensure that the needs of residents in outlying areas of the District can be served.

CP7

Preferred Policy Approach – Town Centres And Shopping

Adopting a policy approach that:

- In considering retail development, account is taken of:
 - The location for the development with preference given to centrally located and accessible areas, served by a range of transport modes including public transport
 - The impact of development on the viability and vitality of existing centres and local shops
 - The appropriateness of the type and scale of development in relation to the centre and its role, function and catchment area
- Directs most retail development towards Rickmansworth Town Centre and the District Centres of South Oxhey, Abbots Langley and Chorleywood and specifically within the Primary Frontages within these centres.
- Protects and enhances the vitality and viability of the retail cores within the main centres by resisting the loss of Class A1 retail uses particularly within their Primary Frontages
- Promotes uses which are complementary to the main centres, normally within adjoining Secondary Frontages
- Protects and enhances existing Local Centres (within Croxley Green and Mill End) and other local shops which cater for local day-to-day needs
- Resists any future out-of-town retailing that would adversely affect existing centres
- Accommodates projected increases in expenditure and population; this means providing additional comparison (non-food) floorspace, equating to a net gain of around 2,000 square metres by 2021- the target provision over forthcoming five-year periods will be broadly as follows:
 - 350 square metres net by 2011
 - 700 square metres between 2011-2016
 - 950 square metres between 2016- 2021

These targets will be reviewed regularly and amended in light of new evidence in relation to forecast expenditure and population. Proposals that would result in provision over and above these targets will be considered on their merits taking into account their appropriateness in scale and function to the relevant centre.

With regard to convenience (food) shopping:

- Proposals for any major convenience (food) floorspace (over 1,000sq metres) over the Plan period will generally be resisted
- Smaller scale local convenience stores coming forward will be considered on their merits taking into account the criteria listed above.

Reasoned Justification

7.104 The preferred policy approach sets out a positive approach toward shopping provision with the District's centres and will ensure that the vitality and viability of these centres can be protected and enhanced, providing positive economic and employment opportunities. It also takes into account the need for future modest retail growth in the District as demonstrated by a retail capacity assessment. The preferred spatial strategy approach is to spread future growth amongst the centres so that each centre will become increasingly 'self-sufficient' in the provision of day- to-day needs, thus reducing the need to travel further afield.

Options Rejected

7.105 The option of giving existing retail centres greater protection by further resisting non-retail uses was considered but rejected on the basis that it would potentially lead to more empty shop units, would stifle future investment and adversely affect the vitality and viability of centres.

7.106 The option of allowing more flexibility of uses within centres, by letting local market forces determine the mix of uses, was also considered but rejected on the basis that it could lead to too many non-retail uses such as bars, takeaways and estate agents, affecting the retail function of centres and affecting the amenities of residents at night.

7.107 The option of not making any further provision for future retail growth in the District was considered but rejected on the basis that not meeting future needs would be detrimental. This is because the 'retail offer' of the District would diminish over time and be affected by competition from shops outside the area, harming the local economy and leading to residents travelling further afield for goods and services.

7.108 In considering where to focus future retail growth in spatial terms, a number of options were considered but rejected:

- Focusing on Rickmansworth only – the town's geographical position does not necessarily best serve the needs of the entire District, particularly the outlying areas to the north (Abbots Langley, Bedmond, Sarratt) and east (South Oxhey and Carpenders Park).
- Focusing on Rickmansworth and Abbots Langley only – this would provide a north and south focus but the needs of the eastern parts of the District would still not be met.
- Focusing on one or two centres only – this would not ensure that needs from across the District would be served.

TRANSPORT

National Context

- 7.109 The Government's priorities¹⁹ are for a safe, efficient and integrated transport system. The objectives are to:
- Integrate transport at the national, regional, strategic and local level in order to promote more sustainable transport choices for people and freight movement
 - Promote accessibility to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services, by public transport, walking and cycling and
 - Reduce the need to travel, particularly by car, by locating development in accessible locations.

- 7.110 Planning applications involving development that will have significant transport implications need to be accompanied by a detailed Transport Assessment. The use of Green Travel Plans may also be necessary to reduce car use and promote the use of sustainable transport modes for people and freight.

Regional Context

- 7.111 The priority of the East of England Plan Regional Transport Strategy is to increase travel by more sustainable modes and increase mobility and access as part of delivering the region's development needs, whilst minimising the impact on the environment. Watford and Hemel Hempstead are identified as Regional Transport Nodes in the Strategy and these should be the focus for improvements to inter-urban public transport.

- 7.112 Hertfordshire County Council has produced a second **Local Transport Plan covering 2006/07-2011/12**. It identifies nine objectives within the following five priorities:
- **Safety:** to improve safety by minimising the number of collisions and injuries occurring as a result of the transport system
 - **Congestion:** to obtain the best use of the existing network through effective design, maintenance and management and to manage the growth of transport and travel volumes across the County
 - **Accessibility:** to develop a transport system that provides access to employment, shopping, education, leisure and health facilities for all
 - **Air Quality:** to mitigate the effect of the transport system on the built and natural environment and on personal health
 - **Quality of life:** to raise awareness and encourage use of more sustainable modes of transport and to reduce the need for movement of people and goods through integrated land use planning, the promotion of sustainable distribution and the use of telecommunications.

- 7.113 Hertfordshire County Council is also leading on a **Joint Infrastructure and Investment Strategy** to define infrastructure requirements across Hertfordshire necessary to meet RSS growth targets. The study will also provide an infrastructure funding model to match costed infrastructure requirements with funding opportunities (see also Chapter 7 and policies CP9 and CP10 on Implementation).

- 7.114 The **Hertfordshire Bus Network Strategy Review** (2006) identifies priority routes for bus corridor improvements on the following strategic routes:
- 500 (between Hemel Hempstead and Watford)
 - W5/6 (between Maple Cross and Hemel Hempstead)

¹⁹ Planning Policy Guidance 13: Transport, Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development

- W8/10 (between North Watford and Northwood)
- 724 (Harlow to Heathrow)

7.115 These improvements may take the form of investment in new and/or accessible vehicles; improved bus stop and shelter improvements; marketing measures to increase awareness of the service and changes. The aim is to improve reliability, punctuality and service delivery.

7.116 Within Hertfordshire, Three Rivers, Watford and Hertsmere are covered by the **South-West Herts Transportation Strategy (SWHTS)**. This Strategy sets an overall approach to meeting Local Transport Plan objectives and contains measures designed to address congestion, improve transport infrastructure and promote alternatives to journeys by car.

7.117 The objectives of the South-West Herts Transportation Strategy are to develop a package of integrated transportation measures to:

- Improve quality of life by addressing transport-related environmental issues
- Assist in maintaining the vitality and viability of commercial centres
- Promote and develop a transport system in conjunction with land use patterns
- Allow proper assessment of the impacts of any future development proposals
- Address future demands.

7.118 Within the south-west Hertfordshire area the following key developments and infrastructure improvements are likely to take place over the Plan period:

- **Watford Health Campus:** a major development proposal in neighbouring West Watford for a Health Campus, which would include a new access road from Wiggshall Road over the line of the proposed Croxley Rail Link, with a connection to the Dalton Way gyratory system by a new link road
- **M25 Widening/Integrated Demand Management:** proposals to widen the M25 between junction 16 and 23 from dual three lanes to dual four lanes will directly affect transport in Three Rivers and involve building new lanes, partly over the current hard shoulders with new hard shoulders built alongside, except under or over bridges. Construction is anticipated to begin in early 2009. Integrated Demand Management to management traffic more effectively is currently being considered for the M25 junctions 17 and 18 following completion of widening works
- **Croxley Rail Link:** includes plans to re-route and extend the Metropolitan line to Watford Junction and improve access to and from London. The project has the strong backing of local authorities, the regional authority, Transport for London and public support but full funding for the project has yet to be secured
- **Watford Junction Improvements:** combines improved access for all modes to the station and Colonial Way Link Road, anticipated to be operational by late 2011.

7.119 As part of the South-West Herts Transportation Strategy, further work has been commissioned on developing a network of high frequency radial bus services in the area that will link the main retail, commercial and service areas in the south-west Hertfordshire areas. Bus priority measures, smartcard ticketing systems and the creation of a network of 'MobiHubs' are also being investigated. MobiHubs involve the creation of a series of neighbourhood hubs in urban and rural areas with improved facilities for users, offering real-time traveller information and covered waiting areas. They are located along bus routes and would integrate with cycle and footpath networks and taxi services. This work will feed into the wider South-West Herts Transportation Strategy.

7.120 The South-West Herts Transportation Strategy also includes 'legacy schemes' which have been carried forwards from the original South-West Hertfordshire Strategy, including the Tolpits Lane Link (a bus and HGV route to link Tolpits Lane and West Watford Industrial Estates) and Watford Town Centre ring road alterations. Other new schemes include better management of the existing transport network; development of cycle facilities; implementation of Hertfordshire County Council's Intelligent Transport Systems; and bus network reviews.

Local context

7.121 Meeting the transport needs of Three Rivers effectively is of paramount importance in delivering the Core Strategy's spatial strategy. We will work with Hertfordshire County Council, the Highways Agency and other transport providers to provide a co-ordinated and enhanced transport system to improve access to existing development and to support proposed new development.

Map 7 (Transport Strategy Map) shows key transport needs and schemes in Three Rivers, and the linkages with the surrounding area.

7.122 The Council's Transport Background Paper (2007) provides information on transport issues in Three Rivers. In essence:

- Three Rivers is well served by communications links. The M25 and M1 motorways both run through the District. There are four underground stations on the Metropolitan Line and two stations on the West Coast Mainline. The Grand Union Canal also runs through the District
- Car ownership levels in Three Rivers are higher than the regional and national averages; at the 2001 Census, 84% of households had at least one car or van. This has led to car usage increasingly dominating patterns of movement within the District. Traffic levels in Three Rivers are forecast to grow by 21% by 2021 (Local Transport Plan, 2006/07-2010/11). Existing congestion hot spots are shown on the Transport Strategy Map (Map 7)
- The predicted increase in congestion and car-dominated environment could undermine the economic growth of the District and detract from its environmental quality and social well-being. High volumes of car use continue to make walking, cycling and bus use less attractive options despite many journeys being short in distance
- Demand for rail services remains high but access to, and parking at, stations are additional pressures. However, bus networks are shrinking, reducing the potential for use of buses rather than cars and reducing accessibility for people without access to a car
- There are a variety of cycle routes within Three Rivers, including the Ebury Way, a 3.5 mile (5.6km) traffic free section of route 6/61 of the National Cycle Network, signposted routes and designated on-road cycle lanes
- The pedestrian network is extensive but facilities for pedestrians are often provided alongside roads, where high traffic levels adjacent may make walking a less attractive option.

What you told us

Issues and Options consultation highlighted strong support for effective promotion of alternative modes of transport to the car and integration of systems.

There was also support for implementing policy measures to reduce congestion, increase public transport and non-motorised modes of transport, reduce local traffic impacts, manage traffic for quality of life and environmental benefits, improve bus and rail services, improve safety and facilities for cyclists and pedestrians, improve

access and facilities for mobility impaired and elderly people, control parking in the District. There was support to ensure that new development does not place undue pressure on infrastructure and for sustainable transport modes.

Physical measures were also supported including implementation of the Croxley Rail Link, extension of Rickmansworth Controlled Parking Zone, implementation of other parking restraints through Three Rivers, installation of programmed parking bays and a continued programme of highway improvements. Improving public transport networks generally and reducing the cost were also supported.

Specific areas of concern relating to transport were highlighted around:

Bus services

- Poor access between outlying parts of the District and Watford General Hospital and between Rickmansworth and surrounding areas of Sarratt, Abbots Langley and South Oxhey
- Desire for increased services at evenings and weekends and to cover areas of Chorleywood (bottom of Dog Kennel Lane), Eastbury, Croxley Green (Byewaters Estate), Oxhey Hall, Maple Cross and Rickmansworth (Upper Cedars Estate)
- Better promotion of bus services and increased availability of information about services
- Need for more small 'hopper' type buses and community transport initiatives.

Road Infrastructure

- Desire for better traffic management schemes
- Desire for safer cycling routes and other cycling-friendly infrastructure, together with cycle training for young people
- Congestion issues, particularly in Croxley Green at peak hours.

Other

- Desire for better coordination between modes, particularly along main transport corridors
- Desire for work with rail operators to reduce the cost of parking at stations.

What the Sustainability Appraisal told us

- Future growth pressures will increase pressure on Three Rivers' transport infrastructure
- Promoting alternative modes of transport and integrating systems would help increase the proportion of journeys made by public transport and help reduce car-based journeys, with beneficial impacts on energy consumption, air quality and healthy lifestyles, and increase accessibility to employment opportunities and open space and leisure facilities
- Implementation of the Croxley Rail Link would improve access to London by public transport which is encouraged in principle
- Implementation of a District-wide cycling strategy supports a number of Sustainability Appraisal objectives, including health, air quality and noise/ vibration
- Measures to install parking bays and highway improvements must be implemented alongside public transport improvements, and works should not compromise biodiversity, cultural heritage or landscape/ townscape value
- Policies should be included to increase rural accessibility and increase accessibility in areas of social and economic deprivation, principally through public transport provision
- Policies to address flooding and transport infrastructure should be included; highway improvements should include the installation of Sustainable Drainage Schemes (SuDS) in flood risk areas

- Physical and policy measures to reduce greenhouse gases from transport could be included, for example through encouraging Green Travel Plans
- Physical and policy measures to support the principles of sustainable freight distribution could provide important social and environmental benefits.

CP8

Preferred Policy Approach – Transport

Delivering the Spatial Strategy

In taking forward the proposed levels of growth and development proposed in the Three Rivers Spatial Strategy, the Council will seek to promote the following transportation measures with the South West Herts Transportation Strategy authorities and other adjoining authorities, Hertfordshire County Council, the Highways Agency and transport providers:

- Implementation of the Croxley Rail Link
- Improvement to the strategic cycle network
- Continuing improvement of pedestrian facilities
- Improvement of bus services and facilities including the provision of bus stops, frequency of services and extension to existing routes across the District and the wider area
- Improvement of the highway network to increase efficiency of movement and safety
- Improvement of parking and cycling facilities at all rail stations in the District
- Improvement of the transport interchange at Watford Junction Station (located within Watford Borough Council area)
- Improvement of accessibility and transport integration between settlements in the District and with services and facilities in adjoining areas.

Specific improvement measures and schemes are set out after this policy, in the Place-Shaping policies and on the Transport Strategy Map (**Map 7**). Development proposals will be expected to contribute to their delivery as part of on-site development proposals or off-site contributions as appropriate.

Development proposals

Development will need to be designed and located to minimise the impacts of travel by motor vehicle on the District. In particular, major development will be expected to be located in areas highly accessible by the most sustainable modes of transport (as identified in the modal hierarchy – see below). Where appropriate, measures to improve the accessibility of development will be required, particularly improvements to interchange and access by public transport, walking and cycling.

Development proposals will be required to be accessible to people of all abilities in a socially inclusive and safe manner in accordance with the user hierarchy below. Priority will be given in the following descending order:

- i. Pedestrians, particularly people with restricted mobility
- ii. Cyclists and where appropriate, horse riders
- iii. Public transport (including taxis)
- iv. All forms of motor vehicles.

Development will need to demonstrate that:

- i. It provides a safe and adequate means of access
- ii. It is appropriate in scale to the existing transport infrastructure, including public transport, and where necessary infrastructure can be improved
- iii. It is integrated with the wider network of transport routes including public rights of way and cycle paths where appropriate
- iv. It makes adequate provision for all users, including car and other vehicle parking, giving priority to people with mobility difficulties, pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians
- v. It includes, where appropriate, provision for public transport either within the scheme or through contributions
- vi. The impact of the proposal on transport has been fully assessed; for major development this should be done through a comprehensive Transport Assessment detailing the measures that will be used to reduce impacts
- vii. The proposal is accompanied by a draft Green Travel Plan for prospective users and employees of the development for all major development.

Integrated Transport

Every opportunity will need to be taken to integrate means of travel wherever possible. Major development will need to consider the provision of measures and facilities that encourage integration including:

- Secure cycle parking
- A safe network for pedestrians
- Taxi ranks
- A layout to enable convenient access for buses
- Provision of covered waiting facilities
- Improvements to transport hubs within and including the provision of Mobi- Hubs where appropriate.

Freight transport

The transfer of road freight to the railways and canals in the District will be supported in principle, subject to the assessment against the following criteria:

- The protection of landscape, Green Belt and wildlife habitats
- The protection of residential and recreational amenities
- No significant increase in local road freight traffic levels
- The provision of a full Transport Assessment
- Compliance with other relevant detailed criteria contained in the Development Policies (Chapter 8).

Specific Transport measures and Schemes

7.123 In helping to deliver the Spatial Strategy the following specific measures and schemes are identified as priorities:

Cycling facilities

- New cycle route between Rickmansworth Town Centre and Chorleywood (St Clement Danes School)
- Completion of cycle route between Maple Cross and Rickmansworth Town Centre

- New cycle route between Croxley Green and Rickmansworth Town Centre
- New cycle route between Croxley Station and the Ebury Way (via Byewaters estate)
- Improvements to cycle parking facilities at all stations in the District (Moor Park, Croxley, Carpenders Park, Kings Langley, Chorleywood)
- Improvements to provide safe cycle parking facilities in shopping centres.

Bus Network

- Improved bus service and frequency between northern and eastern parts of the District (Abbots Langley, South Oxhey) and Watford General Hospital
- Improved bus service and frequency between Rickmansworth Town Centre and surrounding centres, notably Sarratt, Abbots Langley and South Oxhey
- Better service penetration and frequencies into housing estates/areas of Chorleywood (bottom of Dog Kennel Lane), Eastbury, Croxley Green (Byewaters Estate), Oxhey Hall, Maple Cross and Rickmansworth (Upper Cedars Estate)
- Improved shuttle service between Leavesden Park and key centres including Rickmansworth, Watford Town Centre and Watford Junction Transport Interchange
- Improved bus service and frequency between Maple Cross and Rickmansworth
- Improved bus service frequency between Kings Langley Employment Area and key centres in the District
- Bus corridor improvements on routes 500 (between Hemel Hempstead and Watford, W5/6 (between Maple Cross and Hemel Hempstead), W8/10 (between North Watford and Northwood), and 724 (Harlow to Heathrow)
- Supporting uneconomic services for trips to hospitals or to shops/post offices from Sarratt and Bedmond and other rural settlements to cater for the elderly and people with special needs or without access to a car.

Traffic Management and highway improvements

- Junction improvements at Leavesden Park (A41)
- Transport management improvements to C76 (from Station Road, Kings Langley to Barnacres Lane, Dacorum District)
- Transport management improvements to C77 (Bedmond Road, Bedmond)
- Transport management improvements to A404 (Rickmansworth Road/ Chenies Road, Chorleywood close to St Clement Danes School)
- Transport management improvements to A4125 (Hampermill Lane, South Oxhey)
- Transport management improvements to A412 (Park Road, Rickmansworth)
- Transport management improvements and junction improvements to A412 (Denham Way, Maple Cross).

Parking Facilities

- Improved parking facilities where feasible at all stations in the District (Moor Park, Croxley, Carpenders Park, Kings Langley, Chorleywood).

Taxi Facilities

- Additional provision of hackney carriage waiting facilities in Rickmansworth Town Centre.

Pedestrian facilities

- Supporting the implementation of the strategic London Outer Orbital Route (London LOOP) in conjunction with Greater London Authority/Transport for London.

Reasoned Justification

7.124 The preferred policy approach sets out the specific transport infrastructure which is necessary in the District to deliver the required levels of growth and development set out in the Spatial Strategy. It also provides a framework for guiding the location of development and influencing design details to both reduce the need to travel and to promote a genuine choice of modes of travel, with emphasis on walking, cycling and public transport, rather than reliance on the private car or lorry. Ensuring that sustainable transport modes are a realistic option for a greater proportion of journeys should both ease congestion and benefit the environment.

7.125 The Council accepts that it will need to work closely with a range of authorities and providers that are responsible for transport and where appropriate will support strategic schemes in adjoining areas; for example the upgrading and extension of the Bakerloo Underground line in London.

Options Rejected

7.126 There were no objections at Issues and Options consultation to including policies on transport. No new additional policies were suggested for this policy area, and therefore none was rejected. However, the preferred approach has been developed on the basis of suggestions put forward at consultation.

7.127 It should be noted that the Cross Rail proposals, which were referred to at Issues and Options stage, will no longer have a direct impact on the Three Rivers area. This is because one of the options originally put forward for the western spur of the scheme to run through the District will now not be happening.

7.128 Matters relating to operational car parking and standards are considered to be more appropriately covered within the Development Policies section.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND PLANNING OBLIGATIONS

National Context

- 7.129 In delivering sustainable development and making available sufficient land for development, Government policy²⁰ states that planning authorities should take into account access and transport needs and the provision of essential infrastructure.
- 7.130 Infrastructure is normally considered as part of development through planning obligations secured by legal agreement (known as section 106 agreements). Government guidance²¹ sets out a number of 'tests' that need to be satisfied in order for planning obligations to be required. These include that the obligation is fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development.
- 7.131 The Government has been considering changing the way that obligations are sought. This includes the use of Planning Gain Supplements whereby a proportion of the land value increase created by the planning process is captured. More recently, a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is proposed, with the aim that the levy will contribute to the costs of the infrastructure needed to support the delivery of homes and jobs envisaged in an authority's Local Development Framework. The anticipated implementation date is Autumn 2009.

Regional Context

- 7.132 The Regional Spatial Strategy recognises that implementation and effective delivery of the East of England Plan will require a co-ordinated approach between the public, private and voluntary sector, through an implementation plan. However, an implementation plan has yet to be completed by the East of England Regional Assembly.

Hertfordshire Investment and Infrastructure Strategy

- 7.133 In order to provide further information about the scale of resources likely to be needed to deliver the Regional Spatial Strategy, the likelihood of those resources becoming available and the agencies responsible for producing them, the Hertfordshire authorities commissioned a County-wide Infrastructure and Investment Strategy. This addresses the following key areas for the long- term (up to 2031):
- A full assessment of the nature, location and timing of growth anticipated within Hertfordshire as a consequence of the Regional Spatial Strategy
 - The current infrastructure deficit: the level of under-investment in infrastructure and services that would need to be addressed before any consequences of future growth can be factored in
 - Anticipated future investment/infrastructure requirements arising out of Regional Spatial Strategy growth as far as they can be known
 - The cost of providing the necessary infrastructure and how it can be funded/secured.
- 7.134 The Strategy will also provide a Funding Model to enable local authorities to secure contributions from development through a tariff-based approach. This could link into future Government plans to introduce the Community Infrastructure Levy.
- 7.135 The Strategy will cover the following topics:
- Transport – highways and public transport
 - Education – including additional primary and secondary schools provision, further education and early years

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21 ODPM Circular 05/2005: Planning Obligations

- Affordable housing – social rented housing, intermediate and key worker homes
- Primary and secondary healthcare, ambulance services
- Leisure, indoor and outdoor sports facilities, equipped play areas
- Libraries
- Supported accommodation and children’s homes/centres
- Fire and police service
- Waste management – collection and management
- Utilities – water, wastewater, electricity, gas
- Flood defences
- Arts and cultural facilities and heritage
- Community facilities
- Major public realm improvements
- Cemeteries and faith needs.

7.136 The Strategy is expected to be finalised in the Spring of 2009. It will be used to supplement existing information on infrastructure and to inform future stages of the Core Strategy.

Local Context

7.137 The Council has already collected a range of information about existing infrastructure, services and facilities in the Three Rivers area. This has been referred to in previous consultation and studies. For example, as part of the 2007 Issues and Options document, the Council carried out research on both the perceived and actual levels of access to key services and facilities in the District. Using a combination of mapping, public perceptions and the Index of Multiple Deprivation, the Council produced an Access to Services and Infrastructure Background Paper (March 2007), setting out a detailed picture of access to education, health care, shops, post offices and library services, as well as to bus and rail services in the District. This helped inform the Settlement Appraisal referred to in Chapter 5, which gives an accessibility classification for each settlement in the District, ranging from ‘Very Good’ to ‘Poor’.

7.138 Historically the Council has negotiated with developers, through the use of planning obligations, to contribute towards infrastructure as part of relevant development proposals. This includes:

- Affordable housing
- Open space
- Sports and recreation facilities
- Site-specific matters.

7.139 Hertfordshire County Council is responsible for negotiating planning obligations with developers in respect of contributions to the following areas:

- Passenger transport
- Highways
- Education (nursery, primary and secondary)
- Libraries
- Youth facilities

- Child care
- Fire & rescue services
- Adult care facilities (special needs accommodation and other services)
- Other matters such as economic development, archaeology, waste facilities, green infrastructure and key worker housing.

7.140 The type and scale of infrastructure required, or in some cases a contribution towards it, has been determined on a case-by-case basis using guidance and formulae. For example, contributions towards open space, amenity and children's play facilities are set out in the Council's Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Contributions that are sought by the County Council are calculated using the Hertfordshire 'Toolkit' guidance document (2008). This is based on a tariff approach and contributions are calculated on a property by property basis.

What you told us

Schools – some concern expressed about the capacity of schools in the District to cope with impact of new development. Hertfordshire County Council advises that some limited capacity exists within primary schools but secondary schools are generally over-subscribed. Additional secondary provision is likely to be provided through expansion of existing facilities rather than a new school.

Policing – Desire for more police resources particularly in terms of more 'visible' policing on the street. Herts Constabulary (Western Division) identifies potential future deficiency of police resources within the Abbots Langley area; suggestion that any planned development at Leavesden Park makes provision for a new neighbourhood police facility to house additional personnel.

Health – Desire for more, better and more mobile health facilities and more flexible hours of service. Better transport access is needed from parts of the District to neighbouring facilities in Watford. The Primary Care Trust advises that GP services are generally well covered in District. No new significant primary care facilities are planned in the District, although future development of Acute Hospital at Watford, Local General Hospital at Hemel and Planned Surgery Hospital at St Albans together with other urgent care centres and 'surgi-centres' in the SW Herts area will have implications for development, particularly in terms of ensuring good transport access to them.

Utilities – some concern was expressed about the ability of utilities to cope with new development. Discussions with key providers (water supply, sewerage, energy) indicate that there are no strategic issues in relation to future development, although developments would generally be expected to contribute towards enhanced provision locally.

Highways – some concern was expressed about local pockets of congestion and desire for improved public transport and cycling facilities. The Highways Agency advises that a Transport Evaluation/Assessment will be required to fully assess the impact of development on the road.

Transportation – existing bus services were considered to be poor in some parts of the District, particularly between Rickmansworth and outlying areas of Sarratt, Abbots Langley and South Oxhey. Smaller and more frequent buses are needed to service the District, including during evenings and weekends. There was support to maintain current parking standards for new development (location specific in relation to proximity to public transport and services) and strong support to promote public transport, cycling and walking and to integrate transport modes. There was strong support for the physical transport improvements and policy measures put forward in the 2007 consultation, including implementation of the Croxley Rail Link and cycling strategy and improvements to public transport.

Leisure/Community services – general need was identified for more facilities for children and young people, particularly for more indoor facilities.

7.141

In terms of the way contributions are secured for infrastructure, the Council consulted on two possible options in 2007. These included:

- A 'discretionary case-by-case' approach, whereby each application is treated on its merits, taking into account policy and site considerations
- A 'standard charge' approach, whereby all obligations are rolled into a single contribution covering a range of service and infrastructure issues in an area.

What you told us

- There was strong support for the range of planning obligations put forward as policy issues by the Council in 2007
- The planning obligations that should be prioritised include healthcare, education, open space and sports provision, sustainable transport, nature conservation and affordable housing
- There was greater support for a discretionary approach than a standard charge approach towards securing planning obligations.

What the Sustainability Appraisal told us

- The Sustainability Appraisal supports the discretionary approach as it allows priorities to be set on a case-by-case basis and is the most flexible approach
- However, it could be integrated, with smaller sites to contribute as well by means of a formula, thereby developing a kind of hybrid approach
- The use of the standard approach alone may result in a lack of transparency and delivery of funds may be used away from the localised area of development
- There were no sustainability conflicts with the range of planning obligations put forward by the Council and all should be taken forward
- Obligations should be prioritised relating to the area where specific development is proposed and to any existing or likely infrastructure deficit in that area
- Access solutions should sometimes be given priority with the focus upon public transport and highways infrastructure improvements.

CP9

Preferred Policy Approach – Infrastructure And Planning Obligations

Adopting a policy approach whereby:

Development provides, or makes adequate contribution towards, infrastructure and services that:

- Makes a positive contribution to safeguarding or creating sustainable, linked communities
- Offsets the loss of any significant amenity or resource through compensatory provision
- Meets ongoing maintenance costs where appropriate.

Such provision will take full account of the Council's priorities for infrastructure, services and facilities identified in the Core Strategy, and the Hertfordshire Investment and Infrastructure Strategy (2009). This will help to address infrastructure deficit identified in the District and contributes towards the infrastructure necessary to support growth in the south-west Hertfordshire area.

Until such time as the Community Infrastructure Levy comes into operation (expected Autumn 2009), the Council will continue to use standard charges and formulae to calculate indicative contributions and to seek on-site provision of the required facilities. Applications for development will be considered on a case-by-case basis to allow individual site circumstances to be reflected

where appropriate. Detailed charges and formulae will continue to be set out in the Council's supplementary planning documents (for example 'Open Space, Amenity and Children's Play Facilities', 2007) and other guidance documents as appropriate including Hertfordshire County Council's 'Planning Obligations Guidance – Toolkit for Hertfordshire' (2008).

Reasoned Justification

- 7.142 The preferred policy approach sets out a positive approach towards ensuring that all development is supported by the necessary infrastructure and services to enable it to take place, to function properly and efficiently and to ensure that undue burden due to cumulative development is not placed on existing provision to the detriment of surrounding communities. It is based on an assessment of infrastructure needs, taking into account proposed growth in the area but also allows a flexible approach to enable the Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Investment Strategy and the Government's proposed Community Infrastructure Levy to be considered as they emerge more fully.

Options Rejected

- 7.143 With regard to planning obligations, neither the discretionary 'case-by-case' approach nor the 'standard tariff' approach considered at Issues and Options stage have been rejected. Both approaches are seen to have merits and it is proposed to use them in combination until such time as the Community Infrastructure Levy comes into effect.

MONITORING AND DELIVERY FRAMEWORK

National Context

- 7.144 The Government is keen to ensure that the planning system delivers a flexible and responsive supply of land particularly in relation to housing²². Using the principles of 'Plan, Monitor and Manage', local authorities should develop policies and implementation strategies to ensure that sufficient and suitable land is available to achieve objectives.
- 7.145 Regular and continuous monitoring and review are key aspects of the new planning system needed to ensure that the Core Strategy remains relevant and responds to changing needs and circumstances, locally, regionally and nationally.
- 7.146 The Government has laid down a standard set of indicators that can be compared on a national basis. The results of these indicators (together with other locally set indicators) are published in the annual monitoring report, which the Council is required to publish every December. The Annual Monitoring Report should demonstrate the extent to which the Core Strategy policies are being achieved and their effectiveness in delivering the vision and spatial objectives and implementing the spatial strategy. The Annual Monitoring Report will also indicate whether changes should be made, particularly if policies are not being met or outcomes are not being delivered.

Regional Context

- 7.147 The East of England Plan seeks to implement regional development through a partnership approach to develop a region-wide implementation plan²³. It acknowledges that annual monitoring is important in tracking the delivery of development especially delivery of housing, infrastructure, economic development and in helping to deliver environmental objectives including water conservation, waste water and emissions²⁴.

Local Context

- 7.148 The Council set out a range of measures at Issues and Options stage to help ensure effective and timely delivery. These included:
- Working with other partners including the Local Strategic Partnership and infrastructure and service providers
 - Ensuring a continual supply of housing land primarily through the preparation of a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment
 - Developing an Implementation Strategy to deal to unexpected changes
 - Continual monitoring of the implementation of policies.
- 7.149 The Council has developed a monitoring framework containing targets and indicators linked to policy objectives (Appendix 6). They include some Government specified 'core' indicators, other 'local' indicators and some taken from the Sustainability Appraisal reports. The main purpose of the framework is to reveal any significant failure(s) to meet targets, so that the Council can take action to rectify the situation as soon as possible.

22 Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing

23 Policy IMP1: Implementing the RSS

24 Policy IMP2: Monitoring the RSS

What you told us

Issues and Options consultation showed strong support for the implementation and monitoring measures identified by the Council. These were seen as necessary in order to ensure that the spatial vision and objectives of the Local Development Framework can be delivered.

In addition, measures such as ensuring the use of empty properties, focusing on brownfield development and communication with the community were also identified as being important.

What the Sustainability Appraisal told us

- The Sustainability Appraisal supports working with other agencies to ensure delivery, particularly with environmental groups
- There needs to be a balance between delivery of development with environmental and social impacts
- The Implementation Strategy should also be flexible enough to take account of climate change
- Monitoring through the existing Annual Monitoring Report process is supported but it should also cover and measure the extent to which sustainability objectives in the Sustainability Appraisal are being achieved together with other environmental and social performance indications.

CP10

Preferred Policy Approach –Monitoring And Delivery

The preferred approach will be to ensure that key components of development and growth in the Core Strategy can be delivered through:

- The effective and timely release of land and provision of the necessary and supporting infrastructure, services and facilities
- A robust monitoring framework to respond to changes in circumstances.

The Council will seek to achieve this by:

- Working with a range of partners such as the Local Strategic Partnership, infrastructure and service providers, environmental bodies and interest groups to identify and provide the necessary improvements to infrastructure, services and facilities
- Co-ordinating and integrating delivery with the implementation of the Three Rivers Community Strategy and funding opportunities such as through the Local Area Agreements
- Ensuring a continuous supply of deliverable housing by preparing and updating a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment in conjunction with the development industry and housing suppliers
- Developing an Implementation Strategy that is sufficiently flexible to take into account changing circumstances such as changes in national or regional policy, housing need and supply, climate change and delivery of transport and other infrastructure
- Regularly monitoring and reviewing policies, proposals and related targets to ensure that they:
 - Are effectively contributing towards the delivery of the Core Strategy's Spatial Vision, Strategic Objectives and Spatial Strategy
 - Are consistent with up-to-date national and regional policy
 - Can respond effectively to change.

Effective monitoring will be achieved by focusing on a key set of indicators (as set out in **Appendix 6**).

Reasoned Justification

7.150 The preferred policy approach is considered necessary and appropriate to ensure that the growth and development identified in the Core Strategy can be effectively delivered. A number of the improvements to infrastructure, services and facilities necessary to support growth are set out in the Place-Shaping policies under each of the key settlements in the District. These will be further supplemented by the findings of the Hertfordshire Investment and Infrastructure Study (later in 2009), followed by the preparation of an Implementation Plan. The Plan will identify a full range of measures and set out in detail:

- What the required measure is
- Why it is needed
- Where it will be provided
- What the requirement is in land-use terms
- What the cost is and how it will be funded
- Who the lead authority/agency is
- When it will be delivered.

7.151 The preferred approach also reflects the importance of having a robust monitoring system in place in order to ensure effective delivery.

Options Rejected

7.152 The preferred approach expands and develops the 'Plan, Monitor and Manage' actions identified at the Issues and Options and comments made. This is reflected in both the policy approach and the set of monitoring indicators in Appendix 6.