Three Rivers District is renowned for its high quality environment and landscape. Yet like many other districts in the area it is under pressure for development; the District faces many challenges including providing the right level and type of homes including affordable homes to meet local needs, balancing the need for housing with that of employment land for jobs and continuing to protect the Green Belt which makes up two thirds of the District.

We also need to ensure that development is 'sustainable' in order to achieve a better quality of life for people today as well as for future generations. This can take the form of reducing energy and carbon emissions as part of new development and reducing the need to travel to services by making them accessible through a range of transport options.

Over the next few years Three Rivers District Council will prepare a new type of development plan for the District called the Local Development Framework. This will replace the existing Local Plan with a suite of new planning documents, the first of which is the Core Strategy. It will link with other strategies such as the Community Strategy and set out the long term vision for Three Rivers, along with the spatial strategy and policies to deliver the vision. The plan will set out the broad locations for where new houses, jobs and services will go over the period to 2021 and how we can effectively control development.

This document sets out the Issues and Options for the Core Strategy. The Council believes that our communities, groups and societies should have the chance to be actively involved in developing policies and proposals for the district, at the earliest possible stages. We need your views in helping us decide which options are best for the District and for you.
The Council is interested to hear the views of everyone including residents, businesses, community groups and all other stakeholders. All comments received will contribute towards the Preferred Options paper, which is the next stage of the process, to be published later this year.

This paper and all supporting documents, can be found on the Council’s website at: www.threerivers.gov.uk (under Local Development Framework).

Hard copies are available for inspection at the Council’s offices in Rickmansworth and at all public libraries in the District. A summary leaflet/questionnaire can also be obtained at the above locations.

Please let us have your comments in one of the following ways:

Fill in the Questionnaire enclosed with this document and send it back to us in the Reply-Paid envelope.

Further copies of the Questionnaire can also be collected from the Council Offices in Rickmansworth and from libraries in the District. They can also be downloaded from our website www.threerivers.gov.uk

The closing date for responses is the 31st July 2006.

All completed forms received by the closing date will go into a Prize Draw for a digital camera.

Further information on this document, please contact the Council:

By e mail: trldf@threerivers.gov.uk

By telephone: 01923 727106 or Minicom on 01923 727303.
The Three Rivers Local Plan was adopted in July 2001. The Plan sets out the planning framework for development in Three Rivers up to 2011 and forms the basis for taking decisions on planning applications in the District. Due to many changes taking place at the national, regional and local level, the Plan is now ready to be reviewed.

The New Planning System

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced a radically revised planning system in England. It introduced the requirement to prepare the Local Development Framework (LDF) in order to replace existing Local Plans. The Government aim is to streamline the planning process and promote a proactive, positive approach to managing development.

In comparison with the Local Plan, LDFs are intended to be more flexible, enable greater community involvement, particularly at early stages, and be more 'sustainable' so that the social, environmental and economic effects of the proposals can be fully assessed. They also adopt a 'spatial' approach whereby they bring together and integrate other policies and programmes that influence the nature of places and how they function, including the Community Strategy.

The Three Rivers Local Development Framework

The Three Rivers LDF will consist of a series of documents called Local Development Documents (LDDs) that will guide development in the District to 2021. These include:

- **Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD)** - sets out the strategic long term spatial vision and objectives and core policies
- **Housing Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD)** - identifies the sites proposed for development to meet the Council's vision and core strategy
- **Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)** - a range of documents setting out guidance to help interpret and implement the Core Strategy and Housing Allocations development plan documents.

In addition to LDDs, the Council is also required to prepare a number of other documents forming part of the LDF:

- **Local Development Scheme (LDS)** - a 3 year project plan setting out when documents will be prepared with key milestones and stages for completion

WHAT IS THE CORE STRATEGY?

The Core Strategy sets out the key elements of the planning framework for the area. It sets out the broad spatial vision, objectives and core policies for the district. It is normally the first DPD to be produced and all other documents will need to be in conformity with it. The Core Strategy will:

- Set out the spatial vision and strategic objectives for the District
- Reflect the Regional Spatial Strategy and help implement other strategies such as the Community Strategy, Housing Strategy and Local Transport Plan
- Identify broad locations for housing, employment, retail and other strategic development needs
- Include a suite of generic development control policies that will form the basis for determining planning applications
- Provide a monitoring and implementation framework
LDFs cannot be prepared in isolation. They need to take into account a number of other plans, policies and strategies at national, regional and local level.

### National Guidance

The Government produces a range of national planning advice that sets out the broad principles that must be addressed by local authorities in preparing their LDFs. For example, Planning Policy Statement 1: ‘Delivering Sustainable Development' sets out the overarching objectives and principles of planning policy. At its heart is the need to promote sustainable development. This has been defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

Furthermore PPS 1 states that development plans should:

- ensure that sustainable development is pursued in an integrated manner
- address the causes and potential impacts of climate change through policies which reduce energy use, reduce emissions (for example, by reducing the need to travel) and promote the development of renewable energy resources
- adopt a spatial planning approach
- Promote high quality design in the layout of new developments in terms of function and impact over the lifetime of the development
- Contain clear, comprehensive and inclusive access policies in terms of both location and external physical access
- Ensure communities are able to participate in developing the vision, strategy and policies for their areas

### Regional context

Three Rivers District lies within the East of England Region. The East of England Plan or Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) sets out the regional strategy for planning and development in the east of England to the year 2021. It covers economic development, housing, the environment, transport, waste management, culture, sport and recreation, mineral extraction and more.

The District lies within the 'London arc' sub-region; this area is characterised by its proximity to, and strong influence by, London and one of the dilemmas for the regional strategy is to continue to protect the metropolitan green belt whilst allowing some development to redress unsustainable commuting patterns in the area.

A key issue for the District, is accommodating its proposed share of the Region's allocation of dwellings that will be required to meet projected need. The draft allocation for Three Rivers is 3,600 dwellings between 2001 and 2021. The Three Rivers LDF will need to make provision to enable a sufficient supply of housing to come forward. There are key issues around accommodating the regional allocation without encroaching on the green belt and ensuring that there is sufficient infrastructure in the form of transport, schools, health and other facilities to support it.

RSSs are now part of the statutory Development Plan, and Local Development Documents must be in conformity with them. The timetable for producing the RSS is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st November 2005 to 3rd March 2006</td>
<td>Examination in Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid 2006</td>
<td>Panel publishes a report of its findings. Government considers the Panel's recommendations and publishes 'proposed changes' to the draft RSS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late 2006</td>
<td>Government consults on the proposed changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early 2007</td>
<td>Government publishes final RSS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Local Context

A Community Strategy (2003-2008) was prepared by the Three Rivers Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) to bring together the works of various organisations and voluntary groups within the area. The strategies are a requirement of the Local Government Act 2000 and aim to promote the social, environmental and economic well being in each local authority area. The LSP consists of the following organisations:

- Three Rivers District Council
- Hertfordshire County Council
- Hertfordshire Constabulary
- Hertfordshire Police Authority
- Three Rivers Centre for Voluntary Services
- Watford and Three Rivers Primary Care Trust
- Local Parish Councils

www.threerivers.gov.uk
Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce

The Community Strategy identified four priorities: these are
- Healthy Communities
- Prosperous Communities
- Safer Communities
- Sustainable Communities

It is important that Community Strategies and LDFs are closely linked in order to achieve an integrated approach to community planning. The LDF is the key mechanism for delivering on the ground what the community has said it needs in the Community Strategy.

The Community Strategy is in the process of being reviewed. Initial research and consultation has revealed the main community priorities are:
- Addressing anti-social behaviour
- Improving access to services
- Improving the environment
- Improving children and young people's access to education, skills and training
- Providing more affordable housing

The LSP also identified two cross-cutting themes of Equality and Children and Young People as part of a revised strategy.

The authority's goals and objectives

The Council's Strategic Plan (2005-08) identifies the priorities for the Council which include a range of high level outcomes linked to the Community Strategy themes. These are based around a vision that the district should be a prosperous, safe and healthy place where people want and are able to live and work.

In addition, the Council's Equality and Diversity policy concentrates on targeting resources at areas of disadvantage in the District to reduce social exclusion and improve the quality of life for everyone.

In preparing the LDF the Council needs to take into account all relevant plans and strategies that are linked to planning and development. These will include those relating to economic development (eg. Economic Development Strategy 2005-07), transportation (eg. Local Transport Proposals 2006-11) and the Housing Strategy (2006-2011).

Three Rivers is relatively small, sub-urban district (34 square miles/88.8 square kilometres) located within South West Hertfordshire. It borders Watford and Hertsmere boroughs to the east, Buckinghamshire County (Chiltern and South Bucks districts) to the west, St Albans City & District and Dacorum Borough to the north and the London Boroughs of Hillingdon and Harrow to the south.

The district is on the inner fringe of London and benefits from excellent regional road and rail connections, including the M1 and M25 motorways which run through the District and the West Coast main line and the Metropolitan line into the City. Heathrow and Luton airports are in close proximity with Gatwick and Stansted about one hour away. Two thirds of the District is designated as Green Belt.

It has a population of 82,900 (2001 Census). The District contains a number of small and medium sized settlements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settlement</th>
<th>Approx. Population</th>
<th>Parish Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rickmansworth</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>Unparished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorleywood</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>Chorleywood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croxley Green</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>Croxley Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbots Langley</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>Abbots Langley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenders Pk.</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>Watford Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Oxhey</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>Watford Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxhey</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>Watford Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maple Cross</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>Unparished</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The District has a higher proportion of older residents than the county average, 21.2% are over 60 compared to a county average of 19.7%.
The minority ethnic population of Three Rivers increased between the 1991 and 2001 Census; 12.9% of the district population was from minority ethnic communities in the 2001 Census. The minority ethnic population varies from ward by ward, ranging from 5.2% to 39.6%, and is greatest in the more affluent wards of Moor Park & Eastbury, Chorleywood East and Carpenders Park.

Between the 1991 and 2001 Census, the overall population increased by 4.8% whilst the number of households increased by 9%. 27% of all households are single person households as a result of people living longer, remaining single for longer and relationship breakdown. Population projections indicate that the population as a whole will increase by 2.6% by 2021, with the under 19s falling, and the over 45s increasing (Source: Three Rivers Housing Needs Study 2004).

Crime is relatively low in Hertfordshire and crime rates are below the county average. However, fear of crime remains a prominent issue and anti-social behaviour is a concern amongst residents.

The District has a mixed economy of business and industry with no dominant employer but with the head or regional offices of a number of large national and international companies (examples include Daewoo, Nissan and Cadbury-Trebor Basset). These are complemented by small businesses. The District also has a key employment site at Leavesden which contains the regional office headquarters for BT and Leavesden Studios, an internationally acclaimed site for making blockbuster films.

Each weekday, 17,000 workers come into the District compared to 27,000 going out (2001 Census). This is the second highest daily outflow of commuters in Hertfordshire and reflects the high importance of the adjacent London job market. The majority of employees are engaged in managerial, administrative, clerical and secretarial positions, principally in the banking, finance, distribution and catering sectors. Unemployment in the District is historically low compared to other parts of the country. The 2001 Census showed unemployment as being 2.2% for the District compared to a national average of 3.4%.

Ashridge, Hayling, Langlebury, Maple Cross and Northwick wards feature relatively high up on the national Index of Multiple Deprivation whilst wards such as Moor Park & Eastbury feature relatively low down. Overall Three Rivers is ranked 308 out of the 354 local authorities where 1= the most deprived and 354 the least deprived (Source: IMD 2004). The Index is a measure of health, access to education, relative incomes, unemployment and other social and economic factors.

The average annual income for Three Rivers is £29,016 and is the 6th highest of the 15 authorities within the London Commuter Belt area (Source: LCB 2005). However of the 15, the district is 2nd highest for detached houses prices (£515,000), 4th highest for semi-detached (£270,000), 6th highest for terraces (£212,000) and the highest for flats/maisonettes (£202,000). The Housing Needs Survey 2001 (updated 2004) indicated a shortfall in affordable housing of 429 units a year. This lack of affordable housing leads both to significant numbers of people moving out of the District and to recruitment problems for local businesses and public sector organisations.

**WHAT HAVE WE DONE SO FAR IN DEVELOPING THE CORE STRATEGY?**

Evidence Base

The first phase in preparing the Core Strategy was to develop an evidence base; i.e. ascertain a thorough understanding of the needs of the area and the opportunities and constraints which operate in that area.

As part of the evidence gathering process, the Council has reviewed all relevant policy requirements at European, National and Regional level. It has also reviewed the key objectives set out in existing local strategies such as the Community Strategy, which the Council has prepared with its key partners (the Local Strategic Partnership).

In addition, the Council has undertaken a number of studies including:

- **Urban Capacity Study (January 2005)**; this study was carried out jointly with Dacorum and Watford Councils to assess the capacity of the districts to accommodate the amount of new dwellings as prescribed by the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) up to 2021. The Study found that the vast majority of the 3,600 dwellings prescribed by the draft RSS could potentially be accommodated within the urban area of the district. The Council will identify the precise sites needed to accommodate the regional figure through the Housing Allocations DPD in 2007, by which time the draft RSS will have been finalised. The Council also needs to assess whether sufficient infrastructure and services will exist to accommodate additional housing.

- **Employment Land Study (January 2005)**; this study was also carried out jointly with Dacorum and
Watford Councils to assess the quality and quantity of employment land in south west Hertfordshire and to recommend a policy approach for LDDs in planning up to 2021. In Three Rivers the study found that in the industrial and warehousing sector the district cannot afford to lose any more space to other uses. Whilst there is projected to be an oversupply of office space, this is in part dependent on existing commitments at Leavesden coming forward. In any event, a need for small and medium sized units for both office and industrial use is also identified.

Open Space and Recreation Study (July 2005); again this study was carried out with Watford and Dacorum Councils to provide a comprehensive analysis of open space, playing pitches and sport and recreation in the districts. Of particular relevance to the LDF is that the study found deficiencies in certain parts of the district in relation to a range of open spaces including parks and gardens, natural and semi-natural green spaces, green corridors, amenity greenspace, children’s playspace, allotments and cemeteries. An Action Plan sets out recommendations to improve, extend and create new space to address deficiencies and other priorities.

Gypsy and Travellers Needs Study (November 2004); this study was carried out with Hertsmere, Dacorum, St. Albans and Watford Councils and Hertfordshire County Council to assess the need for gypsy accommodation over coming years. It concluded that within the south and west Herts area, over the next five years about 140 families are in need, necessitating around 90 additional plots. Between 5 and 15 new residential sites will be needed. A further follow-up study is ongoing in relation to identifying specific sites; however the initial consultant study recommends that each authority should accommodate at least one new site.

Shopping Facilities Survey (July 2005); this survey looked specifically at the existing retail facilities of the shopping centres and parades in the District and undertook at a ‘health check’ assessment in relation to type of retail activity and number of vacant units. The survey shows that there is a good range of retail activity across the district and low vacancy rates.

Gaps in the evidence base

The Council acknowledges the need to provide up to date information on affordable housing needs and retail capacity in the district, and is considering the need for further work into these areas. The results of these studies will be fed into the preparation of the Core Strategy at the Preferred Options stage.

Annual Monitoring Report

The Council has also collected and analysed further data, through the preparation of the Annual Monitoring Report for the year 2004/5. This comprehensive report monitors existing planning policy and provides baseline data and indicators for future monitoring. Some of the data is referred to in this Paper. The full report can be viewed on the Council’s website at: www.threerivers.gov.uk (under Local Development Framework).

Initial public consultation

Through consultation via the Council’s web site and at the Rickmansworth Canal Festival (May 2005) the public were also asked what they considered to be the key planning issues facing the District. The key comments were:

- Retain open spaces
- Use previously used land for new development
- Build affordable housing
- Only cater for local housing needs
- Protect the Green Belt
- Adopt an integrated approach to the provision of transport services
- Provide new built leisure facilities
- Protect wildlife and promote recycling and renewable energy
- Improve facilities at the Aquadrome
Some of these issues were reinforced by more recent consultation carried out by the Local Strategic Partnership as part of the review of the Community Strategy priorities.

### Sustainability Appraisal

The new planning system requires local authorities to undertake a sustainability appraisal (SA) of all Local Development Documents. The purpose of sustainability appraisal is to assess the social, environmental and economic effects of documents throughout their preparation. This incorporates the requirements of the European Union Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive.

As the first stage in the SA/SEA process, the Council in conjunction with adjoining districts in south and west Hertfordshire, commissioned independent consultants to undertake a Scoping report. This identifies other plans and strategies which may have an impact on the Core Strategy. It also establishes a set of baseline information that helps identify the issues, problems and opportunities in Three Rivers, and the setting of SA/SEA objectives and indicators against which all Local Development Documents will be assessed.

From the draft Scoping Report (published in February 2006), the main sustainability issues and 'headlines' affecting Three Rivers are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Air Quality:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Whilst pollution levels are above regional levels, they are consistent with the SW Herts area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In general pollutant levels are decreasing and are below national targets.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Biodiversity:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The District lies within part of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and has five Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and seven local nature reserves (LNRs).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 93% of the SSSI area is described as being in 'favourable' or 'unfavourable recovering' condition. This is just below the national target (95%) but well above existing levels in the county and England.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Climatic Factors:</strong></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Carbon emissions per capita are at the same/lower than regional and national average; moreover, domestic energy efficiency has improved, with electricity consumption decreasing between 2002 and 2004.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Cultural Heritage:</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• There are 3 scheduled ancient monuments, 350 listed buildings and 21 conservation areas in the District. Four new conservation areas were designated in the last year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Two of the listed buildings are classified as 'at risk' due to their condition (Langleybury House and Croxley Great Barn).</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Landscape/Townscape:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The District falls within three Landscape Character Areas- 'Northern Thames Basin', 'Thames Valley' and 'Chilterns.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The District is a mix of generally poor agricultural land, urban development and high quality landscape.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Light pollution and loss of tranquillity has increased countywide and regionally (no specific data available for the District).</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Material Assets:</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The amount of household waste recycled increased from 12.2% in 2001/2 to 18.7% in 2004. This compares favourably with SW Herts however the amount of household waste collected per head also increased over this period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The percentage of new houses built on previously developed land increased from 83% in 2001/2 to 98.9% in 2004/5. This is well above the national target of 60%.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The chemical quality of water increased between 1995 and 2004 but the biological water quality fell during this period. Water resources are over abstracted in the region.

Population:

- The population of the District increased by about 5% between 1991 and 2001 to 82,843, making up about 8% of Hertfordshire's population.
- The largest proportion (23%) is aged between 30 and 44, which is a trend amongst the region.
- The majority of the population is white but the minority ethnic population has shown the fastest and greatest level of growth since 1991 in all sets of data.

Crime:

- Burglary rates in Three Rivers were above the regional average in 2003/4, although violent crime and vehicle crime is relatively low.

Health Care and Education:

- 74% of the population in the District are classified as being in good health on a par with national and regional figures.
- Life expectancy in the District is the highest in Hertfordshire and one of the highest in the UK.
- Approximately 22% of people aged 16-74 have no qualifications; this is below the regional average of 28%.

Accessibility:

- The percentage of local authority buildings being classified as suitable for and accessible by disabled people was 8% in 2003/4 rising to 79% in 2005/6.
- Three Rivers ranks 308th out of 354 local authority areas in England in the 2004 Index of Multiple Deprivation; levels of 'deprivation' increased between 2000 and 2004, however it still remains one of the most affluent local authority areas.

Economic Activity:

- Unemployment levels in the District are relatively low.
- Three Rivers accounts for about 6% of Hertfordshire's economic output or Gross Value Added (GVA). Over 2003-2009, GVA in the district is expected to grow slightly less than the County average; 2.75% compared with 3%, for both manufacturing and services.
- The majority of businesses are small (1-10 employees) and over a third were in banking, finance and insurance sectors.

The draft Scoping report also identifies a methodology and matrix for assessing documents as part of the next stages of the SEA/SA process. The full report, included sources for the data provided above, can be viewed at the Council's website at: www.threerivers.gov.uk (under Local Development Framework)

The evidence base is referred to in identifying the key issues and options facing the District in the following Sections.

VISION AND OBJECTIVES

Taking into account the existing plans, strategies and the evidence base available a number of important issues for inclusion in the Core Strategy are now proposed. In order to deal with these issues it is important that we have a clear and distinctive Vision that sets out the aspirations for Three Rivers over the period to 2021. The following draft Vision is proposed:

VISION

In essence, future development in Three Rivers must secure balanced development for homes and jobs which safeguards the environment, maintains the green belt, secures good services, and facilities for all and achieves a sustainable transport system.

Objectives are also needed to help give direction as to how the Vision will be achieved. The following draft Objectives are proposed:
This paper considers the key issues that have been identified and a number of potential options for addressing them. They are set out in no particular priority order. Each issue is introduced with information that sets out the context. The different options are then set out with a brief commentary. In some cases it may be possible for one or more options to co-exist. The options have also been considered against environmental, social and economic criteria as part of an initial Sustainability Appraisal. This can be viewed on the Council's website: www.threerivers.gov.uk.

**KEY ISSUE 1**

**Overarching Spatial Strategy; balancing homes and jobs and protecting the green belt.**

**Context**

The current local plan identifies the general settlement pattern, with development concentrated in the settlements of Rickmansworth, Chorleywood, Abbots Langley and part of Kings Langley, part of Garston, Croxley Green, Oxhey Hall, Carpenders Park, South Oxhey, Eastbury and part of Northwood, Moor Park and Maple Cross. Limited infill development is also permitted in the village cores of Bedmond and Sarratt.

The draft East of England Plan currently proposes 3,600 new homes to be provided in the District over the period 2001-2021. Based on a recent Urban Capacity Study, the Council estimates that this may be met through previously developed sites coming forward and completions since 2001, together with the use of non-green belt sites within the defined urban area. At this stage the Council does not anticipate the need to take land from the green belt to meet its proposed housing allocation. However should the allocation in the final East of England Plan be significantly higher than the current draft figure of 3,600, the Council will need to consider alternative locations for housing development.

One alternative is allowing housing development in the Green Belt. The Green Belt occupies about two thirds of the district area. The Council has generally resisted development in the Green Belt in order to check the unrestricted sprawl of the main settlements, to prevent neighbouring towns from merging (in some areas the depth of the green belt is quite thin) and to safeguard the countryside from encroachment. This all

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**OBJECTIVES**

- To balance the need for homes and jobs by providing sufficient land to meet a range of local housing needs and to maintain a prosperous local economy
- To increase levels of affordable housing in the District
- To make efficient use of previously developed land and to fully protect the Green Belt and open countryside
- To deliver improved and more integrated transport systems and to reduce the need to travel by locating development in accessible locations
- To maintain the vitality and viability of town and local shopping centres
- To protect and maintain biodiversity and landscapes
- To achieve a measurable reduction of pollution and greenhouse gas emissions through sustainable design of development
- To facilitate the provision of services and infrastructure to meet the needs of existing and new development, to include schools, health facilities (working with the Primary Care Trust), the emergency services, and transport
- To reduce crime rates and fear of crime through good design, increased police resources and improved access to training facilities provided by the Learning and Skills Council and other agencies
- To increase opportunities for good health through improved sport, leisure and open space and better access to facilities
- To achieve a holistic approach to waste management by minimising waste and optimising recycling opportunities
- To protect and enhance the historic environment

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**ISSUES AND OPTIONS FOR THE CORE STRATEGY**

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serves to protect the special character of the District and direct housing to brownfield (previously developed) sites. In 2004/5, 98.9% of dwelling completions were on brownfield land.

Another alternative is to allow housing development on land currently safeguarded for employment land; this includes land at Maple Cross, Croxley Business Park, Tolpits Lane, Kings Langley and Hunton Bridge. The recent Employment Land Study identifies that there are just enough industrial and warehousing sites, either built or ‘in the pipeline’, to meet projected demand to 2021 but it predicts an oversupply of office space. This is part dependant on a large amount of office space with planning permission at Leavesden airfield being built; however there is predicted to be a surplus with or without this site coming forward in its entirety. This means that some land currently earmarked for office use could be released for housing development. This would be consistent with national guidance where it can be clearly demonstrated that such land is no longer required for employment purposes.

However, it should be noted that releases of employment land have already occurred in recent times, most notably at the Ovaltine site. There is a danger that replacing employment activity with housing development will only exacerbate the existing high levels of out-commuting from the district as local recruitment opportunities decrease. Any release of employment land may necessitate the rationalisation of existing employment areas as identified in the local plan, with some areas reducing in size and some expanding.

The Employment Land Study recommends the promotion of mixed-use development (ie. a mixture of employment, housing and other uses) on employment sites that are proposed to be released; this approach may target all such sites or only particular ones. Mixed use development is supported by Government guidance and offers sustainable benefits, for example if people are able to live closer to where they work, there is less travelling required. However, depending on the nature of the employment activity, residential and employment uses may not always be compatible.

which are deemed to be accessible to shops, services and public transport facilities.

Option 1b
If required new homes cannot be delivered through option 1a) allocate sites on surplus employment land.

Any surplus employment land would be determined on the basis of the Employment Land Study and regular monitoring to assess the take-up of land and changes in market conditions. Such land would be used if the East of England Plan allocates the district a significantly higher housing allocation than anticipated and/or sites identified for housing within the urban area do not come forward during the course of the plan period.

Option 1c
If required new homes cannot be achieved through Option 1a), promote mixed-used development on surplus employment land so that an element of employment use is retained.

As with Option 1b), but recognising the benefits of mixed-use development, where employment and residential (and other uses such as local shops and services) are compatible.

KEY ISSUE 2
Making efficient use of land whilst protecting character

Context

The Government advises local authorities to ensure that land is used efficiently in order to minimise the need for development on green field sites. PPS3-Housing, states that developments that make inefficient use of land (below 30 dwellings per hectare) should be avoided, and developments which make more efficient use of land (between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare) should be encouraged. A greater intensity of development should be encouraged at places with good public transport accessibility such as town and local shopping centres or around locations along good public transport routes.

However, Government policy also acknowledges the importance of ensuring that making more efficient use of land does not compromise the quality of the environment and existing residential areas, which may be within areas of special landscape value or historic value.
The existing local plan does not specify any specific density standard other than permitting higher densities within the most accessible urban areas. The emerging East of England Plan follows government guidance on delivering a minimum of 30 dwellings per hectare. This is repeated in a government consultation paper, PPS 3- Housing, but it is proposed that authorities set specific standards based on the nature of each settlement in district areas.

Over the last four years average development density in the district has been below 30 dwellings per hectare. In 2004/5, it was just 15.4 dwellings per hectare, well below the government target. However the average density for sites under construction and with detailed planning permission at the end of 2004/5 is 65.6 dwellings per hectare, well above the government target. The latter reflects a number of larger housing schemes proposed recently, where it has been possible to achieve higher densities.

**Options**

**Option 2a**

Require housing development to make full and effective use of land having regard to the character of the surrounding area.

This is effectively a continuation of current local plan policy, and would not set specific density standards or guidelines. This allows each development to be assessed on its merits taking into account the character of the area and the location of the site in relation to services and public transport. There is a danger however that on some sites densities of 30 dwellings per hectare or above may not be achieved, and without larger sites coming forward with the potential for higher densities, the overall density figure for the district may not achieve the government target in any one year. This could potentially put pressure on the release of green field or green belt sites to meet identified housing allocations (see key issue 1).

**Option 2b**

Require housing development to meet specific density guidelines set on settlement by settlement basis.

This would involve setting and applying a range of density guidelines according to the specific settlement. Draft PPS 3 proposes indicative density standards as follows:

- Urban area: 40-75 dwellings per hectare
- Suburban area: 35-55 dwellings per hectare

Rural area 30-40 dwellings per hectare

Therefore within Three Rivers a higher range could for example be set in Rickmansworth as the principal town in the district, a medium density would be set in the other main settlements, whilst a lower one would be set in the rural settlements of Sarratt and Bedmond. The guidelines would give developers some certainty about the levels of density expected, although there would still remain an element of flexibility if special circumstances dictated a deviation away from the set range. This option could however necessitate the Council carrying out a character study of each settlement that would be used as a basis for the density guideline.

**Option 2c**

Require housing development to meet specific density guidelines based on accessibility.

This option would be similar to Option 2b) but would be based on a more sophisticated method of determining density, by settlement alone. It would involve mapping areas according to access to services and public transport. In those areas which were deemed to be more accessible, a higher level of density would be expected. This might mean that certain parts of existing settlements are more accessible than others and different range of density would apply within the same settlements. This essentially builds on Figure 2 in the existing Local Plan which sets out a range of accessibility 'zones'. In order to be effective, this option would involve having to regularly update the zonal maps, for example to take into account new shops opening or closing in an area or frequency of bus routes being changed.

**KEY ISSUE 3**

**The mix of new housing types and sizes.**

**Context**

It is important for new housing to be of a type and size for which there is a need. Local authorities are required to undertake assessments of existing and future needs and plan accordingly. The Council carried out such an assessment in 2001 (updated in 2004). The Council will shortly be carrying out a new assessment, and this will also look at housing markets.

Over the past few years there has been a trend of building smaller one and two bedroom units, normally as part of flatted development. Whilst smaller units may be suitable for the young as starter units and elderly as retirement homes, they offer less...
flexibility for families. Of some concern is that the smaller units are also invariably built as flats; whilst this assists with raising densities, flatted development is not always suited to the character of an area.

New housing also needs to take into account the specialist housing that may also be needed for the elderly and disabled including those with mobility disabilities.

### Option 3a
**Require a range in the type and size of dwellings to be provided to meet identified needs**

This is effectively a continuation of existing Local Plan policy, although it would involve much more stringent adherence to recommended ranges in the types and sizes of dwellings as set out in housing needs/market assessments in tandem with monitoring data set out each year in the Annual Monitoring Report.

### Option 3b
**Require a range in the type and size of dwellings to be provided on housing developments of a certain size to meet identified housing needs**

As per Option 3a), but only requiring a specified mix on development involving a certain number of dwellings; for example by setting a threshold of 10 units. It may sometimes be difficult in design, economic or marketing terms, to build a full range of housing on smaller sites.

### KEY ISSUE 4
**Affordable Housing**

#### Context

The provision of affordable housing is a major issue, particularly in the South East of England, where house prices are high relative to incomes. The Housing Needs Survey (update 2004) estimated that 429 affordable dwellings would be needed every year to satisfy need. This is above the total number of homes planned and suggests that the provision of affordable housing is likely to become an even more important issue in the future. Changes in funding regimes and the level of funding available from Housing Corporation for districts such as Three Rivers that are not within any allocated housing growth area in the region, may make it more difficult to secure affordable housing in the future.

The existing Local Plan policy requires all sites providing 25 dwellings or more dwellings (or on sites of one hectare or more) to provide an element of affordable housing (currently 30%). The policy has been relatively successful; since 2001/02, 222 affordable units were completed, representing 27.4% of all dwellings completed. However, in 2004/5, only 18 units were completed, representing 19% of the total. There needs to be a marked shift in affordable housing output if the need for affordable housing is going to be addressed in any significant way.

One means of achieving this is to lower the site threshold which triggers the requirement for affordable housing and/or increase the percentage of affordable housing sought on each site. Lowering the threshold will mean that more developments will be required to contribute to affordable housing. Increasing the proportion also increases the amount of affordable housing, either provided directly on site, or as a contribution towards provision elsewhere. The lowering of thresholds is supported by the recent draft consultation paper- PPS 3:Housing, provided it can be justified by evidence of local need.

The Local Plan also allows a limited amount of sites in the village cores of Bedmond and Sarratt, not normally permitted for market housing because of the green belt, to be released for affordable housing. Again, evidence of local need has to be demonstrated to allow housing through this 'rural exceptions' route.
**Option 4a**  
Seek the provision of affordable housing on all developments of 10 dwellings or more on sites of half a hectare or more

This option involves lowering the existing Local Plan threshold from 25 units to 10 units and would maintain the existing proportion of affordable housing sought (30%). A lower threshold would secure affordable housing from a greater number of sites than at present. The contribution from smaller sites would become more prominent; this is important as the number of large housing sites available for development is likely to decrease over the coming plan period.

**Option 4b**  
Seek the provision of affordable housing on all developments of 10 dwellings or more or on sites of half a hectare or more and increase the element of affordable housing sought from 30% to 40%

As per 4b) but with an increased element being sought. Existing evidence in the form of the Housing Needs Assessment (updated in 2004) recommended that an element of 40% of affordable housing be sought on suitable sites. This will need to be tested as part of the proposed new housing needs/market assessment being planned. As with Option 4a), any increased requirement for affordable housing will need to take into account the viability of development. Too onerous a requirement will effectively prevent any form of housing coming forward, including market housing, and could affect the overall housing supply required to general needs.

**Option 4c**  
Allocate some residential sites wholly or mostly for affordable housing

This would enable the Council to target sites suitable for affordable housing at an early stage. As a consequence a higher than normal percentage of affordable housing could be achieved on particular sites in order to boost supply. This could however lead to the concentration of affordable housing in particular areas rather than helping to create ‘mixed communities’ across the district.

**Option 4d**  
Permit small scale affordable housing schemes within the village core areas of Bedmond and Sarratt on the basis of demonstrable local need

This is a continuation of existing Local Plan policy. On the basis of past evidence, the 'rural exceptions' route is not likely to result in large numbers of affordable housing coming forward, but it does provide the opportunity to meet specific local needs and thereby sustain village life and the rural economy.

**Option 4e**  
Permit the redevelopment of non-residential sites wholly or mostly for affordable housing

This option seeks to maximise affordable housing provision from non-residential sites, which currently make little or no contribution. Non residential sites include those within employment use, retail use or community use. As with Key Issue 1, if the Council were to contemplate a release of surplus employment land, this could be on the basis that it be developed entirely, or with a very high proportion (say 75%) with affordable housing.

**KEY ISSUE 5**  
Gypsy and Travellers

**Context**

Government guidance now requires local authorities to assess the accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers and if necessary provide sites or additional capacity. The Council, in conjunction with other authorities in south and west Herts, undertook a needs survey; this found a deficiency in provision across all authorities. In order to rectify the situation...
each authority would need to increase capacity, and the study recommends the provision of at least one additional site in each authority area over and above existing provision. Whilst the potential locations of such sites is still being assessed as part of a supplementary ongoing study, it is clear that Three Rivers will need to plan to help meet the identified needs of gypsies and travellers in the area, resulting in at least one new site (or extension of existing site) in the District.

Options

Option 5a
Make additional provision in the district for gypsy and traveller pitches focusing on the extension of existing sites and/or the development of new sites

This option would be consistent with government advice. Additional provision would help meet the needs of gypsies and travellers and reduce the likelihood of unauthorised sites (often in the green belt) and facilitate enforcement and eviction, where required. The precise location of any extension of a site or new site would be set out in the Housing Allocations DPD.

Option 5b
Determine any application for gypsy sites on the basis of a meeting range of criteria relating to the site, access to services and impact on residential amenities and the environment.

This is a continuation of existing Local Plan policy. Whilst using specified criteria are helpful in identifying the suitability of certain sites, the current policy is essentially a reactive rather than a pro-active approach and there is no commitment to meet identified need through the provision of new sites. Continuing with this policy could lead to a shortage of sites in the area, increases in unauthorised encampments and possible legal challenges.

KEY ISSUE 6
Town and Local Shopping Centres

Whilst Three Rivers does not contain any of the strategic retail centres identified in the emerging East of England Plan, it is nevertheless in close proximity to a number of strategic town centres such as Watford (major regional centre) and Hemel Hempstead and St. Albans (regional centres). However the East of England Plan acknowledges that there are many other centres that meet local needs. Government policy is that provision should be concentrated in existing centres rather than outside of them, so that the viability and vitality of existing centres are protected.

Retailing provision is classified according to 'comparison' goods (clothing, sports equipment, books, music etc.) and 'convenience' goods (food and other goods required on a daily basis). An assessment of retail capacity carried out as part of the last Local Plan review (in 2000) identified a need for additional convenience retail floorspace in the Rickmansworth area during the plan period (up to 2011). Provision for this (3000 sq metres) was made by allocating the Rickmansworth Station car park for convenience retail development. Planning permission has now been granted for a new Waitrose store on this site.

The Council is considering the need for an up to date capacity study to look primarily at the need for additional comparison goods provision, and if needed, in which areas it should be provided. It is likely that expenditure on all types of retailing will grow but there is also growing competition from new areas such as internet shopping. If this expenditure is to be spent locally in the district, it will be important for the existing centres to retain their current role, and to be enhanced where appropriate. The Council is already undertaking a rolling programme of environmental enhancements to local centres.

The shopping areas in the District are classified into a 'retail hierarchy' into four main categories:

1 Primary Frontages - the cores of main centres within Rickmansworth, Abbots Langley, Chorleywood and South Oxhey
2 Secondary Frontages- the more peripheral parts of the main centres
3 Local Shopping Centres- 'stand-alone' centres within Croxley Green and on edge of Rickmansworth
4 Local Shops- smaller parades and individual shops dotted around the district

The Local Plan seeks to protect the main retail function of all centres by restricting changes of use to non-retail uses such as financial and professional services (Class A2) and food and drink uses (Classes A3-A5).

A survey of all centres within the District was carried out in July 2005 to assess the function, condition and vitality of all existing centres and parades. This revealed that across the District, 70% of units are in use for retail (A1) purposes, 12% as Banks, Building Societies, Employment Agencies, Estate Agents and Betting Shops (A2), and 14% were in use as Hot Food Takeaways, Cafes and Restaurants (A3 & A5). There was an overall vacancy rate of 3%.
 Options

Option 6a
Guide retail development within existing shopping areas subject to it being appropriate to the character and function of these centres

This is effectively a continuation of existing Local Plan policy where the main retail function of shopping areas is protected and each application for development is treated on its merits.

Option 6b
Greater protection of town and local shopping centres

This would involve greater control over changes of use to non-retail uses, perhaps by setting a capped ceiling of non-retail uses permitted in each centre. The cap could vary according to the nature of the centre; for example, in primary shopping areas, non-retail uses should not exceed 20% of the total uses within the centre, whilst in secondary centres, 40% may be a more appropriate upper level. This approach would serve to protect the retail function of centres and parades but the danger is that it could increase the number of vacant units and adversely affect vitality and viability by default.

Option 6c
Let market forces determine the mix of uses in within town and local shopping centres

This flexible approach would allow a greater range of uses within shopping centres such as food and drink uses (restaurants, cafes, take-aways, bars) or financial and professional services (offices, banks, estate agencies) and leisure uses. A number of these uses already co-exist above shops, however it is at ground floor level where uses have greatest impact and where uses have traditionally been controlled. This approach might make more effective use of premises particularly in the evenings but the danger is that the retail function of centres and parades, and residential amenities (from night-time uses), could be adversely affected.

Option 6d
Plan for any additional retail floorspace that is identified to meet need

This option is dependant on the findings of further work on retail capacity. However, you may have views at this stage about what type of retail provision you think is missing in the district and if so, where you think it should be located.
KEY ISSUE 7
Delivering improved and more integrated transport systems

Context

Hertfordshire County Council is the Highways Authority for all roads in the District except motorways and trunk roads which are the responsibility of the Department of Transport. The County Council also has a role to promote passenger transport. Through its Local Transport Plan it sets out plans and proposals to deal with transport issues in the county, which require government funding. The latest Plan (LTP2) does not include any major proposals affecting the District, although independently from LTP process, the County Council is promoting the Croxley Rail Link. The Government go-ahead for this scheme is still awaited.

The Council is working closely with the County Council and the adjoining authorities (Watford and Hertsmere) to review the South West Herts Transportation Strategy (1995/6). Key issues facing the area remain the ever-worsening effects of road traffic on the environment and the quality of life for residents. In this regard plans are afoot to widen the M25 and M1 within or close to the district as part of regional transportation plans. Government guidance does however seek to discourage the use of the private car as a method of transport by increasing the effectiveness of the passenger transport system and the cyclist and pedestrian networks.

The key areas where the LDF can influence transport choices and patterns are though:

✦ Directing development to the most accessible locations; the existing Local Plan policy already directs all major trip generating development to the urban areas which have easy access to shopping and other services and public transport. Outside of these areas development is only permitted where measures are put in place to minimise the use of cars and contribute to public transport service improvement.

✦ Ensuring through development that developers make adequate provision for non-car modes; public transport, cycling and walking; the existing Local Plan requires development to provide safe pedestrian access and cycle parking and shower/changing facilities. There is no requirement to contribute towards public transport improvements, unless the development is located in an inaccessible location.

✦ Using car parking standards that are compatible with the location in line with maximum standards; local parking standards are currently set for each type of development and vary depending on which ‘accessibility zone’ they fall in. Development outside the most accessible built up areas are required to provide more parking spaces as part of development, whilst those within the accessible urban area, less. Through other measures such as controlled parking zones, parking within the congested centres is further discouraged.

✦ Ensuring large new developments make provision for improved and integrated infrastructure; the existing Local Plan encourages the provision of transport interchanges at or close to rail stations but there is no specific requirement to integrate infrastructure as part of major development.

✦ Ensure that new large employers operate Green Travel Plans; the existing Local Plan policy already states that all major generating developments will be expected to operate a Green Travel Plan whereby employees through shift patterns, travel choices and working from home, are discouraged from using their cars to get to work.

Options

Option 7a
Maintain existing car parking standards for new development

Essentially a continuation of the existing local plan approach which recognises that parking standards can be adjusted according to the location of development in the District and their accessibility by other means of...
transport and proximity to services. The current standards are based on Hertfordshire-wide supplementary planning guidance.

**Option 7b**
**Review parking standards for new development.**

This could involve reviewing standards across the board, either upwards or downwards. Allowing more generous standards might encourage more dependency on the car whilst lowering standards might disadvantage those living in the least accessible rural parts of the district where public transport is poor.

**Option 7c**
**Review the car parking zones which determine how much parking should be provided as part of new development.**

This is essentially similar to Option 2c) whereby the accessibility/parking zones are revised and updated in relation to proximity to shops and services and public transport routes and frequencies.

**Option 7d**
**Effectively promote alternative modes of transport and integration of systems.**

This essentially continues existing local plan policy but would require a stronger policy stance to ensure that every major development contributes either to reducing the need to travel in the first place and secondly requiring alternative modes to be provided or facilitated and integrated at every opportunity.

**Option 7e**
**Require all developments, regardless of size to be located in accessible locations.**

Through the present Local Plan policy, it is only large or major developments (involving 10 or more houses or more than 300 square metres) that are required to be located in the most accessible locations. The Council recently proposed to extend this requirement to small developments as well, through the introduction of a supplementary planning guidance; however the advice from the Government Office was that this could only be done as part of the LDF process as it represented a significant change to the Local Plan policy. Requiring all development to be within walking distance of shops, frequent bus routes and/or railway stations would 'catch' a significant number of applications which currently 'escape' the need to be sustainably located; whilst these developments are small, their cumulative impact in terms of car trips, can be significant.

**KEY ISSUE 8**
**Increasing opportunities for good health through improved sport, leisure and open space and better access to facilities.**

The District currently offers a good range of open space and recreation facilities. However a recent comprehensive study found that there are access deficiencies in certain parts of the district particularly in natural and semi-natural greenspaces, amenity greenspace, children's play space, allotments and cemeteries. A series of Action Plans have been prepared identifying the need to plan for:

- Improvements to existing parks such as Leavesden country park, in relation to signage, paths, fencing, interpretation facilities
- Additional play areas in Chorleywood and Sarratt and Watford Rural area
- Site extension to cemetery at Woodcock Hill
- A range of improvements to indoor and outdoor sports facilities including pitches and their promotion

The existing Local Plan requires developers of housing development to contribute towards the provision or enhancement of local sports facilities, amenity and children's play space. Large scale developments of 25 units or more are expected to provide space/facilities on site whilst smaller developments can contribute by way of commuted payments.

A need has been identified for more precise guidelines to assist officers when negotiating for the provision
and future maintenance of different types of open space facilities associated with new development. Guidance has recently been produced and it is proposed to incorporate this guidance as part of the LDF. Guidance is also being prepared on the design of open space.

Option 8a
Seek to fully implement, where relevant to the LDF, the actions identified as part of the open space and recreation study/strategy.

This would involve identifying specific areas for new or extended play areas and cemeteries.

Option 8b
Require residential development to contribute both directly on site and through commuted payments towards the provision of sports facilities, amenity and children’s playspace.

This continues the Local Plan policy. However in order to make the process of calculating requirements easier and more transparent it is proposed that further guidance be used to supplement existing policy.

KEY ISSUE 9
Protecting and maintaining biodiversity and landscapes.

Context

The protection of wildlife and nature conservation is of high importance in Three Rivers. The District has a number of important habitats including five Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSI) covering 114 hectares at Whippendell Woods, Croxley Common Moor, Frogmore Meadows, Sarratt Bottom and Westwood Quarry. It also has seven Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) at:
- Oxhey Woods (97ha)
- Croxley Common Moor (41ha)
- Stockers Lake (38ha)
- The Withey Beds (7.5ha)
- Prestwick Road Meadows (2.8ha)
- Chorleywood Common (76ha)

The current Local Plan has policies to protect these important habitats. Furthermore the Council has adopted a Biodiversity Action Plan for Three Rivers (2003). This sets out how the Council, in conjunction with other agencies and the community, will protect wildlife and habitats and maintain management plans for all key sites in its ownership, for example at the Aquadrome and Chorleywood House. The Plan also aims to raise environmental awareness through education.

The landscape of the District is a complex and distinctive mix of rural and urban areas, woodlands, wildlife habitats, farmland, water features and land forms. There are three distinct landscape character areas in the district:
- Chilterns - landscape of high scenic quality; the District contains part of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- The Central River Valleys; encompasses the lower reaches of the River Colne
- South Hertfordshire Plateau; forming generally high ground on the edge of the London Basin

The Council is particularly pro-active in the protection of woodland, trees and hedgerows, through for example the serving of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).

Options

Option 9a
Protect important wildlife sites and species and maintain the distinctive landscape character of the district through the protection and management of the landscape.

This is a continuation of existing Local Plan policy and Biodiversity Action Plan for Three Rivers.

KEY ISSUE 10
Achieving a measurable reduction of pollution and green house gas emissions.

Due mainly to the M25, air quality in some parts of the District remains relatively high. The Council has therefore declared five Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in the Chorleywood, Chandlers Cross and Kings Langley areas. Within these areas levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO2) and particulate matter (PM10) are closely monitored.

The existing Local Plan policy seeks to control development proposals that would give rise to unacceptable levels of pollution to land, air or water, including noise and light pollution.

Climate change is one of the most pressing global issues and there appears little doubt that the burning of fossil fuels is contributing to long-term changes in the climate. In order to tackle the problem it is important we also act at the local level. In 2003, the
District was responsible for emitting 725 kilo tonnes of CO2 from a range of sources including industry and commerce, domestic and road transport. Whilst the Council has been successful in promoting good improvements in domestic energy efficiency, there is significant room for improvement in contributing to a reduction in CO2 emissions.

The Council is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions that arise from development and is actively seeking a number of ways of doing this. For example the Council commissioned a report with other Hertfordshire councils to assess the role that renewable energy could play in the County. The study found that the use of domestic wind turbine energy, biomass and solar panels could play a significant part in helping to meet government and regional targets; targets include reducing CO2 emissions by 20% and supplying 10% of UK’s electricity through renewable sources by 2010.

The Council is also working with other authorities in Hertfordshire in preparing guidance on how developments could be built more sustainably. In the short term the Council has developed its own guide covering best practice on energy efficiency, water conservation, renewable energy, waste management and recycling. It is proposed that the guidance be taken forward as part of the LDF process.

Another consequence of climate change is increased risk of flooding caused by seasonal rain or through sudden and increasingly violent storms. As part of recent government guidance, local authorities will be required to fully assess flood risk and control development within the floodplain.

Through the development of policy and guidance as part of the LDF, Three Rivers District Council will seek to become a flagship authority in promoting sustainable design measures as a means of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

**Options**

**Option 10a**

Development will be required to be designed and built in a sustainable manner in order to ensure that greenhouse gas emissions are minimised.

This builds on existing Local Plan policy but involves a step change in delivery of existing and emerging policy and guidance. This will ensure that development fully takes into account the need to minimise emissions. In order to succeed it is important that other authorities adopt a similar approach and in this regard the Council is working with other Hertfordshire authorities in promoting sustainability in development.

**Option 10b**

All new major developments will be required to ensure that at least 20% of their energy requirements are met on site through renewable energy sources.

This approach will ensure that energy is considered at the beginning of the development process. There is a danger that this may affect the viability of some sites coming forward, however improvements in technology and availability of equipment should help to keep costs down. In any event any additional cost will be offset by lower maintenance costs in the form of fuel bills.

**KEY ISSUE 11**

A holistic approach to waste management.

Hertfordshire County Council is the authority responsible for waste planning policy and this is being developed as part of the Waste and Minerals Development Framework. The District Council nevertheless has an important role in promoting the policy locally and in operational waste management issues.

A holistic approach to waste means effectively managing the entire waste cycle; importantly this includes reducing the amount of waste produced in the first place and then dealing with that waste in a sustainable fashion: re-using or recycling waste where possible and only disposing of waste to landfill as a last resort. The Council is an active participant in 'WasteAware', a county-wide partnership which determines the waste strategy, optimising disposal routes and minimising waste for landfill.
In terms of recycling, the Council is performing well. Three Rivers has one of the lowest figures for waste produced per household (341 Kg per head in 04/05) and is one of the top recyclers in England, recycling or composting 25.27% of household waste in 04/05. It is expected to be the top authority in Hertfordshire in 05/06 with over 40% of household waste recycled.

Whilst the Council is performing well on the recycling of household waste, it is important that other wastes such as commercial and demolition waste are re-used or recycled, and that such wastes are reduced. It is also important that the total amount of waste produced is not increased annually.

The Local Plan already encourages the use of recycled and reclaimed material in new development. The need for waste recovery and recycling facilities as a part of commercial, industrial or residential development is also considered. This may include providing composters or bottle banks as part of new development.

The Council is also liaising with the County Council in identifying and protecting waste management sites within the District as part of the Waste and Minerals Framework.

**Options**

**Option 11a**
All new developments will be required to use an element of recycled or reclaimed materials as part of construction.

**Option 11b**
All new developments will be required to provide facilities on site to allow the recovery and recycling of materials wherever possible.

These options follow on from existing Local Plan policy but there would be more of an emphasis on 'requiring' rather simply 'encouraging' such measures as part of an overall sustainability strategy (linked to Issue 10).

**KEY ISSUE 12**
Facilitating the provision of services and infrastructure to meet the needs of existing and new development, to include schools, health facilities (working with the Primary Care Trust), the emergency services and transport.

The Community Strategy identified 'access to services' as the second most important priority for Three Rivers. There is concern that additional development within the district, particularly as a result of the need to plan for the regional allocation of new dwellings, will put added strain on existing infrastructure and services. Roads in southwest Hertfordshire are already the most congested in Hertfordshire. There is also concern about the impacts on schools, hospitals, doctors' surgeries as well as with utilities, particularly in relation, to water supply.

In planning for development the Council will need to consider the impacts on infrastructure and services and how developments, through planning obligations can contribute towards road improvements and sustainable transport modes, schools and library provision, open space, children's play space provision and affordable housing, amongst others.

It may be possible to introduce a development charge or planning gain supplement in the future as part of government proposals but at the moment there is no clear national direction on this issue.

**Options**

*No options at the present time. This issue will need further examination. The Council will be discussing this further with Local Strategic Partnership and other key infrastructure and service providers.*

**KEY ISSUE 13**
Reduce crime rates and fear of crime through good design, increased police resources and improved access to training facilities provided by the Learning and Skills Council and other agencies.

The recent Community Strategy consultation placed crime, anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime as the most important priorities for Three Rivers.

In 2003/4, burglary rates in Three Rivers were above the regional average, although violent crime and vehicle crime was relatively low. Overall crime fell slightly between 2003/4 and 2004/5 from 67.91 crimes per 1000 population to 64.27. There is also a distinct geographical spread with the highest levels normally being found in the most 'deprived' wards.

In relation to existing Community Strategy targets, more needs to be done to address:

- criminal damage (including graffiti),
- non-domestic burglary (including garages, sheds etc.),
- violent crime (woundings and common assault)
- domestic violence (repeat incidents).

In contributing to reducing crime and fear of crime, it is proposed that the Council adopt the national 'Safe
by Design’ guidance relating to the design and layout of residential and other development. It is also proposed that access to youth facilities is improved. Another option is to ensure that new development contributes towards local policing, either through contributions towards police infrastructure or increased policing on the street. A strategy on this proposal is already being developed by police authorities within the region, in consultation with local authorities. This may be something that could be progressed through the LDF.

Options

Option 13a
Promote ‘safer by design’ development and seek contributions from development towards police infrastructure and services.

The existing Local Plan has no specific policy relating to crime reduction although the planning system can have an impact particularly through the design of development and open and public spaces and by seeking contributions towards local policing.

Option 13b
Seek local recruitment and training policies with major employers coming into the District.

As a condition of major new employers locating in the District it may be possible for the Council to negotiate as part of a planning permission that an element of the new jobs provided go to local people. In order to facilitate this process, this may also include a contribution towards training to ensure that the local workforce has the right skills needed. As well as the general benefits of helping to provide young people with training and skills towards employment opportunities, this option may also help deter them away from anti-social behaviour.

Option 13c
Seek the provision of youth facilities as part of new development.

As with Option 13b), new development could directly contribute towards facilities and initiatives which deter young people away from anti-social behaviour. This may include the provision of social facilities such as youth shelters for example where the young can congregate.

KEY ISSUE 14
Conservation and heritage.

Three Rivers is an area rich in its historic environment. There are 3 scheduled ancient monuments, 350 listed buildings and 21 conservation areas in the District. Four new conservation areas were designated in the last year.

The Local Plan sets out a broad approach to the preservation and enhancement of the historic environment, including listed buildings, development within conservation areas and archaeological remains.

Option 14a
Protect and enhance the historic environment by resisting the loss of important buildings and ensuring that new development respects the character of the historic environment.

This is a continuation of Local Plan policy but in addition it will be important to carry out conservation area appraisals for all existing conservation areas so that the special architectural and historic features are clearly identified, and guidance be provided for development within these areas. It will also be important to ensure that listed buildings do not become ‘at risk’ as a result of neglect and to review the current list of locally important buildings so that protection is provided to buildings which are not statutorily listed, yet still contribute to the local historic environment.
OTHER PARTS OF THE CORE STRATEGY

The Core Strategy will also contain policies which will set out the criteria against which planning applications for development will be considered. These are called 'generic development control' policies. These will focus on topic-related policies such as:

- Protecting the amenities of residential areas
- Protecting landscape, wildlife and natural resources
- Addressing access, highways and transport issues
- Protecting vitality and viability of centres
- Addressing visual impact of development and other design issues

These policies will need to accord with vision, objectives and core policies that are discussed in this consultation document and then taken forward. The Council will undertake further consultation on these policies, including with focus groups.

If you would like to be involved in these groups and have a view on the range of topics that the development control topics should cover, please let us know.

Finally the Core Strategy will contain a framework that will address the monitoring and delivery of the Strategy. Again the Council will undertake additional consultation on this element in subsequent stages of preparation of the Core Strategy.

NEXT STAGES

Comments received at this stage will help the Council assess its 'Preferred Options' for the Core Strategy. Whilst further consultation will also be carried out at the Preferred Options stage we would really like to hear your views at this initial stage of the process.

Thank you for taking the time to read this Paper. Please fill out the questionnaire enclosed with this Paper and return it to us with your views on whether we have identified the right key issues, and all possible options to address them. Your feedback will help us develop the Core Strategy and help us plan for the future of the District.
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