

Chapter 7

Hertford

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7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 The County town of Hertford lies at the confluence of four rivers in a valley setting, which in the past has influenced its shape and form. Hertford's boundaries are characterised by areas of open land which penetrate towards the centre of the town. These 'Green Fingers' are an environmental asset of value to local people and visitors alike. The town also benefits from many cultural and recreational facilities.

7.1.2 Hertford's town centre retains much of its medieval core, includes many buildings of historic significance, and has high townscape quality which, combined with its river setting, presents both opportunities and constraints in shaping its future development. The town offers an attractive environment for leisure and business purposes and, with its retail offer characterised both by major multiples and independent outlets, Hertford is classed as a Secondary Town Centre. The Hertford Town Centre Urban Design Strategy, 2016, seeks to build on this and includes proposals to improve the commercial viability and vitality of the central area and to further enhance the quality of the built environment. The redevelopment of the Bircherley Green centre will be a key part of this approach.

7.1.3 The town has good transport connections, including a bus station, providing access to both local and long-distance destinations, and two railway stations, offering services into London and wider locales. Despite good road links, traffic congestion in Hertford is acute at peak times, both within the historic core and especially on the A414 Gascoyne Way, which bi-sects the town. It is important to ensure that future development should not exacerbate this situation, and mitigating measures should be identified and delivered, where possible.

7.1.4 Good use has been made in the past of brownfield opportunities in the town and, despite this being a shrinking resource, the vacant former gas works site in the Mead Lane area presents a prime redevelopment opportunity and is expected to be brought forward for mixed use development. The Mead Lane Urban Design Framework (December 2014) will guide the approach to development in this location.

7.1.5 As there has been some loss of employment in the town in recent years, it is important that the town should seek to maintain and improve on its current provision, to both internalise trips within the Hertford and Ware area to minimise out-commuting, and also to encourage new businesses to locate to the County town.

7.1.6 The main components of the development strategy for Hertford are as follows:

7.1.7 **Housing:** a mix of dwelling types and sizes will be constructed in appropriate locations to ensure that Hertford's population will be able to access a balanced housing market catering for all life stages. The provision of affordable housing as part of any new residential or mixed use development schemes will allow emerging households to be able to remain living in Hertford in accommodation suited to their needs.

7.1.8 Design: collaboratively prepared Masterplans for development in Hertford (at sites HERT2, HERT3, HERT4 and HERT5) will form an important part of the delivery of the site allocations. These Masterplans will provide a strong framework for the development, which will also embody the use of design codes. This will ensure the highest quality design and layout of each area and provide a comprehensive approach to the whole development, whilst reflecting different character areas across the sites. The Masterplans will accord with the provisions of Policy DES1 (Masterplanning).

7.1.9 Education: since the provision of an all-through school facility at Simon Balle in 2015 addressed a previous shortfall of spaces in Hertford, any future additional primary level educational needs of the town will be achieved via the expansion of existing facilities. Secondary educational provision in the Hertford and Ware Schools Planning Area will be enhanced via the provision of a new secondary school as part of development to the North and East of Ware, and, where appropriate, by the expansion of one or more of the existing schools in the Schools Planning Area .

7.1.10 Transport: the provision of enhanced bus services to support travel to and from new urban extensions to the town will provide links with the two existing railway stations and the central bus station. New development will support improved sustainable travel and will aid delivery of initiatives contained in Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan 4 and daughter documents, particularly those schemes detailed in the Hertford and Ware Urban Transport Plan (or in subsequent HCC transport policy documents). Mitigating measures will help ameliorate congestion, particularly on the A414, where a bypass of the town and reassignment of one existing carriageway lane in each direction would enable prioritisation of sustainable transport modes and the ability for Hertford to become a Sustainable Travel Town.

7.1.11 Other Infrastructure: improved utility infrastructure, such as to wastewater networks, will support existing and new developments.

7.1.12 Employment and Retail: the Mead Lane Employment Area will be revitalised via the redevelopment of vacant areas to provide 3,000m² of B1 employment floorspace, as part of a mixed use development (see also the Mead Lane Urban Design Framework, December 2014). Other existing Employment Areas in the town will be maintained and, where appropriate, modernised. Where possible, the current employment offer should be supplemented by the creation of additional jobs in suitable locations. The retail function of the town will be maintained and supplemented within the central core, in line with the provisions of the Hertford Town Centre Urban Design Strategy, 2016.

7.1.13 Character: Hertford will preserve its market town character and the quality of the town's historic core will be respected in new development proposals. Where development occurs in the town, this should ensure that the sense of place is created which allows for successful integration with existing features of character in the area. Where development involves river frontages, this will enable the provision of an enhanced setting and improvement of public access, as appropriate. The town's green infrastructure, particularly Hertford's Green Fingers which provide unique

character to the settlement, will be maintained and enhanced, as appropriate. Development will be expected to support the Panshanger Country Park, to enable protection of, and increased public access to, this valuable resource.

7.2 Development in Hertford

7.2.1 The main features of the policy approach to development in Hertford are shown on Figure 7.1 below:

Figure 7.1: Key Diagram for Hertford



7.2.2 Reflecting the District Plan Strategy, the following policies will apply to applications for new development in Hertford:

Policy HERT1 Development in Hertford

I. Hertford will accommodate a minimum of 950 new homes, which will include:

- (a) around 200 homes as part of mixed use development in the Mead Lane area, as set out in Policy HERT2 (Mead Lane Area);
- (b) around 550 homes to the west of the town, as set out in Policy HERT3 (West of Hertford);
- (c) around 150 homes to the west of B158 Wadesmill Road, as set out in Policy HERT4 (North of Hertford);
- (d) around 50 homes to the west of Mangrove Road, as set out in Policy HERT5 (South of Hertford); and
- (e) a proportion of the overall windfall allowance for the District.

II. Retail floorspace will be delivered primarily within the town centre.

III. 3,000m² of B1 employment floorspace or other employment generating uses that would be compatible with the uses on neighbouring land, will be delivered in the Mead Lane Area (HERT2).

Development Sites in Hertford's Urban Area

7.2.3 It is expected that a proportion of the overall windfall allowance for the District will be accommodated in Hertford. These sites will be determined on an individual basis, taking into account the policies of the Plan.

7.2.4 For the allocated sites, the following policies will apply in addition to general policies in the Plan:

Mead Lane Area

7.2.5 In order to meet the District's short term housing requirement and to provide for the housing needs of Hertford, development of around 200 dwellings in the Mead Lane area is proposed as part of mixed-use development.

7.2.6 The Mead Lane area offers a unique opportunity to regenerate underused employment land through high quality, mixed-use, development which will revitalise this area and provide an enhanced river frontage. The Mead Lane Urban Design Framework, December 2014, sets parameters in terms of acceptable uses, necessary infrastructure, design, and other requirements, to support the redevelopment and revitalisation of the area. Any development in the Mead Lane area will therefore be subject to its provisions.

The Mead Lane Urban Design Framework is available to view at: www.eastherts.gov.uk/evidencebase

Figure 7.2 Site Location: The Mead Lane Area

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Policy HERT2 Mead Lane Area

- I. Land in the Mead Lane Area, to the east of Marshgate Drive, is allocated to provide around 200 homes by 2027, as part of mixed-use development.
- II. A Masterplan will be collaboratively prepared, involving site promoters, landowners, East Herts Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Hertford Town Council, and other key stakeholders. This document will further be informed by public participation in the process.
- III. Subject to, and in accordance with, the provisions of the Mead Lane Urban Design Framework, December 2014, the development is expected to address the following provisions and issues:
 - (a) a range of dwelling type and mix, in accordance with the provisions of Policy HOU1 (Type and Mix of Housing);
 - (b) Affordable Housing in accordance with Policy HOU3 (Affordable Housing);

- (c) delivery of 3,000m² B1 employment floorspace, or other employment generating uses that would be compatible with the uses on neighbouring land, which will provide appropriate opportunities to promote self-containment and sustainability and to assist in providing a buffer between existing employment uses and new residential provision;
- (d) provision of appropriate mitigation measures on boundaries shared with existing employment uses within the overall Employment Area that should both ensure a good quality living environment for new residents and prevent existing or potential uses within the Employment Area being jeopardised;
- (e) quality local green infrastructure throughout the site including maximising opportunities for linking into and improving existing assets and enhancing biodiversity, especially along the river corridor;
- (f) necessary new utilities, including, *inter alia*: integrated communications infrastructure to facilitate home working;
- (g) sustainable drainage and provision for flood mitigation;
- (h) access arrangements and appropriate local (with contributions towards wider, strategic,) highways mitigation measures, which, *inter alia*, should include: a segregated emergency access at Mill Road between Railway Street and Claud Hamilton Way; improvements to the Rowley's Road/Mead Lane level crossing for pedestrians and cyclists; and a link between Marshgate Drive and the existing spur road to the east of the site to facilitate pedestrian and cycle access, and which should also complete the circulatory route to allow for the extension of bus routes into the area. In the event that land ownership issues preclude this arrangement, provision should be made within the site for suitable access and turning arrangements to facilitate bus penetration to the north east part of the site;
- (i) the widening of Marshgate Drive to allow for improved vehicular and pedestrian access and car parking/car share scheme to be delivered within a Green Streets approach;
- (j) encouragement of sustainable transport measures, both through improvements to the existing walking and cycling networks in the locality and through new provision, which should include, *inter alia*, a 3m pedestrian/cycleway to the south side of Mead Lane in addition to improvements to the towpath and links with the adjoining area and the town centre (in particular addressing links to Hartham Common and Kings Meads) and enhanced passenger transport services;
- (k) remediation of land contamination resulting from former uses;
- (l) public open space/s within the site, including the provision of a play area and opportunities for public art interventions and space for wildlife;

- (m) landscaping and planting, both within the site and peripheral, which responds to the existing landscape and complements development, as appropriate;
- (n) development will protect or, where appropriate, enhance heritage assets and their settings, including the Grade II listed Hertford East Station and Signal Box, through appropriate mitigation measures;
- (o) the delivery of all other necessary on-site and appropriate off-site infrastructure;
- (p) other policy provisions of the District Plan and relevant matters, as appropriate.

West of Hertford

7.2.7 In order to meet the District's short term housing requirement and to provide for the housing needs of the town, development of around 550 homes is proposed on land to the west of Hertford.

7.2.8 Development of the area will need to ensure the enhancement of sustainable transport provision; the continued protection of Archer's Spring, Ancient and other woodland, wildlife, and other natural assets; and also respect and contribute to the Panshanger Country Park. The phasing of development will also need to ensure that any underlying mineral deposits within the site can be satisfactorily extracted as part of development.

Figure 7.3 Site Location: Land West of Hertford (North of Welwyn Road)

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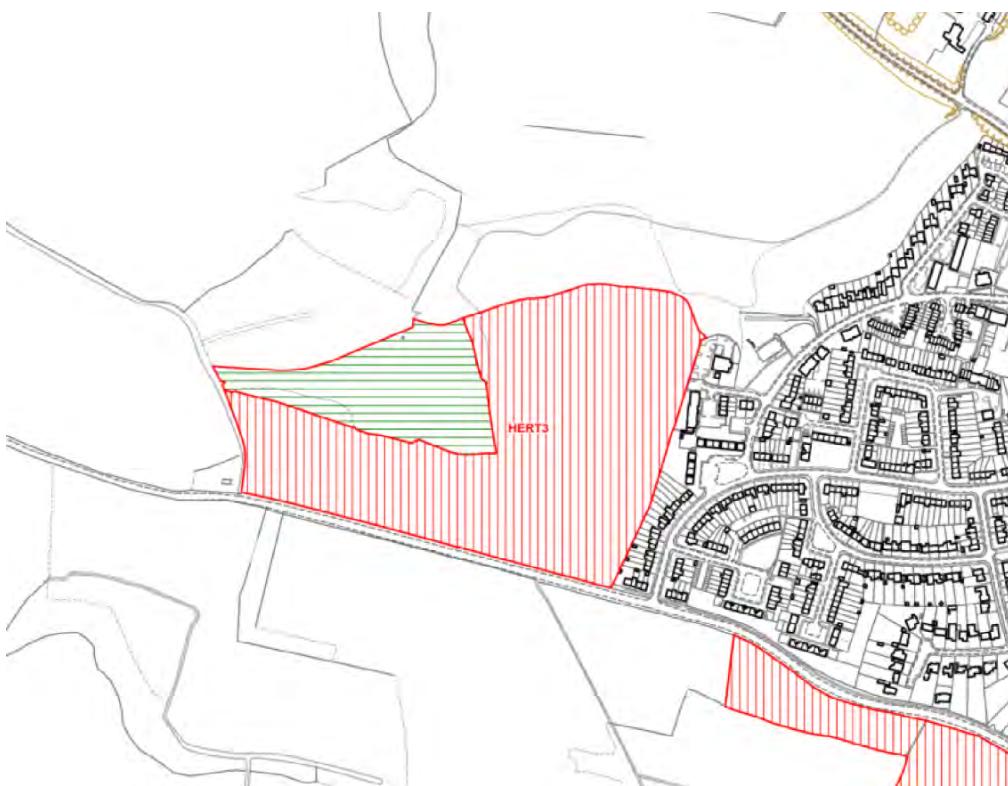
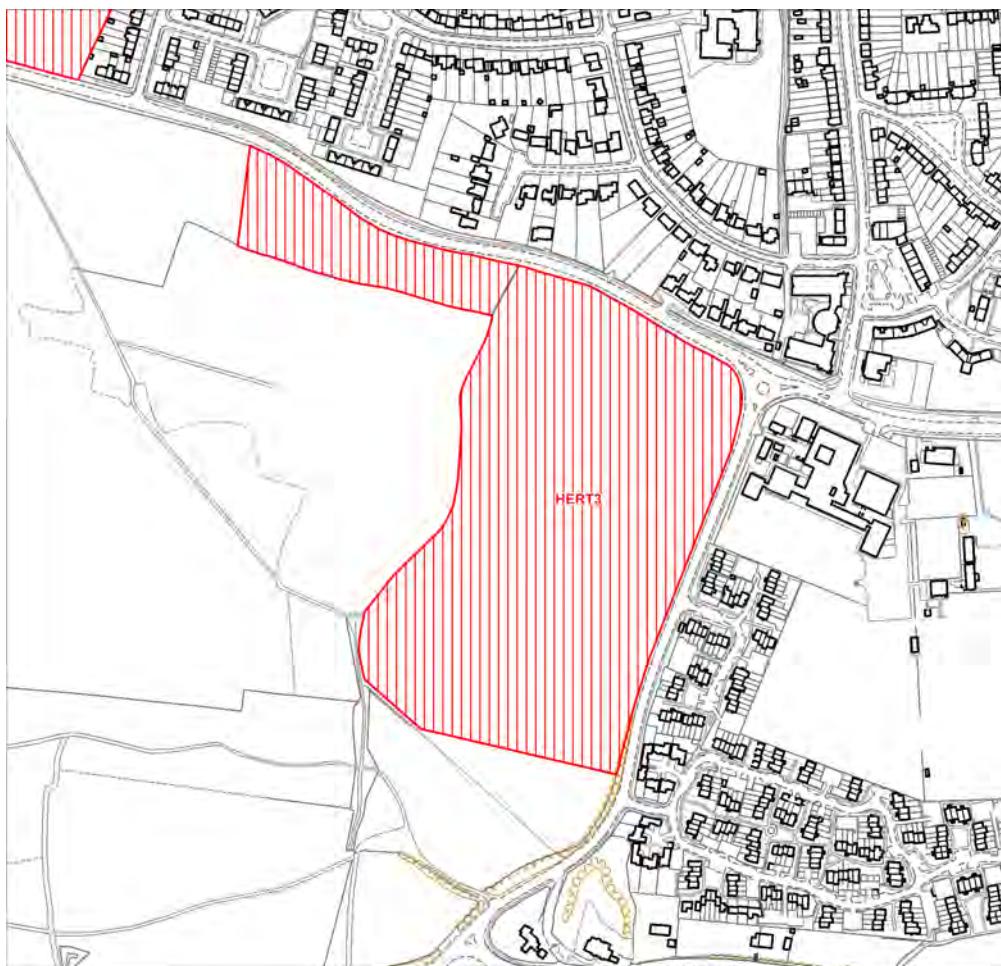


Figure 7.4 Site Location: Land West of Hertford (South of Welwyn Road/West of Thieves Lane)

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Policy HERT3 West of Hertford

- I. Land to the west of Hertford is allocated as a residential site, to accommodate a minimum of 550 homes by 2022, with around 300 homes being provided to the north of Welwyn Road and around 250 homes south of Welwyn Road/west of Thieves Lane.
- II. A Masterplan will be collaboratively prepared, involving site promoters, landowners, East Herts Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Hertford Town Council, and other key stakeholders. This document will further be informed by public participation in the process.
- III. The development of around 300 dwellings to the north of Welwyn Road is expected to address the following provisions and issues:
 - (a) a range of dwelling type and mix, in accordance with the provisions of Policy HOU1 (Type and Mix of Housing);

- (b) Affordable Housing in accordance with Policy HOU3 (Affordable Housing);
- (c) Self-Build and Custom Build Housing in accordance with Policy HOU8 (Self-Build and Custom Build Housing);
- (d) demonstration of the extent of the mineral that may be present and the likelihood of prior extraction in an environmentally acceptable way has been fully considered. As a minimum, an assessment of the depth and quality of mineral, together with an appraisal of the consequential viability for prior extraction without prejudicing the delivery of housing within the plan period should be provided;
- (e) necessary new utilities, including, *inter alia*: integrated communications infrastructure to facilitate home working, and necessary upgrades to the sewerage system;
- (f) sustainable drainage and provision for flood mitigation;
- (g) access arrangements and appropriate local (with contributions towards wider, strategic) highways mitigation measures;
- (h) encouragement of sustainable transport measures, both through improvements to the existing walking, cycling and bridleway networks in the locality and through new provision, which should also provide links with the adjoining area and the town centre (which should include, *inter alia*, the improvement of pedestrian and cycle access to Perrett Gardens and links from the Sele Farm estate to public footpaths and bridleways in the locality); shared use cycle/pedestrian way alongside Welwyn Road; enhanced passenger transport services (including, *inter alia*, improved service provision and the provision of new bus stops and shelters on B1000 Welwyn Road);
- (i) protection of public rights of way and other public access routes running through or on the boundaries of the site;
- (j) landscaping and planting, both within the site and peripheral, which responds to the existing landscape and complements development, as appropriate, including the provision of a suitable buffer between the development and existing woodland areas and a defined, recognisable boundary to the Green Belt;
- (k) public open spaces across the site, including the provision of play areas and opportunities for outdoor health and fitness activities, as well as space for wildlife;
- (l) quality local green infrastructure through the site including opportunities for preserving and enhancing on-site assets, maximising opportunities to link into existing assets and enhance biodiversity including the protection of Local Wildlife Site 59/077; Archers Spring; and other woodland and wildlife interests in the area, including a suitable buffer between woodland and development;

- (m) taking into account the contents of the 'Panshanger Park and its environs Heritage Impact Assessment, July 2016' and including measures to ensure that any impact on views affecting the Panshanger Country Park and Goldings are successfully mitigated;
- (n) contributions towards the Panshanger Country Park;
- (o) social infrastructure including contributions towards education, health services and other community facilities;
- (p) the delivery of all other necessary on-site and appropriate off-site infrastructure; and
- (q) other policy provisions of the District Plan and relevant matters, as appropriate.

IV. The development of around 250 homes to the south of Welwyn Road/west of Thieves Lane is expected to address the following provisions and issues:

- (a) a range of dwelling type and mix, in accordance with the provisions of Policy HOU1 (Type and Mix of Housing);
- (b) Affordable Housing in accordance with Policy HOU3 (Affordable Housing);
- (c) Self-Build and Custom Build Housing in accordance with Policy HOU8 (Self-Build and Custom Build Housing);
- (d) demonstration of the extent of the mineral that may be present and the likelihood of prior extraction in an environmentally acceptable way has been fully considered. As a minimum, an assessment of the depth and quality of mineral, together with an appraisal of the consequential viability for prior extraction without prejudicing the delivery of housing within the plan period should be provided;
- (e) necessary new utilities infrastructure including, *inter alia*: integrated communications infrastructure to facilitate home working, and necessary upgrades to the sewerage system;
- (f) sustainable drainage and provision for flood mitigation;
- (g) access arrangements and appropriate local (with contributions towards wider, strategic) highways mitigation measures;
- (h) encouragement of sustainable transport measures, both through improvements to the existing walking, cycling and bridleway networks in the locality and through new provision, which should also provide links with the adjoining area and the town centre; shared use cycle/pedestrian way alongside Welwyn Road; enhanced passenger transport services (including, *inter alia*, improved service provision and the provision of new bus stops and shelters on B1000 Welwyn Road);

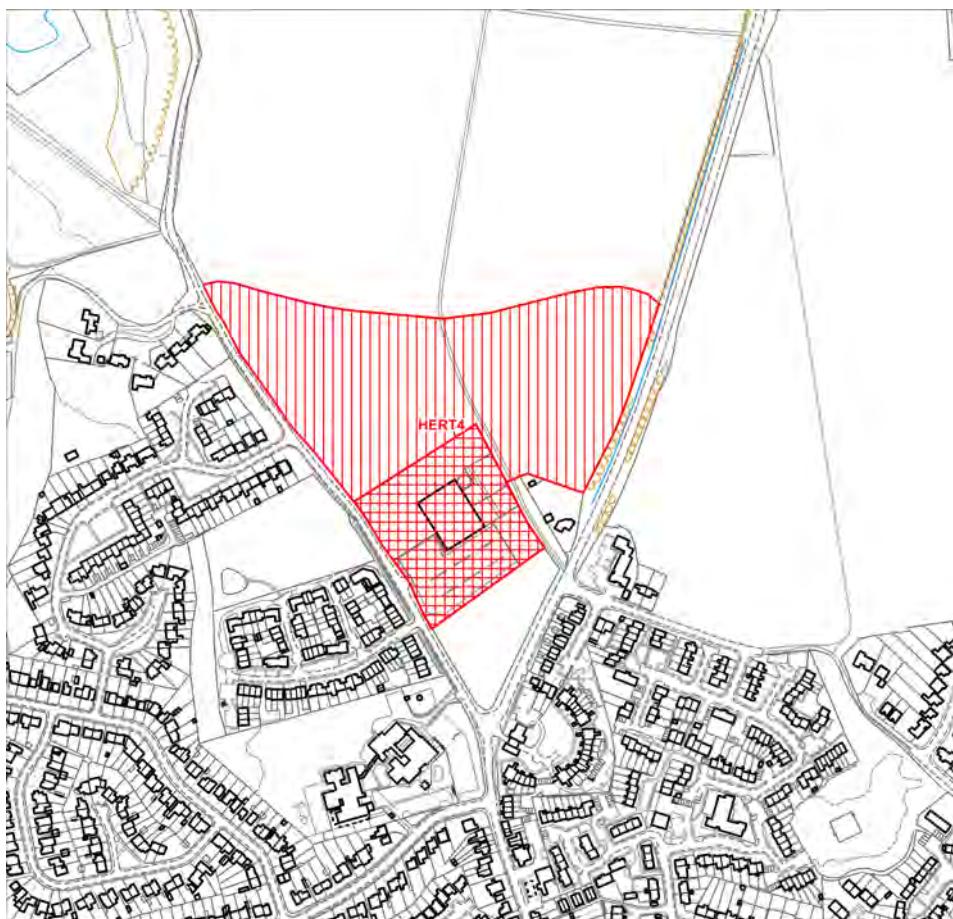
- (i) protection of all public rights of way and other public access routes running through or on the boundaries of the site;
- (j) landscaping and planting, both within the site and peripheral, which responds to the existing landscape and complements development, as appropriate, including, *inter alia*, the provision of a suitable buffer between the development and the existing woodland and a defined, recognisable boundary to the Green Belt;
- (k) taking into account the contents of the 'Panshanger Park and its environs Heritage Impact Assessment, July 2016' and including measures to ensure that development respects the relationship with this sensitive location. Such measures should include, *inter alia*, the creation of gateway landscaping to the south of the site, which protects key views into and from within the Panshanger Country Park and ensures that the development is successfully mitigated;
- (l) contributions towards the Panshanger Country Park;
- (m) public open spaces across the site, including the provision of play areas and opportunities for outdoor health and fitness activities, as well as space for wildlife;
- (n) quality local green infrastructure through the site including opportunities for preserving and enhancing on-site assets, maximising opportunities to link into existing assets and enhance biodiversity including the protection of Local Wildlife Site 58/025; Ancient and other woodland and wildlife interests in the area, including a suitable buffer between woodland and development;
- (o) the delivery of all other necessary on-site and appropriate off-site infrastructure; and
- (p) other policy provisions of the District Plan and relevant matters, as appropriate.

North of Hertford

7.2.9 In order to meet the District's short and medium term housing requirement and to provide for the housing needs of the town, a development of around 150 new homes is proposed to the North of Hertford.

Figure 7.5 Site Location: Land North of Hertford

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Policy HERT4 North of Hertford

I. Land to the north of Hertford is allocated as a residential development site to accommodate a minimum of 150 homes, with around 50 dwellings being provided to the north of Sacombe Road by 2022; and, subject to the satisfactory previous phased extraction of mineral deposits on the neighbouring site, around 100 homes to the west of B158 Wadesmill Road between 2022 and 2027.

II. A Masterplan will be collaboratively prepared, involving site promoters, landowners, East Herts Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Hertford Town Council, and other key stakeholders. This document will further be informed by public participation in the process.

III. The development is expected to address the following provisions and issues:

(a) a range of dwelling type and mix, in accordance with the provisions of Policy HOU1 (Type and Mix of Housing);

(b) Affordable Housing in accordance with Policy HOU3 (Affordable Housing);

(c) demonstration of the extent of the mineral that may be present and the likelihood of prior extraction in an environmentally acceptable way has been fully considered. As a minimum, an assessment of the depth and quality of mineral, together with an appraisal of the consequential viability for prior extraction without prejudicing the delivery of housing within the plan period should be provided;

(d) necessary new utilities, including, *inter alia*: integrated communications infrastructure to facilitate home working;

(e) necessary upgrades to the sewerage system;

(f) sustainable drainage and provision for flood mitigation;

(g) access arrangements and appropriate local (with contributions towards wider, strategic) highways mitigation measures;

(h) encouragement of sustainable transport measures, both through improvements to the existing walking, cycling and bridleway networks in the locality and through new provision, which should also provide links with the adjoining area and the town centre and enhanced passenger transport services;

(i) protection of all public rights of way (including, *inter alia*, the protection of the restricted byway) and other public access routes running through or on the boundaries of the site;

(j) landscaping and planting, both within the site and peripheral, which responds to the existing landscape and complements development, as appropriate and provides a defined, recognisable boundary to the Green Belt;

(k) public open spaces across the site, including the provision of play areas and opportunities for outdoor health and fitness activities, as well as space for wildlife;

(l) quality local green infrastructure through the site including opportunities for preserving and enhancing on-site assets, maximising opportunities to link into existing assets and enhance biodiversity;

(m) measures to ensure that any impact on wildlife within the site and at the nearby Waterford Heath nature reserve is successfully mitigated;

(n) the delivery of all other necessary on-site and appropriate off-site infrastructure; and

(o) other policy provisions of the District Plan and relevant matters, as appropriate.

South of Hertford

7.2.10 In order to contribute towards the District's short term housing requirement and to provide for the housing needs of the town, development of around 50 dwellings is proposed to the South of Hertford.

7.2.11 The site provides an opportunity to deliver a range of housing types and tenures in a location that benefits from excellent access to educational facilities, historic assets, and other town centre amenities. Development of the area will ensure the continued protection of the Green Finger at the western part of the site, including the existing treed area at the higher level, the tree belt at the lower level, and the sloped area of land between them leading towards Hagsdell Stream, while allowing public access to this valuable resource.

Figure 7.6 Site Location: Land to the South of Hertford

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Policy HERT5 South of Hertford

- I. Land to the south of Hertford is allocated as a residential development site to accommodate around 50 homes to the west of Mangrove Road by 2022.

II. A Masterplan will be collaboratively prepared, involving site promoters, landowners, East Herts Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Hertford Town Council, and other key stakeholders. This document will further be informed by public participation in the process.

III. The development is expected to address the following provisions and issues:

- (a) a range of dwelling type and mix, in accordance with the provisions of Policy HOU1 (Type and Mix of Housing);
- (b) Affordable Housing in accordance with Policy HOU3 (Affordable Housing);
- (c) demonstration of the extent of the mineral that may be present and the likelihood of prior extraction in an environmentally acceptable way has been fully considered. As a minimum, an assessment of the depth and quality of mineral, together with an appraisal of the consequential viability for prior extraction without prejudicing the delivery of housing within the plan period should be provided;
- (d) development that is compatible with, and complements, the character of local heritage assets and designations, including, *inter alia*, the adjacent Grade I Balls Park and its Grade II Registered Garden;
- (e) necessary new utilities including, *inter alia*: integrated communications infrastructure to facilitate home working;
- (f) access arrangements and appropriate local (with contributions towards wider, strategic) highways mitigation measures;
- (g) encouragement of sustainable transport measures, both through improvements to the existing walking and cycling networks in the locality and through new provision, which should also provide links with the adjoining area and the town centre (including, *inter alia*, an upgraded pedestrian and cycle way along Mangrove Road to Simon Balle School), and enhanced passenger transport services;
- (h) landscaping and planting, both within the site and peripheral, which responds to the existing landscape and complements development, as appropriate;
- (i) public open space within the site, including the provision of a play area and opportunities for outdoor health and fitness activities, as well as space for wildlife;
- (j) quality local green infrastructure through the site including opportunities for preserving and enhancing on-site assets, maximising opportunities to link into existing assets and enhance biodiversity. This should include, but not be limited to, the provision of a public amenity greenspace buffer (which will remain in the Green Belt) between the development and Hagsdell Stream to allow for the preservation of that part of the Hertford Green Finger. This shall include the existing treed area at the higher level, the tree belt at the lower level, and the sloped area of land between them leading towards Hagsdell Stream, and should also provide

for public pedestrian access from Mangrove Road along with the protection of any public rights of way and other public access routes running through or on the boundaries of the site;

- (k) the delivery of all other necessary on-site and appropriate off-site infrastructure; and
- (l) other policy provisions of the District Plan and relevant matters, as appropriate.

7.3 Employment in Hertford

- 7.3.1** The county town of Hertford retains its traditional brewing role, albeit on a reduced basis from that of bygone times. The town has evolved its employment base over time to reflect changing needs and currently contains a broad spectrum of employment from industrial to prestige office accommodation with varying sized enterprises in its employment areas.
- 7.3.2** Hertford's location in relation to accessing the major road network means that it is an attractive place for businesses to locate; however, the A414 has a propensity towards congestion, especially at peak times, which can affect ease of access to some areas and will require mitigation in line with the provisions of Hertfordshire County Council's Local Transport Plan 4. It is currently proposed that this will include provision of a Hertford bypass to address identified constraints on the A414 in combination with Sustainable Travel Town initiatives.
- 7.3.3** Hertford benefits from having the District's largest local authority employer, Hertfordshire County Council, located in the town. Other public and private sector employment premises also lie in close proximity to County Hall.
- 7.3.4** In order to continue to provide opportunities for businesses to serve the town and nearby settlements in the surrounding area, the strategy will be to protect and enhance the existing employment areas in Hertford and to supplement this by the formal designation of the Pegs Lane area which has long been in employment use.

Policy HERT6 Employment in Hertford

- I. In accordance with Policy ED1 (Employment), the following locations are designated as Employment Areas:
 - (a) Caxton Hill;
 - (b) Foxholes Business Park;
 - (c) Hartham Lane;

- (d) Mead Lane - East of Marshgate Drive (including the provisions of Policy HERT2 Mead Lane Area);
- (e) Mimram Road;
- (f) Warehams Lane;
- (g) Windsor Industrial Estate, Ware Road.

II. In addition, in accordance with Policy ED1 (Employment), the following location is designated as an Employment Area reserved primarily for B1 use:

- (a) Pegs Lane.

7.4 Retail in Hertford

7.4.1 Classed as a Secondary Town Centre, Hertford provides a wide range of comparison and convenience shopping in addition to other service needs. This offer serves both its own residents and those of surrounding settlements. Hertford's markets, food and drink facilities and successful night-time economy also draw patronage from wider locations.

7.4.2 However, its historic development pattern, while providing a unique character which acts as an attractor, also limits the potential of the town to expand its retail function in its central core.

7.4.3 Within some of its residential areas, Hertford also benefits from local parades and individual shops, which provide valuable resources for local people and passing trade, in addition to the retail offer in the town centre.

Hertford Town Centre Urban Design Strategy

7.4.4 The Hertford Town Centre Urban Design Strategy was devised to guide future development in the town centre and to increase the viability and vitality of its commercial operations. It provides a long-term coherent vision for the area; proposes design approaches for key sites and areas within the town centre; and aims to guide developers by providing a framework for determining planning applications. The Strategy further seeks to engender a sense of community, to provide opportunities to reinforce or improve the sense of place associated with Hertford Town Centre and its environs, in line with the sustainability principles outlined in section 2 of the NPPF (ensuring the vitality of town centres).

7.4.5 The Strategy, which is underpinned by robust technical evidence and two rounds of public consultation, has been agreed by East Herts Council, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertford Town Council, which will continue to work together to help bring its proposals to fruition. While provisions are included for improvements across Hertford's entire central core, of particular note is the Bircherley Green key site area,

which is viewed as being the most important development opportunity site in the town centre. Key use and urban design principles for the mixed use redevelopment of this area, based around a revitalised retail offer, are included in the Strategy. Therefore, where any redevelopment proposals emerge for Bircherley Green or other town centre sites, these should respond positively to the detailed provisions of the Strategy. It is intended that the Strategy will be adopted by East Herts Council as a Supplementary Planning Document in due course.

The Hertford Town Centre Urban Design Strategy is available to view at: www.eastherts.gov.uk/evidencebase

7.4.6 To ensure that the aims of the Hertford Town Centre Urban Design Strategy can be met, where development is proposed in town centre locations in Hertford, Policy HERT7 will apply.

Policy HERT7 Hertford Town Centre Urban Design Strategy

Development proposals in Hertford Town Centre will be expected to take account of, and positively contribute to, proposals contained within the Hertford Town Centre Urban Design Strategy, as appropriate.

7.5 Leisure and Community Facilities in Hertford

7.5.1 Hertford is located within an extremely attractive rural setting with unique areas of open land, known as 'Green Fingers', which penetrate towards the centre of the town. While benefiting from these assets, Hertford's provision of public access, as well as the provision of space for children could be improved. Therefore, where possible, better public access to the countryside that surrounds the settlement should be created to support both existing and new communities in the town. Proposals for the development of the HERT3, HERT4 and HERT5 policy areas should therefore assist in this respect, through increased public access to countryside/green space provision. The river corridors have also been identified as areas where the improvement of both habitat and physical links connecting settlements should be sought, especially between Hertford and Ware and the wider countryside. Cycling provision is another area that would benefit from improvement. It is anticipated that the implementation of district-wide and settlement specific policies relating to development sites in and around Hertford, will result in increased access, as appropriate.

7.5.2 In respect of formal indoor and outdoor sport provision, any under provision of junior football and mini-soccer pitches identified in the Hertford and Ware area should also be addressed. Development proposals will therefore be considered in accordance with Policies CFLR1 (Open Space, Sport and Recreation) and contributions sought towards on or off-site provision, as appropriate.

7.5.3 Hertford's Green Fingers, which penetrate the town, are a recognised local amenity, wildlife and leisure asset and have been designated as Local Green Spaces under Policy CFLR2 (Local Green Space). This designation provides protection for these valuable resources and ensures that development will not be allowed in such locations, other than in very special circumstances.

7.5.4 All new development in Hertford will result in an increased demand for local services and community facilities including, *inter alia*, healthcare and education. Development proposals should contribute to the enhancement of existing provision to ensure that both new and existing residents in the town are able to access community facilities and vital services within Hertford, thereby reducing the need to travel to other settlements. In this respect, development proposals will be considered in accordance with Policies CFLR7 (Community Facilities), CFLR8 (Loss of Community Facilities), CFLR 9 (Health and Wellbeing) and CFLR10 (Education).

